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**CRS214**  
**PAULINE EPISTLE**

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## **Module 1      General Introduction**

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### **UNIT 1:        The Life and Times Of Paul**

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#### **1.0    Introduction**

I welcome you to this course titled, Pauline Epistles. I can say confidently that by the end of this course you would have covered most of the New Testament as the epistles of Paul takes more than half of the New Testament. In this first module, you would be studying about Paul himself. Since a man cannot be divorced from his writings, you should know that a good knowledge of the life of a man would give you an insight into understanding his writings. In this unit, which is the first unit of the first module of this course you would be studying about the life and times of Paul though very briefly. Paul was a man whose life shaped the Christian world and thought and so it is desirable to know the elements that made the man who he was.

#### **2.0    Intended Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Explain Paul's dual nationality.
- Give an insight into Paul's educational life
- Narrate the conversion of Paul
- Discuss the activities of Paul in Ministry
- Narrate the tradition about Paul's death

“Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee.”

The Pharisees was a Jewish sect, more correctly a Jewish school that became a distinct body or party around the 2nd century BC. The name Pharisees is usually traced to the Hebrew word, *perashin*, which means ‘to separate,’ hence they were regarded as separatists. They were also most of the time traced to the successors of the Hassidim (a party that originated in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes in revolt against his hellenization policy). Microsoft Encarta (2008) indicates that they became known as Pharisees when John Hyrcanus became the high priest of Judea.

The first mention of the Pharisees is in a description by Josephus of the three sects or schools into which the Jews were divided around B.C. 145. The other two sects were the Essenes and the Sadducees. By the time of Jesus Christ they were the popular party (John 7:48). Pertaining to the Law, they were extremely accurate and minute in all matters. Their chief tendency was to resist all Greek or other foreign influences that threatened to undermine the sacred religion of their fathers, and they took their stand most emphatically upon Divine Law. Their doctrine was of an ethical, spiritual and sometimes mystical Judaism, which enabled the religion to survive the destruction (AD70) of the Temple, and which later became the dominant form of Judaism. In other words, what is known as Judaism today is actually the Pharisaic form of Judaism. No doubt, the doctrines of the Pharisees would have affected the man Paul.

### **3.4 Paul’s Conversion**

Paul grew to be a man of firm convictions and fiery temperament. He always acted on his beliefs. Thus, when he was confronted with what he took to be a heresy to Judaism (that is, Christianity in its early stages) he worked with all his might to suppress it. Thus he referred to himself in Philippians 3:6, “in zeal I persecuted the church, in righteousness based on the law I was blameless.” The first time Paul came to the scene in the Bible, he was called Saul; this was the Saul who was present at the stoning of Stephen. Though he did not participate in the stoning of Stephen, he encouraged the violent act that destroyed the first of the martyrs. He then participated in a general persecution including, going from house to house, to drag out the believers, both men and women and threw them into jail. It was this act of persecution against the church that made him seek permission to travel to Damascus. It was on the road to Damascus that he had the remarkable experience that turned his life around:

<sup>1</sup> Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, <sup>2</sup> and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup> As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; <sup>4</sup> and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” <sup>5</sup> And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” And He said, “I am Jesus whom you are

persecuting, <sup>6</sup> but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do.”

Cross (2005) dated Paul's conversion to around AD 33 basing his dating on Paul's reference to it in one of his letters.

After he has been blinded by this light from heaven, his companions led him into the city, where, absorbed in deep thought for three days, he neither ate nor drank until Ananias, a disciple living in Damascus, was informed by a vision of the change that had happened to Saul, and was sent to him to open his eyes and admit him by baptism into the Christian church. As said earlier, the whole purpose of Paul's life was now permanently changed. Immediately after his conversion he retired into the solitudes of Arabia as recorded in Galatia 1:17 for the purpose, probably, of devout study and meditation on the marvellous revelation that had been made to him. A veil of thick darkness hangs over this visit to Arabia. Of the scenes among which he moved, of the thoughts and occupations which engaged him while there, of all the circumstances of a crisis which must have shaped the whole tenor of his after-life, absolutely nothing is known. He returned after three years to Damascus and he began to preach the gospel “boldly in the name of Jesus” (Acts 9:27) but was soon forced to flee as the Jews now saw him as a threat. This led him back to Jerusalem where he tarried for another three weeks, but was again forced to flee from persecution (Acts 9:28, 29). He now returned to his native home Tarsus for probably about three years until we came across him later.

It might interest you to know that there are three different accounts of Paul's conversion in the book of Acts. The first one as recorded in Acts 9 has been used here. The other two were recorded by Luke to have come from Paul's mouth when he testified of his faith before King Herod Agrippa (Acts 25:22-26:29) and Festus, the Roman governor (Acts 25:1-12).

### **3.5 Paul in Ministry**

Before starting the section on the activities of Paul in the ministry, it is good to begin to talk about the man who most of the time had been forgotten but to whom the church owe the coming of Paul to the ministry.

Barnabas was described in the Bible as a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit. He was delegated by the Apostle to go and lead the church at Antioch and as a result of the good work he did at Antioch, the church grew tremendously to the point that Barnabas would need an assistant. At this point, he remembered Paul and set out to Tarsus to look for him because Paul had left Jerusalem for Tarsus. The two worked together in Antioch until the Lord separated them for missionary work outside Antioch.

#### **First Missionary Journey**

The first missionary journey started with Paul and Barnabas taking John Mark with them. They started from Antioch to Cyprus and would have covered about

1,500 miles (Stephens, 1991). It was at Cyprus that Paul actually changed his name from Saul. From Cyprus they left for Asia from where John Mark deserted them. From here, they moved on to Antioch of Pisidia then to Iconium, Lystra and Derbe where they established churches at all the major towns. They later retraced their steps and returned to Antioch.

The admission of the Gentiles to the church and Paul's practice of admitting the Gentiles without circumcision led to serious conflict within the church. This quarrel went on for a long time in the church of Antioch until the church decided to send a delegate to the church at Jerusalem for a decision on the issue. This led to the Jerusalem Council to which Paul and Barnabas led the Antioch delegate. The decision of the Council was later communicated to the Antioch church with two members of the Jerusalem church. The Gentiles were exempted from the burden of circumcision but were told to abstain from blood and immorality.

### **The Second Missionary Journey**

The second missionary journey started after a brief disagreement between Paul and Barnabas over John Mark. At the end of the squabble, Paul and Barnabas parted ways with Barnabas taking John Mark and Paul taking Silas. He later brought Timothy whom he met in Lystra and Luke whom he met at Troas on board. The second missionary journey took a period of almost three years and it is noticeable that Paul worked as a tent-maker during this period to sustain himself and the ministry.

It was during this time that Paul had problem with the Jews because of his teachings and this led to his decision to turn over to the Gentiles completely. The second missionary journey started from Antioch, to Lystra, to Troas, Philippi, Berea, Athens, Ephesus and Caesarea before they finally returned to Antioch.

### **The Third Missionary Journey**

After the second missionary journey, Paul stayed in Antioch for another 18 months before setting out for the third journey. This journey started with a revisit of the churches that he has founded in Asia. He stayed at Ephesus for over two years after which a riot broke out and he eventually landed in Rome as awaiting trial.

### **3.6 The Death of Paul**

There is no incontrovertible evidence as to the manner in which Paul died. The last time he was mentioned in the Bible, Paul was a prisoner, though he had certain freedom. As the book of Acts indicates, he was living in his own house and was receiving visitors though he had soldiers guarding him but they did not interfere with his preaching.

There are two major traditions concerning Paul's death. One, there are those who hold that after the two years 'house arrest' described by the book of Acts, Paul had his trial in Rome and was executed after being found guilty. This position would put his death at 64 AD. Two, there are those who hold that after the two years 'house arrest,' Paul was released and he then went on a fourth missionary

trip to Spain for a period of 18 months. He was then re-arrested and executed after being found guilty. This position would put Paul's death somewhere between 64 and 68 AD. Church tradition holds that Paul was killed during the Neronian persecution of Christians.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

Paul the Apostle was born around the same time with Jesus Christ and was a citizen of Tarsus. Although, a Jew by birth, he was also a Roman citizen also by birth. He was popularly known by his cognomen, which is Paul, even though he would have had three names as a Roman citizen. He was also educated according to the Jewish custom which means apart from the preliminary studies of the scriptures he had learnt a trade, which in Paul's case was tent-making. After this, he left for Jerusalem where he had advanced training in the scriptures under the feet of Gamaliel. He was a Pharisee by religious leaning and a zealous conservative Jew. He was however converted dramatically and he was called to be a minister of the gospel. He was believed to have been executed by Emperor Nero around A. D. 64 to A. D. 68

#### **5.0 Summary**

The following are the major points you have learnt in this unit:

- Paul was born around the same time as Jesus Christ.
- He was a Jew of the city of Tarsus and also a Roman citizen.
- He was popularly known by his cognomen, Paul.
- He was educated under Gamaliel.
- He belonged to the Pharisee sect within Judaism.
- He was probably executed by Emperor Nero around A. D. 64 to A. D. 68.

#### **Self-Assessment Exercises**

Write a brief history of Apostle Paul's life.

#### **6.0 References/Further Readings**

Cross, F. L. (2005). "Paul" in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, Cross, F. L. (ed.) New York: Oxford University Press.

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## **UNIT 2:      The Political World of Paul**

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### **1.0    Introduction**

In the previous unit you have studied generally about the life and times of the Paul the Apostle. You have learnt about his nationality, his family background, his conversion and his coming to the ministry to his death. In this unit, you would be focusing on the political situation of the Jews during the time of Jesus Christ and the early church. This is also important as it formed the background to the social and the political era of the Pauline period.

### **2.0    Intended Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Identify the role of Alexander the Great in the political set-up of Palestine.
- Evaluate the various Jewish reaction to the shifting political pendulum.
- Trace the origin of Hellenism

### **3.0    Main Content**

#### **3.1    The Political Set-up of Palestine**

The political set-up of Palestine is actually a vast history and thus we would have to limit ourselves from the on-set about what we have to do. The history of Palestine as it affected the New Testament world, actually begins from the coming of the Greeks under the leadership of Alexander the Great.

##### **3.1.1   From Alexander the Great to the Roman Occupation**

##### **Alexander the Great**

Alexander the Great was born in 356 BC in Pella, Macedonia. He was the son of King Philip of Macedon and Princess Olympias of Epirus. At the age of thirteen, he became a pupil of Aristotle. It was Aristotle who inspired Alexander's great love for Greek literature and culture. Through his mentor, Alexander learned the Greek ways of living and the ideals of Greek civilization.

By the age of twenty, Alexander the Great became the King of Macedonia as his father Philip was assassinated. Alexander the Great united the Greek cities and became the leader. After uniting the Greek city-states, Alexander the Great set out to conquer Persia. On the banks of the Granicus River Alexander defeated the Persian troops who had been waiting for him. This victory made the rest of Asia Minor vulnerable. In 333 BC Alexander marched into Syria. Even though Darius III, King of Persia, had raised a large army he was unable to withstand Alexander's powerful infantry and phalanx. The entire region soon submitted to Alexander. Following this he went to Egypt, where he was welcomed as a deliverer because the Egyptians hated their cruel Persian rulers. It was here that Alexander founded the famous city that bears his name; Alexandria, which became a world center of commerce and learning.

The decisive victory over the Persians took place at the Battle of Gaugamela where Alexander defeated Darius. The capturing of Babylon allowed Alexander to capture Susa and Persepolis. At the peak of his power, Alexander the Great's empire stretched from the Ionian Sea to northern India.

However, Alexander's pet project was to combine Asia and Europe into one country with Babylon as the new capital. In order to attain this goal, he encouraged intermarriages and spread Greek ideas, customs, and laws into Asia. This is the beginning of the Hellenistic age. Alexander's policy was first one of conquest and then the integration of the conquered people into the Greek empire. This means that his conquests were not only military but also social to Greek custom and culture. This policy laid the foundation for the social eruption that was to take place long after his death.

After the death of Alexander the Great, altercations between his generals led to the division of his empire among his four generals.

- a. Ptolemy Lagi ruled over Egypt, Palestine, Arabia, and Peterea
- b. Antigonus controlled Syria, Babylonia, and central Asia
- c. Cassander ruled over Macedonia and Greece and
- d. Lysimachus was the ruler of Thrace and Bythinia

These four generals were known as the *Diadochoi*, which in Greek means "Successors." Even though the kingdom had been divided between them, they still continued to fight with one another. There were frequent outbursts of violence as they sought to gain each other's territory. Antigonus was probably the worst of the generals. The others finally allied themselves together and drove him out in 312 BC.

Seleucus seized upon this opportunity and took back the territory which had originally been given to him. This area, Syria and Babylonia, now came under the Seleucid Dynasty. At the same time, Ptolemy Lagi extended his boundaries

northward from Egypt to include the area occupied by the Jews. Thus, the Jews came under the rule of the Ptolemies, which they held until 198 BC.

Later, the entire empire was now controlled by the Seleucids in the North and the Ptolemies in the South. Caught right in the middle of these two struggling factions was Palestine, and it became the source and site of constant conflict between the Seleucids and the Ptolemies. For the first 100 years or so the Ptolemies held the upper hand in the struggle over Palestine, the home of the people of Israel. It would interest you to note that between 319 and 302 BC, the rulership of Jerusalem changed seven times.

### **The Jews under the Ptolemaids**

The strategic position of Judea to Egypt lends credence to the fact that whoever governs Egypt would be directly interested in Judea. This is because Judea is the only place from which Egypt could be invaded since it was bordered in the North by the Mediterranean Sea, in the West by the Libyan Desert and in the South by the Ethiopian Desert.

### **Ptolemy I (323 - 285 BC)**

Ptolemy I is also known as Soter and Ptolemy Lagi. He was one of the Diadochoi. Palestine came under the dominion of the Ptolemies during his reign. He also relocated many of the Palestinian Jews to the land of Egypt where Greek soon became their native language.

### **Ptolemy II (285 - 246 BC)**

Ptolemy II is also known as Philadelphus. Under his rule, the Jews, both in Egypt and Palestine, enjoyed a lengthy period of quiet, and also some degree of prosperity. In Palestine, the High Priest, aided by a council of priests and elders, was allowed to rule as a political underlord of the Ptolemies. As long as they paid their annual tribute of 20 talents, they were left pretty much alone.

In Egypt, the Jews were allowed to build Synagogues to worship and study. It was this that made Alexandria become an influential Jewish center. Under the rule of Ptolemy II, the Jewish Scriptures were translated into the Greek language. This translation is known as the Septuagint (LXX), a translation which would become the most popular version of the Scriptures among the Jews of the dispersion and which would be used a great deal by the writers of the New Testament books.

### **Ptolemy IV (221 - 203 BC)**

Ptolemy IV is also known as Philopater. He has been described as the most cruel and vicious ruler of the Ptolemaic Dynasty. He hated the Jews, and as a result persecuted them without mercy. He even attempted to force his way into the Holy of Holies in the Jewish Temple and thus defile it. The Jews detested this madman, and celebrated with great rejoicing at his death in 203 BC.

### **Ptolemy V (203 - 180 BC)**

Ptolemy V was also called Epiphanes which means “the illustrious one”. He was the last of the Ptolemaic rulers to hold control over Palestine and the people of Israel though he was not the last of the Ptolemaic rulers in Egypt.

### **The Jews under the Seleucids**

In 198 BC the Seleucids under the leadership of Antiochus III took control of Palestine and they held this control virtually until the coming of the Romans in 63 BC.

#### **Antiochus III (223 - 187 BC)**

Antiochus III ascended the throne of the Seleucid Empire in 223 BC at the age of 18. At the Battle of Panion in the Jordan Valley (198 BC) he was able to gain complete control of Palestine. The Jews were at first happy by this state of affairs and they welcomed Antiochus with open arms not knowing that the Seleucids would be harsher than the Ptolemies.

Hannibal one of the rulers who had been defeated by the Romans at Zama, fled to the court of Antiochus for protection. He convinced Antiochus to invade Greece and this made Rome to declare war on Antiochus. The Romans defeated Antiochus in 190 BC, and made him pay dearly for his alliance with Hannibal. He was forced to pay enormous amounts of money, and to surrender his navy and his war elephants. To ensure that Antiochus continued making his payments, the Romans took his youngest son to Rome where they kept him hostage for twelve years. This young boy later returned to assume the throne under the name Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

#### **Seleucus IV (187 - 175 BC)**

Antiochus III died three years after the Romans defeated him and was succeeded by Seleucus IV, who ruled for the twelve years. Since he has to raise the money to send to the Romans, he heavily taxed the people of the land, including the Jews of Palestine.

The issue of paying tax for the government brought division among the Jews. The Oniads, under the leadership of the High Priest Onias, were opposed to helping the Seleucids in any way. The other group, led by a man named Jason, felt the opposite, and set about making many false and slanderous reports to the king concerning Onias, in the hopes of undermining him and becoming the High Priest. However, Seleucus IV ignored the Jewish problem.

#### **Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175 - 163 BC)**

In the year 175 BC, Antiochus IV, also known as Epiphanes, murdered Seleucus IV and took the throne. He immediately took advantage of Jason's offer of money, and removed Onias from the office of High Priest, installing Jason in his place. Three years later, a man named Menelaus offered Antiochus even more money, so the king removed Jason and made Menelaus the High Priest.

This political manoeuvring of the highly exalted office of the High Priest led to the formation of the Hasidim, meaning “the pious ones”. Because of this act and many others, they renamed Antiochus “Epimanes” meaning “the madman”. It was a play on sound with the name “Epiphanes”.

When Antiochus invaded Egypt in 169 BC, it was reported back in Palestine that the king had been killed in battle. On hearing this, Jason returned from exile and threw Menelaus out of the city to regain the office of High Priest. The news of Antiochus' death was false, however, and when he returned to Jerusalem he removed Jason from office and reinstalled Menelaus. Antiochus also entered the Temple and stole a great deal of valuable treasure, an act which the pious Jews counted as an abomination.

In the following year, that is 168 BC, Antiochus attempted to wage war against Egypt again but the Roman representative, Popilius Laenus, ordered him out of Egypt and warned him never to return. Out of frustration, Antiochus IV attacked Jerusalem killing large number of Jews and destroyed the Scriptures. He also desecrated the Temple by having his soldiers and prostitutes had sex there. He also ordered that Greek gods should be worshipped and announced death penalty for Jews that practiced circumcision or observe the Sabbath and any other Jewish religious feasts and sacrifices. This led to the Maccabean wars.

### **The Maccabean Revolts and the Jewish Independence**

In Modein, a town outside Jerusalem, one of the officials of Antiochus IV commanded the people to sacrifice to Zeus. As one of the young Jews was about to do this, Matthatias, a 90 year old priest of the town rose in anger and killed both the young Jew and the official. He then issued a command that all who are zealous for the law and the covenant should follow him. Together with his family and these supporters, they headed for the mountains. This began the Maccabean revolts. After Matthatias' death in that same year, Judas, his son took over the leadership of the revolt.

The years 166-164 BC were years of continual guerrilla warfare under the command of Judah Maccabee. The Jews attacked the Seleucid armies as they attempted to reach Jerusalem and reinforce their garrison there. Seleucid forces approached the city from almost every direction, but each time they were defeated and their weapons were appropriated by the ever-growing Hasmonean forces. The heroic and almost always victorious Hasmonean military efforts are vividly recorded in both 1 and 2 Maccabees. The only inconclusive battle was fought at Beth Zur in 164 BC and a temporary truce was declared through the joint intervention of Jewish Hellenists and Roman envoys.

It was these successive victories that led the people to surname Judas, as Macacabee, a name that means “the hammerer”. The Maccabeans became the ruling force in Jerusalem and Judea after these victories. In the year 165 BC, on the 25<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Chivlev (December), the Temple was purified and rededicated. This led to the establishment of the Feast of Hanukkah also called the Feast of Lights because for the seven days duration of the feast, all Jerusalem would be illuminated with lights.

From this point to the time Pompey conquered Judea, the Jewish state expanded under the leadership of the Maccabeans. They are also known as the Hasmoneans because their family name was actually Hasmon. The following were the rulers from Judas:

Judas	165-161BC
Jonathan	160-142BC
Simon	142-134BC
John Hyrcannus	134-104BC
Aristobulus	104-103BC
Alexander Jannaeus	103-76BC

It was under the leadership of Alexander Jannaeus that the borders of the Jewish state included all of Palestine. At the time of Simon, the Jews decided to appoint Simon as the High Priest forever, until there arise a faithful prophet to take over the leadership. Thus, the Hasmonean dynasty came to hold both the political office and the High priesthood.

After Alexander Jannaeus' death in 76 BC, Salome, his wife took over the leadership under the direction of the Pharisees. Being a woman however, she cannot assume the office of the High Priest and thus appointed her son, Hyrcannus II as High Priest. After Salome's death, a conflict over succession arose between Hyrcannus II and Aristobulus II. It was this conflict that attracted the attention of Rome to Palestine. Thus, in 63 BC, Pompey marched against Jerusalem and the Temple. According to Josephus, 12,000 Jews were killed on that day. The borders of the Jewish state were reduced to Judea, Idumea, Perea and Galilee and Pompey installed Hyrcannus II as the High Priest but not as king thus ending the saga of an independent Jewish state.

### **3.2 The Roman Occupation**

#### **The Coming of Herod**

After a Roman civil war in which Julius Caesar became victorious over Pompey, in appreciation, Caesar appointed Hyrcannus II as the Ethnarch of the Jews. The truth however is that Antipater; one Idumean was the real power behind the throne. Antipater was the father of Phasaël and Herod.

In 43BC, Hyrcanus' nephew, Antigonus, tried to obtain the throne. Herod defeated him, and secured the continuity of the line of Hyrcanus by marrying Hyrcanus' daughter Mariamme. After the Roman civil war between Octavius and Mark Anthony against Brutus and Cassius, over Caesar's murder, Mark Anthony rewarded Herod with the title of Tetrarch of Galilee, a title that was commonly used for the leaders of parts of vassal kingdoms thus rendering Hyrcanus the Jewish national leader in name only.

This appointment caused a lot of resentment among the Jews because Herod was not a Jew. He was the son of a man from Idumea; and although Antipater had been a pious man who had worshipped the Jewish God sincerely, the Jews had always looked down upon the Idumeans as racially impure. Herod's case was

worse because he had an Arabian mother, and it was commonly held that one could only be a Jew when one was born from a Jewish mother. When war broke out between the Romans and the Parthians, Hyrcanus was taken and Antigonus became king in his place while Phasaël committed suicide.

Herod, however managed to escape to Rome where he persuaded Octavius and the Roman Senate to order Mark Antony to restore him. Herod was brought back to Jerusalem by two legions. Antigonus was defeated and after he had besieged and captured Jerusalem, and had defeated the last opposition Herod could start his reign as sole ruler of Judaea. He assumed the title of *basileus*, the highest possible title.

From 37BC to 4BC, Herod held sway in Jerusalem and with the approval of Rome gradually expanded the kingdom. It was at this time that the birth of Christ took place. After the battle between Mark Anthony and Octavius wherein Mark Anthony was defeated and finally committed suicide, the Roman Senate changed Octavius' name to Augustus and titled him *princeps* and *imperator*. It was the decree of Augustus for a census that resulted in Jesus' birth at Bethlehem.

Herod actually had a fantastic and marvelous reign. He had many building projects; he expanded the territories and the development of economic resources. However, many of his projects won him the bitter hatred of the orthodox Jews, who disliked Herod's Hellenistic taste which manifested in the building projects and several transgressions of the Mosaic Law.

The Sadducees also hated him because he had terminated the rule of the old royal house to which many of them were related and their own influence in the Sanhedrin was curtailed. The Pharisees despised any ruler who despised the Law. And all his subjects resented his excessive taxation which according to Josephus was extremely high compared to any preindustrial society (*Jewish Antiquities* 14.202-206). It comes as no surprise that Herod sometimes had to revert to violence, employing mercenaries and a secret police to enforce order. Thus the use of the phrase 'tax-collector' and 'tax-gatherer' in the New Testament are commonplace.

### **Palestine after Herod the Great**

After Herod's death, Augustus divided the kingdom with respect to Herod's will. Herod Antipas became the ruler of Galilee and the east-bank of Jordan (where Jesus grew up and also had his public ministry. He was actually the one Jesus called 'the fox') as tetrarch; Philip was also the tetrarch of the north-east part of Galilee and Archelaus became the Ethnarch of Samaria and Judea.

When Galigula became the Roman emperor, he made Agrippa I (a grandson of Herod the Great and one time tutor of Galigula) to be the king of Palestine. He was ruling during the history of the early church. He was the one that executed James and imprisoned Peter. He later died a mysterious death. After Agrippa I's death in AD44, the whole kingdom became an annex to the Syrian province and was ruled by Roman procurators under the Syrian proconsul. Two of these mentioned in the New Testament were Antonius Felix (AD52- AD60) and

Porcius Festus (AD60-AD62) who were referred to in the book of Acts as being involved in Paul's imprisonment and the proceedings of his trial.

When Claudius became emperor in AD50, he gave Agrippa II, one of the sons of Agrippa I, the territory that his uncle Philip ruled as well as the control of the Temple. Nero later confirmed this when he became the emperor and actually expanded the territory in AD54. It was Agrippa II that visited Paul in Caesarea Philippi and interviewed him on the charges levied against him.

### **3.3 The Social Set-Up of Palestine**

The social set up of Palestine is not too far removed from its religious situation as for Jews; the all of life is dictated by the religious. Thus, the society is divided into two clear lines: the pious ones and the *am-ha-aretz*. The pious ones would be discussed in the next unit, thus we will discuss here the '*am-ha-aretz*' and the Jews of the Diaspora.

#### **The '*Am Ha-Aretz*'**

Most Jews remained outside the circle of the sects we have mentioned as the pious ones. There were very few Sadducees and Essenes. Josephus informs us that there were only six thousand Pharisees. The overwhelming majority of Palestinian Jews belonged to what the Pharisees called the *am ha-aretz*, 'the people of the land'.

It is a term of Rabbinic Judaism applied by scholars of the Talmud to uneducated Jews, who were deemed likely to be negligent in their observance of the commandments due to their ignorance (Wikipedia). The '*am ha-aretz*' were of two types, the '*am ha-aretz le-mitzvot*', that is, Jews disparaged for not scrupulously observing the commandments, and the '*am ha-aretz la-Torah*', that is, those stigmatized as ignoramuses for not having studied the Torah at all. That they are social outcasts is seen in the quotation from the Pesachim (the Order of Festivals of the Mishnah and the Talmud). In this quotation, the *am-ha-aretz* is contrasted with the students of the wise (*talmide hakkamim*). The students of the wise are thus advised:

A man should rather sell all his possessions in order to afford marriage to a daughter of a *hakham talmid*. Marriage of a *talmid hakhim* to a daughter of an '*am ha-aretz*' is compared to the crossbreeding of grapevine with wild wine, which is "unseemly and disagreeable" (Pesachim, 49a-b).

#### **The Jews of the Diaspora or Dispersion**

When we talk about the Jews, our minds settle only on the Jews of Palestine. We must not forget, however, that most Jews lived not in Palestine but in the great cities of the Roman Empire: Rome, Antioch, Alexandria and Ephesus among others. There, they were the object of considerable hostility from Greeks and Romans who regarded them as superstitious, exclusive, and in the words of Tacitus, "hostile to the human race". Their Sabbath observance and practice of circumcision were especially criticized. From Egypt one papyrus letter reflects



fear of their financial acumen. Above all, however, as emperor-worship became more significant, their refusal to accept the divinity of the Roman emperor was attacked, even though treaties with the Jewish nation exempted them from participating in ruler-cult.

One source of difficulty was the existence of Jews who participated in the benefits of Graeco-Roman culture and were citizens of their cities, as well as of the empire, while claiming allegiance to Judaism at the same time. Philo of Alexandria belonged to a wealthy and politically influential family; he was well educated in Greek rhetoric and philosophy; but he stated that as a Jew his native city (*patris*) was Jerusalem. Similarly the apostle Paul was a Jew, a citizen of Tarsus in Cilicia, and a Roman citizen (Acts 21:39; 22:27-28). Roman policy favoured cosmopolitanism; but it had its limits, and turbulence in Palestine did not improve the position of Jews elsewhere.

From the career and the writings of Philo we can see how eager some Jews were to bridge the gap between Judaism and Hellenism. Philo took part in a movement to replace an anti-Jewish governor of Alexandria ( *Against Flaccus*) and in an attempt to modify the anti- Jewish attitude of the Emperor Gaius (*Embassy to Gaius*). He wrote innumerable volumes containing exegesis of the Jewish law intended to show that it expressed the universal law of nature as well as special laws binding only upon the Jewish people.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

In this unit, we have stated the history of Palestine from the Hellenization policy of Alexander the Great to the Roman annexation of Judea. You have been taught that Alexander the Great conquered the then known world from Persia to Northern India because he aimed at uniting Europe and Asia. However, he died at the peak of his career and the kingdom was divided among his four top generals. From that point, the history of Palestine was narrowed down to the two generals that were important to the political history of ancient Palestine. There are Seleucus and Ptolemy. The constant trouble in Palestine when they came under the Seleucus drew the attention of Rome to Palestine and this led to the Roman occupation to Palestine. It was the Romans that enthroned Herod the Great. You have also learnt that socially, ancient Judea was divided along religious lines, and that, apart from the religious aristocrats we also have the *am-ha-aretz* and the Jews of the Diaspora.

#### **5.0 Summary**

The following are the major points you have learnt in this unit:

- Alexander the Great began the policy of Hellenization because he intended to unite Europe and Asia into one single country.
- After Alexander's death, the kingdom was divided among his top four generals.
- Seleucus got Syria and Ptolemy took over Egypt.
- Under the Ptolemaids, the Jews fared very well until the reign of Ptolemy IV.
- Under the Seleucus there was constant trouble in the land.

- The constant problem drew the attention of Rome to Judea and eventually Rome took over the control of Judea.
- It was the Romans that enthroned Herod the Great.

### **Self-Assessment Exercise**

Discuss the struggles to control Judea between the Seleucids and the Ptolemaids.

### **6.0 References/Further Readings**

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## **UNIT 3:      The Religious and Philosophical World of Paul**

### **Content**

- 1.0    Introduction
- 2.0    Intended Learning Outcomes
- 3.0    Main Content
  - 3.1    The Jewish Religious Background
  - 3.2    The Greco-Roman Religious Background
  - 3.3    The Philosophical Background
- 4.0    Conclusion
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### **1.0    Introduction**

In the previous unit you have studied the social and the political situation of Palestine during the time of Paul the Apostle. The significances of this situation to the ministry of Paul as well as the early church were also highlighted. In this unit, you would be examining the religious and the philosophical situation of Palestine. This is important to the understanding of the Pauline epistles because most of these were reflected in his epistles. I will request that you come to this study with an open mind so that you can understand most of the underlying motif of Pauline epistles.

### **2.0    Intended Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Identify the religious groups among the Jews in the New Testament times.
- Identify the religious groups among the Gentiles in the New Testament times.
- Identify the philosophical groups existing during the New Testament times.
- Evaluate the influence of these religio-philosophical groups over Christianity and Pauline epistles.

### **3.0    Main Content**

### **3.1 The Religious Background of Palestine**

Because of its location, Palestine has always been a buffer area in relation to the powers to the north, the east and the south. After Alexander the Great's attempt to create a Graeco-Oriental empire, the generals who succeeded him divided up his empire and their successors, struggled for generations to control Palestine. The major contest has always been between the Seleucids (of Syria) and the Ptolemies (of Egypt). When Palestine was under the control of the Seleucids, Antiochus Epiphanes attempted a rigorous hellenization of Palestine.

The response of the Jewish people was instantaneous. Led by a group of brothers known as the Maccabees (which is a nickname derived from the word for 'hammer'), the Jews revolted and after a series of bloody battles, the Jews finally recaptured Jerusalem in 165 BC and the temple was cleansed and rededicated. The feast of Hanukkah, which is usually observed on the 25th of Kislev (November-December) with the lighting of lamps, still celebrates the memory of this event. It is one of the five great feasts of the Jewish year. The Maccabean victory however brought a big challenge: the divergent attitudes present within Judaism brought various parties or sects into existence.

#### **3.1.1 The Pharisees**

It is usually believed that the Pharisees originated from the group known as the Hasidim. This group came into existence during the time of Antiochus Epiphanes but unlike those who resisted Antiochus' hellenization programme, they upheld pacifism. It was during the reign of John Hyrcanus as high priest of Judea, that they became known as the Pharisees. Attempts have been made to trace the etymology of the word 'Pharisee' to the word meaning 'separate'. Josephus, the most notable Jewish historian, describes them as 'a party of Jews which seems to be more religious than the others and to explain the laws with more minute care' (War I: 110).

Their chief tendency was to resist all Greek or other foreign influences that threatened to undermine the sacred religion of their fathers, and they took their stand most emphatically upon Divine Law. The Pharisees wished the state and all public and political affairs to be directed and measured by the standard of Divine Law, without regard for the priestly and aristocratic Sadducees or the heroes and statesmen who had brought the Syrian wars to a successful close.

They observed the Sabbath so scrupulously that they would not defend themselves on that day and were easily overcome by the king's troops. Some survivors were able to join the Maccabees and to reinterpret the Sabbath legislation (I Macc. 2:29-44). But as a party the Pharisees arose later. In another place Josephus contrasts them with the conservative priestly group known as the Sadducees:

The Pharisees handed down certain legislation to the people from the tradition of the fathers, legislation which has not been recorded in the laws of Moses; for this reason the party of the Sadducees rejects it, saying that what is written must be considered

legislation, but that what comes from the tradition of the fathers need not be observed (*Antiq.* 13, 297).

Certain sociological implications can be drawn from other points which Josephus mentions. The Pharisees were rather urbane and friendly to strangers (*War* 2, 166); they were followed by the masses (*Antiq.* 13, 298); they insisted upon the value of tradition but interpreted the law more freely than the Sadducees did (18, 12). They believed in God's governing of human affairs and believed in life after death; the righteous would rise again, but the souls of the wicked would be punished eternally (18, 2-6). These points suggest that the Pharisees belonged to what we should call a kind of middle class, living chiefly in the cities. They recognized the necessity for making modifications in the law and they used tradition to provide precedents.

With their relatively liberal views, it is not surprising to find various schools existing within Pharisaism itself. For example, at the end of the first century BC we meet the famous rabbis Shammai and Hillel, the one representing a more conservative attitude, the other a more liberal view.

As a group the Pharisees were concerned with modifying the stringencies of the old law so that it could be applied in modern circumstances. Indeed, it was a Pharisaic formula which Jesus expressed when he said that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27). We can see these modifications in the criticisms of Matthew 23:16. For instance, the Pharisees said, 'Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is bound [by his oath].' The purpose of this distinction was to prevent casual oaths from being enforced. Only a deliberate, intentional oath, carefully formulated, was to have binding force.

The Pharisees recognized the positive value of law, which deters men from wrong actions by prescribing penalties and brings them to acknowledge their shortcomings. 'I should never have known sin but for the law' (Rom. 7:7). Since, in their view, the law had been revealed by God, they had to obey its implications as well as its plain statements. They regarded the spirit as binding along with the letter. In order to work out the implications, they developed what we call rabbinic exegesis. G. F. Moore has described it thus (*Judaism* 1 [Cambridge, Mass., 1927], 319)

To discover, elucidate, and apply what God ... teaches and enjoins is the task of the scholar as interpreter of scripture. Together with the principle that in God's revelation no word is without significance this conception of scripture leads to an atomistic exegesis, which interprets sentences, clauses, phrases, and even single words, independently of the context of the historical occasion, as divine oracles; combines them with other similarly detached utterances; and makes large use of analogy of expressions, often by purely verbal association.

Moore's criticisms are valid as far as they go. What he himself seems to neglect is the necessity of legal exegesis rather than historical interpretation in dealing

with a legal code; and the historical exegesis he admires was practically non-existent in antiquity.

It may be added that to attempt to understand the Pharisees by comparing them with other groups in later times is not an especially rewarding pursuit. Historical understanding must be based on direct contact and not on analogies.

### **3.1.2 Sadducees**

Though the Sadducees wanted to lay hold of the claim that their name derived from the phrase, “sons of Zadok,” the respectable High Priest in the days of David and Solomon. This claim has to be rejected because:

- The word *saddoukaioi* has double ‘d’ while Zadok has only a single ‘d’. Therefore, linguistically, the derivation is difficult. The natural term to use for the ‘sons of Zadok’ would be “bene Sathok” as in Ecclesiasticus 51:12. By the time of the Sadducees, the Zadok line of priesthood has ceased to hold office.

The Sadducees were a small select group of influential and wealthy men who exercised considerable powers in the political and religious life of the nation. The powerful priesthood was represented within this social aristocrat by the High Priest and his retinue and other priestly officials. It has to be noted that they did not begin as a religious party but because of their close association with the Temple and the priesthood and because for the Jews, the party assumed a religious character.

They were conservative in outlook and determined to maintain the status quo in religion and State. As conservatives in politics, they stood for the Israelite ideal of a theocratic state under the High Priest’s leadership. As a result of this, they were suspicious of the idea of the Messiah. As religious conservatives, they championed the observance of the Temple rituals and the priest’s prerogative to interpret the Law. As a result of this, they rejected the Pharisees’ oral tradition of lay interpretation and adhered to the strict literal interpretation of the Torah, which to them was the only canonical book.

According to Josephus they believed that providence was not operative in human affairs, though his statement may mean no more than that they were successful politicians. They did not believe in life after death; according to the book of Acts (23:8) they held that ‘there is no resurrection nor angel nor spirit’. According to Mark 12:18-27, they argued against the possibility of resurrection on the grounds provided by Deuteronomy 25:5- 6. The law said that if a man died without offspring his brother was to take the widow and beget children so that the dead man’s name might not ‘be blotted out in Israel’. Suppose seven brothers in succession had the same wife, the Sadducees suggested; whose wife would she be if there were to be a resurrection?

### **3.1.3 Essenes**

Before the Dead Sea Scrolls were found, we already knew something about an ascetic sect which flourished in Palestine before the Jewish War of 66-70. This was the sect of the Essenes, described by three ancient authors: the naturalist

Pliny the Elder and the Jewish Hellenists Philo and Josephus. Their accounts have to be taken with a few grains of salt, since they were not members of the Essene community, and since they admired it and wanted to describe it in terms which would make their readers admire it too. Probably this explains why insist that there was no marriage among the Essenes. Asceticism of this kind was popular in the Graeco-Roman world. But the rest of what they say corresponds rather closely with what we know about the Dead Sea community and its satellites.

First of all, Pliny tells us just where most of the Essenes were to be found. He says (*N. H.* 5, 15, 4) that they lived west of the Dead Sea at a point where there is nothing to fear from the sea's exhalations. Surely this suggests a point where the sea would be purified by the fresh water flowing in from the Jordan River -- and this is just where Qumran is. Then he tells us what lies to the south of the community. First comes En Geddi (which is actually about sixteen miles south of Qumran); then comes Masada (and this is about ten miles farther on). It seems obvious, and certain, that Pliny is aware that the Essenes were located just where the Qumran community was located; and therefore the Dead Sea people were Essenes.

The places where the Essenes lived are described differently by Philo and Josephus. Philo says once that they lived not in cities but in villages and once that they lived in cities and in villages. Josephus says they lived in various cities. This confusing situation is cleared up by the Zadokite document, which gives one set of rules for those who live in cities, another for those who live in camps. The document's camps are presumably the villages of Philo. The centre of Essene life, then, was at Qumran, but there were other Essenes who observed special rules and lived in cities elsewhere. This variety corresponds in part with what Josephus tells us about two kinds of Essenes. There were those who did not marry but brought up the children of others -- thus probably maintaining a kind of orphan asylum as in some mediaeval monasteries. Others did marry and have children. It is not quite clear what the situation at Qumran itself was, since in its burying ground the remains of a few women have been found.

In order to become a member of the community, Josephus says, a 'postulant' had to undergo a year's probation. He was given a shovel for sanitary purposes, a girdle, and a white garment which he wore at meetings of the group. He could not, however, take part in the daily baths of the community or in its noonday meal. Since strangers were admitted to the evening meal, he could participate in this.

At the end of the year he could become a 'candidate'. For two years more he took part in the daily baths, wearing the white garment and entering the water at eleven in the morning. Before sunrise and after sunset he shared in the common prayers; mornings and afternoons were spent in field work or animal husbandry or bee-keeping or work at a craft. He owed strict obedience to the elders of the community and had already turned over his property to the overseer (*epimelitis*), though presumably he could recover it if he was finally not approved.

After these three years he was ready for initiation. He took solemn oaths that he would observe reverence towards God and justice towards men. He would hate

the wicked and help the righteous. He would continue to obey the authorities of the group. If he should become one of the authorities, he would not use his authority for self-aggrandizement. He would love the truth and rebuke liars. He would not conceal his property or his actions. Finally, he would never reveal the teachings of the group to others. He would keep sacred the books of the sect and the secret names of the angels.

All this is to be found almost exactly paralleled in the Dead Sea Manual of Discipline. 'Everyone who wishes to join the community must pledge himself to respect God and man; to live according to the communal rule; . .

. to love all that God has chosen and to hate all that he has rejected; . . . to act truthfully and righteously; . . . to love all the children of light . . . and to hate all the children of darkness.' Such persons must bring their property into the community of God. They are to take oaths to obey their superiors and to observe the law as the community interprets it. They are to spend a year before being admitted to the state of purity, that is, before admission to the baths. Then they are to spend another year of apprenticeship while they work for the community, and only after that year can they be admitted to the common meal. According to Josephus the second period lasted two years; no doubt it was found that one year was not quite long enough a time. We do not know so much about the baths and the common meals from documents, but the remains of the monastery make it plain that the Qumran community did have a common dining hall and an elaborate water supply for purifications. Finally, we know that its members valued the holy books so much that they hid them away in jars, and that in these books there was a great concern for the names of the angels (especially in Enoch).

We must therefore regard the Dead Sea community as an Essene community. It was one of the most important forces in the religious life of Palestine in the first centuries BC. and AD. Josephus treats the Essenes as being just as significant as either Pharisees or Sadducees. We get some light on their numerical importance from a couple of ancient statistics. Josephus tells us that there were 6,000 Pharisees in all, and Philo tells us that there were 4,000 Essenes. Of course not all these Essenes lived at Qumran. As far as archaeologists can tell, there was room for not more than two hundred of them there. But there were other Essenes, a third order, so to speak, who lived in the cities and villages of Palestine.

As for the government of the community, Josephus tells us that the most important disciplinary questions had to be settled by a court of at least one hundred members; this is the general council of the Manual of Discipline. According to the Manual, the most severe penalties involved removal from the common meal or expulsion from the community; similarly Josephus says that bad Essenes had no food but had to eat grass. Less important offences resulted in cutting down rations. He also tells us that blasphemy was punished by death, and while in the Manual of Discipline the penalty is excommunication, in the Zadokite Document it is also death.

### **3.1.4 The Scribes**



The scribes were a group of professional lawyers. According to tradition, the group originated with Ezra, during the life of Xerxes. They grew up copying the Old Testament laws and as such they became familiar with the text of the law and added the functions of interpretation of the law. By the time of Jesus they have grown to the point that they deliver judicial pronouncements on cases brought to them. They mostly belonged to the Pharisee sect, though not all Pharisees were scribes. This is why the New Testament sometimes refers to them with the phrase “the scribe of the Pharisees”.

### **3.1.5 The Temple**

When Jerusalem fell in AD 70, the event which most impressed the Jewish people was not the sack of the city, but the destruction of the Temple by fire. The Temple, whose renovation (still uncompleted as at that time) had been undertaken by Herod in BC. 20, was the focal point of the Jewish religion. Jerusalem was the ‘city of the great king’ (Matt. 5:35) because God’s house was there. In the Temple were conducted the daily sacrifices of animals and produce; the most important of these sacrifices were the people’s burnt offering. At these ceremonies lamps were lighted and music, both choral and instrumental, was performed. Additional offerings were made on the Sabbath and at the great festivals.

The Temple was the centre of the rites of the religious year, which began with the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) on the 10th of the month Tishri (September-October). Burnt offerings were sacrificed and the scapegoat was sent away, bearing Israel’s sins upon it (Lev. 16:10). The whole fast which followed expressed God’s forgiveness of his people. They confessed their sins and he forgave them.

The cycle of festivals began with the feast of Tabernacles which covers the 15th to the 22nd of Tishri. During this festival male Israelites live in booths or ‘tabernacles,’ in memory of the booths in which they dwelt after the Exodus (Lev. 23:39-43). Josephus calls it the holiest and greatest of the feasts (*Ant.* 8, 100). The feast is mentioned in John 7:2, and the story of the Transfiguration (Mark 9:2-8) seems to be told in relation to it. Hannukah follows the Tabernacles and it holds on the 25th of Kislev (December), when the Maccabaeans rededicated the temple was commemorated by the lighting of lamps. It was also called ‘renewal’ (John 10:22) or ‘lights’ (Josephus, *Antiq.* 12, 235). Other rites which accompanied it resembled those of Tabernacles (II Macc. 1:9; 10:6).

On the 15th of Adar (which would be somewhere between February and March), was celebrated the feast of Purim which commemorates the salvation of the Jews from the hands of Haman. It is based on the story of the book of Esther.

Purim is followed by the Passover which is celebrated in the week beginning with the 5th of Nisan (also somewhere between March and April) to commemorate the Exodus from Egypt. Each Israelite family in Jerusalem consumed a roast lamb, killed by the priests in the temple and then followed a week in which only unleavened bread was eaten. Seven weeks after Passover came the feast of weeks or, from the Greek word for ‘fifty’, Pentecost (Lev. 23:15-21). In rabbinic times this festival was regarded as commemorating the giving of the law on Sinai.

The temple and its services expressed the faith of Israel in the one God, and the oneness of the temple was often regarded as analogous to the oneness of God himself (for a Christian parallel cf. Eph. 4:4-6). The sacrifices not only expressed the faith but also taught it by means of dramatic action. Further instruction in the content and meaning of the revealed law was necessary, however, and this was provided by means of an institution developed by the Pharisees.

### **3.1.6 The Synagogue**

The principal institution of Pharisaism was the synagogue. The term synagogue is derived from the Greek word for 'assembly' which was used in the Septuagint to refer to the 'congregation' of Israel'. The congregation of Israel in itself refers both to the group involved, consisting of a minimum of ten adult males, and to the building in which it met. The chief purpose of the synagogue was the Sabbath service, consisting of the Shema ('Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one God,' Deut. 6:4-5), the eighteen benedictions, and the benediction of Numbers 6:23- 6. Individuals recited psalms; then came the reading of a brief portion of the Old Testament in Hebrew, followed by a *targum* or periphrastic translation into Aramaic or Greek, and a sermon on the lesson for the day. The lesson was apparently fixed by a carefully devised lectionary system. Anyone appointed by the 'head of the synagogue' could deliver the sermon. Commenting on the function of the synagogue, Bruce (1949) has this to say:

The Persian period also saw the rise of the synagogue, an institution which was to play a most important part in Judaism in later centuries. The primary purpose of the synagogue was for the reading and exposition of the Law. It met a very real need among the Jews of the dispersion, who lived at a far distance from the Temple at Jerusalem, but it was established throughout Palestine as well. Thanks to the synagogue, Jewish religious life did not cease when the Temple fell in A.D. 70, but survived in a more durable form than was possible under a régime of obsolete sacrifices.

During the week the synagogue was used as a school in which scribes instructed young people in scripture and its exegesis. In these circumstances they learned the two principal exegetical methods, *halacha* and *haggada*. Halachic exegesis involved the interpretation of the law in relation to practical obligations; haggadic exegesis was used for deriving theological and mythological ideas from the Old Testament.

## **3.2 The Greco-Roman Religious Background**

Religion in the Greco-Roman period can be classified into three: the traditional pantheon of deities, the mystery religions and the state religion or emperor worship.

### **3.2.1 The Greco-Roman Pantheon**

Before the coming of the Romans, the Greek polytheistic religion had taken over the non-Jewish world and by the time the Romans were taking over, they simply

took over the Greek pantheon and supplied the gods with Roman names. This is why some of the gods and goddesses have dual names: for example, the chief god or the god of heaven was called Jupiter, the Roman name, and also Zeus, the Greek name. These gods and goddesses were worshipped as in many other cultural religion.

Everett Ferguson (1993) notes that the most deeply ingrained religious beliefs and practice in both Greece and Rome were associated with the traditional civic cult. The state both funded and profited by these cults. Each city had its patron deity. For example, Ephesus was associated with Artemis, the goddess of nature and of childbirth. The statue of Artemis stood in a magnificent temple, four times as large as the Parthenon in Athens. Deities such as Artemis were honored with festivals, prayers, and sacrifices. Annual festivals included banquets, entertainment, sacrifices, processions, athletic contests, and the performance of mystery rites. Prayers included invocation, praise, and petition with the goal of receiving the favor of the goddess. Sacrifices were offered for praise, thanksgiving, or supplication (Wade, 1997).

### **3.2.2 The Mystery Religions**

Apart from the prevalent cultural religions that were common among the Greco-Romans, there were also the mystery religions. Though mostly of Eastern origin, the mystery religions were able to fulfill the people's desire for a personal faith that would bring them into close contact with the deity. The mystery religions included the Eleusian mysteries, the cult of Cybele (who is also called Isis or Osiris) and Mithraism. Most of these mystery religions centered on a god who was said to have died and resurrected. Those who have been initiated into the religion were also taught the way to immortality. According to the Microsoft Encarta Premium (2008), underlying some mystery religions was a fertility ritual, in which a deity undergoes death and resurrection, and the initiates feed on the flesh and blood to attain communion with the divine and ensure their own life beyond the grave. The influence of mystery religions on early Christianity was considerable.

### **3.2.3 Emperor Worship**

As the Roman Empire grew, the emperor came to be seen and accorded superhuman honours with the aim of centralizing the allegiance of the people in him. The practice began with Emperor Augustus, who has deified in his lifetime by the Greeks and at death by the Romans (Microsoft Encarta Premium, 2008). It has to be noted however, that until the time of Emperor Domitian, no emperor actually enforced the people to worship him as god. The refusal of Christians to worship the emperor led to a violent persecution of the Christians, especially, in the Asian province of the Roman Empire.

## **3.3 The Philosophical Background**

As you would have learnt in other course like Introduction to Philosophy, philosophy as a discipline started among the Greeks and actually held sway even unto the contemporary world.

### **3.3.1 Platonism**

Platonism is the philosophy of Plato, from whom the name is derived. Plato was the great Athenian philosopher who was Socrates friend and pupil. He taught that the world consisted of an infinite number of particular things which were imperfect copies of the real one. For example, he said there are many kinds of chair but none of them is the ideal chair of which those wooden chairs were copies. This teaching inevitably led to the concept of dualism. It saw this material world as a shadow of the real world which he said is the world of ideas. According to Plato, the ideas were organized into a system at the head of which is God. He concludes that man seeks to escape this unreal world to the real one through reflection, meditation and asceticism.

All these teachings have similarities in the Christian doctrine and thus pose a great challenge to the early church and even still a challenge to date. It would interest you to note that Platonism has changed mildly in two major phases to become what is known as middle Platonism and Neoplatonism.

### **Middle Platonism**

Middle Platonism came into existence around the 90 BC when Antiochus of Ascalon rejected skepticism and then fused Platonism with Peripatetic and Stoic teachings. In Middle Platonism, the Platonic Forms were not transcendent but immanent to rational minds, and the physical world was a living, en-souled being, the World-Soul. This position was later incorporated into Pythagoreanism and Jewish philosophy as led by Philo of Alexandria.

### **Neo-Platonism**

Plotinus, in the third century fused Middle Platonism with oriental mysticism and arrived at what is today called Neo-Platonism. Its central teaching was the existence of the One or the Good who is the source of all things. The One generated from itself, called the nous. It arrived at the conclusion that is a whole endowed with life and soul.

### **3.3.2 Gnosticism**

The Catholic Encyclopedia has a very rich article on Gnosticism and it would be very helpful if you can use it. Gnosticism can be defined simply as the doctrine of salvation by knowledge based on the etymology of the word in the Greek language. This definition however is limited in that it gives only one but the most predominant characteristic of the Gnostic thought system. The Catholic Encyclopedia however defined Gnosticism as follows:

A collective name for a large number of greatly-varying and pantheistic-idealistic sects, which flourished from some time

before the Christian era down to the fifth century, and which, while borrowing the phraseology and some of the tenets of the chief religions of the day, and especially of Christianity, held matter to be a deterioration of spirit, and the whole universe a depravation of the Deity, and taught the ultimate end of all being to be the overcoming of the grossness of matter and the return to the Parent-Spirit, which return they held to be inaugurated and facilitated by the appearance of some God-sent Saviour.

As far as this definition is concerned, it is true that the teachings of Gnosticism are very fluid. For example, there are two major contradictory conclusions that come out from the Gnostics: there were those on the one hand who became ascetic believing that since the body (as represented by matter) was evil, it has to be brought under control by severe punishment. On the other hand, there were those who became sensuous, believing that if the body was unreal and temporal, its acts were inconsequential. It concludes therefore that full gratification of the desires of the body has no effect on the ultimate salvation of the spirit. Gnosticism contends seriously with Christianity since it denies the Deity of Christ. Most scholars agree that Paul condemned Gnosticism in Colossians 8:2 and 21.

### **3.3.3 Epicureanism**

Epicureanism was a philosophical system named after its founder; a philosopher called Epicurus. The system of philosophy was founded around 307 BC. Epicurus was an atomic materialist who taught that the world began in a shower of atoms some of which by chance collided with others and the ensuing collision produced other collisions until the ensuing movement produced the universe. This thus logically led him to a general attack on superstition and divine intervention. Because according to his theory of atomic collusion, the world is a world of chance and there could not be any purpose or design or any final or absolute good.

Epicurus believed that the greatest good was to seek modest pleasures in order to attain a state of tranquility and freedom from fear as well as absence of bodily pain through knowledge of the workings of the world and the limits of one's desires. The combination of these two states is supposed to constitute happiness in its highest form. Although Epicureanism is a form of hedonism because it declares pleasure as the sole intrinsic good, its conception of absence of pain as the greatest pleasure and its advocacy of a simple life make it different from "hedonism" as it is commonly understood.

In the Epicurean view, the highest pleasure, which is, tranquility and freedom from fear was obtained by knowledge, friendship and living a virtuous and temperate life. He lauded the enjoyment of simple pleasures, by which he meant abstaining from bodily desires, such as sex and appetites, verging on asceticism. He argued that when eating, one should not eat too richly, for it could lead to dissatisfaction later, such as the grim realization that one could not afford such delicacies in the future. Likewise, sex could lead to increased lust and dissatisfaction with the sexual partner. Epicurus did not articulate a broad system of social morality that has survived.

Epicureanism was entirely anti-God or anti-religion. It did not speak of gods because as far as it was concerned, the gods were confined to the bliss of heaven and thus they are not interested in the affairs of man. It brushed aside all concepts of sin and final judgment and also rejected immortality.

### 3.3.3 Stoicism

Stoicism was one of the most important and influential traditions in the philosophy of the Hellenistic world. It claimed the adherence of a large portion of the educated persons in the Graeco-Roman world. It had considerable influence on the development of early Christianity.

It is one of the ironies of history that Alexander, once a student of Aristotle, was in large part responsible for undermining the Hellenic political climate to which the classical Greek thought of Plato and Aristotle was inextricably tied. As the free city-state of Hellenic Greece gave way to the empire of the Hellenistic world, the sharp distinction between Greek and barbarian was replaced by the more cosmopolitan view reflective of Stoicism. Interest shifted from the speculative systems of classical Greece to a concern for the individual's well-being in the more complex cultural environment of the Hellenistic period. Stoicism borrowed many of its cosmological and metaphysical ideas from earlier, pre-Socratic philosophers.

Its founder, Zeno, discussed philosophical ideas at the agora in the *Stoa Poikile* (Painted Colonnade), or porch and thus his followers came to be called Stoics or literally, "philosophers of the porch". Zeno was impressed with the thought and character of Socrates. Interpreting the Socratic model from the point of view of the Cynics, Antisthenes, Diogenes, and Crates of Thebes, of whom Zeno was for a time a disciple. Zeno admired most in Socrates his strength of character and independence of external circumstances. From Zeno's point of view, virtue resided not in external fortune, wealth, honor, and the like, but in self-sufficiency and a kind of rational ordering of intention.

The Stoics were determinists, even fatalists, holding that whatever happens happens necessarily. Not only is the world such that all events are determined by prior events, but the universe is a perfect, rational whole. For all their interests in logic and speculative philosophy, the primary focus of Stoicism is practical and ethical.

To avoid unhappiness, frustration and disappointment Stoics teach that two things are necessary: the control those things that lies within our power (namely our beliefs, judgments, desires, and attitudes) and indifference or apathy to those things which are not within our power (namely, things external to us).

Toward those unfortunate things that are not within our power which we cannot avoid (for example, death and the actions and opinions of others) the proper attitude is one of apathy. This is the consoling feature of Stoic fatalism. It is absurd to become distraught over externals for the same reason that it is absurd to become distressed over the past; both are beyond our power. The Stoic is simply adopting toward all things the only logical attitude appropriate to the past--indifference.

## 4.0 Conclusion

Religion and philosophy played key roles in the Greco-Roman society of Paul and this went a long way to affect the personality growth of Paul. As a Jew, Paul was used to all the various religious sects of the Jews and was himself a Pharisee. The Pharisees and the Sadducees were the key religious sects among the Jews while the Essenes were a sect that was in the minority and withdrawn from the main society. The Temple and the synagogues were the major religious institutions of the day.

Philosophy was the Greek heritage to the Greco-Roman world and also affected Christianity. In fact, philosophical movements such as Platonism in all its forms and Stoicism as well as Epicureanism were what early Christianity had to contend with.

## 5.0 Summary

The following were the major points you have learnt in this unit:

- The Pharisees originated from the group known as the Hasidim that came into operation in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes.
- The Pharisees resisted all Greek or other foreign influences that threatened to undermine Judaism.
- The Sadducees were religious aristocrats within which the High Priest and other priests found their membership.
- The Essenes were an ascetic group among the Jews that lived in monastic communities by the Dead Sea.
- Because religion and philosophy played key roles in the Greco-Roman society, they both affected the personality growth of Paul.
- The Scribes developed from the tradition of Ezra because after being used to the scriptures due to the tradition of copying, they became specialists in the interpretation of the Law

## Self-Assessment Exercise

Discuss the various religious groups among the Jews.

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## **UNIT 4:      The Epistle: An Introduction**

### **Content**

- 1.0    Introduction
- 2.0    Intended Learning Outcomes
- 3.0    Main Content
  - 3.1    Defining the Epistle
  - 3.2    Form and Structure of the Hellenistic Epistle
  - 3.3    The Forms of Pauline Epistles
  - 3.4    Other Literary Traditions in Pauline Epistles
- 4.0    Conclusion
- 5.0    Summary
- 6.0    References/Further Readings

### **1.0    Introduction**

In the previous units, that is, Unit One through Three, you have studied the general situation in the Pauline world, ranging from politics to the religious terrain. This would have undoubtedly prepare you for some of the major issues you would come across when you begin to examine the epistles of Paul. It would also make you understand some undercurrents in his writings. In this unit, you would be exposed to the general structure of the epistle in the Hellenistic world and how Paul made use of these in constructing an epistle that is distinctively Christian.



## **2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Define an epistle
- List the parts of an Hellenistic epistle
- Identify Pauline emendation of the parts of an epistle

## **3.0 Main Content**

### **3.1 Defining the Epistle**

*Epistole* is the Greek word from where the English word, 'epistle' is derived. Walls (1962) defines epistle as a written communication between persons apart, whether personal and private or official. O' Brien (1993) however defines epistle as referring originally to an oral communication sent by a messenger. By this, O'Brien distinguishes between an oral and a written communication, indicating that a written communication would be a letter while an oral communication would be an epistle.

A letter was a broad designation for different types of documents in the ancient world, and could include a great variety of commercial, governmental and legal documents as well as political and military reports, along with other sorts of correspondence, especially of a personal kind (O' Brien, 1993).

According to Walls (1962), Deissman was the first to make this distinction between a letter and an epistle. Walls however concluded that these distinctions cannot be sharply maintained.

### **3.2 Form and Structure of Ancient Epistles**

A lot of studies on the preserved ancient documents have shown that the Greco-Roman and Jewish letter writing followed very regular conventions. In other words, ancient letters had a certain form. This is very much like the conventional letter-writing style of the modern day. It has to be noted however that these forms are not sacrosanct as they could be altered. Studies have shown that there were four general elements of ancient Greco-Roman letters, namely:

- opening salutation which will contain the writer's name, the recipient's name, and a greeting
- a prayer, blessing, or thanksgiving
- the body of the letter (what the sender wanted to say that occasioned the letter), and
- final greeting and farewell

As we have said earlier, the letters do not have to follow the forms rigidly; there are variations which would be considered very important. On the importance of these variations, Bratcher (2010) has this to say:

There can be various modifications of the elements according to the purposes of the writer. However, if there is a significant movement away from the common structure, we might need to ask the significance of the alteration. It is possible that the alteration of a form may be a significant clue to the message.

We would examine some of these alterations when we come to study the Pauline innovations on these ancient forms.

### **3.3 The Forms of Pauline Epistles**

As we have said above, each part of the ancient letters was determined by the conventional style which in the Hellenistic world included an opening, the body and the closing or conclusion. It was this conventional style that Paul adopted for his epistles. As also indicated above, Paul did not all follow the stereotype but occasions determines what part to omit or include. This would be examined in details as we zero in on each of the Pauline letters. A normal letter form of Paul would however have the following sections:

#### **Opening**

In the opening of most of his letters, Paul follows the conventional Hellenistic style which indicates the writer (or writers) and the recipients, which is followed by greetings. However, this conventional style would usually be extended to point to the specific purposes of the epistle. As O' Brien (1993) indicates, the identification of the writer along with the co-worker and the recipient is usually followed by a description of both parties in terms of their standing in relation to God in Christ. Let us take the opening of the first epistle to the Corinthians as an example. The opening in this epistle would be found in 1 Corinthians 1:1-3:

1 Corinthians 1:1 Paul, called *as* an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,

1 Corinthians 1:2 To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their *Lord* and ours:

1 Corinthians 1:3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

In verse one above, Paul described himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ (which is his position in Christ) and identified Sosthenes, his co-worker as at the time the epistle was written, as the brother, which identifies as a fellow Christian as Paul and the recipients of the letter. In verse two, the recipient is identified as 'the church of God at Corinth' and they are described as 'sanctified ones' and 'saints by calling'. In place of the Hellenistic greeting, Paul would use 'grace and peace' as in the third verse above. It is important to note that the later part of verse two is an identification of the relationship of both the Corinthians on the one hand and Paul and Sosthenes on the other hand within the umbrella of the Church.

#### **Introductory Thanksgiving or Blessing**

Paul, here also follows the conventional Hellenistic style wherein intimate letters begin with a thanksgiving to the gods for personal benefits received. Thus, immediately after the opening, Paul would express gratitude to God for what he has done in the lives of the ‘saints’.

Paul’s style here reveals two basic structures. The first one usually has seven basic elements which will begin with thanksgiving and conclude with a *hina* clause (or any of its equivalents). In using this style, the apostle would spell out the content of his intercession for the readers. Examples can be found in Colossians 1:3 -14; 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3:13 and Ephesians 1:15-19. The second type was simpler in form. It usually commences with the giving of thanks and concludes with a *hoti* clause in which the reason for the gratitude is given. A good example is found in 1 Corinthians 1:4-9.

It is also important to note that though the structure of Paul’s thanksgiving was Hellenistic, the contents are usually influenced by the Old Testament and Jewish thought. O’Brien (1993) indicates that these statements of thanksgiving usually have an epistolary function in that they introduce and present the main theme in the letters, thus setting the tone and atmosphere. Some also have a didactic function by setting forth important theological themes. At times the apostle would use a typical Old Testament and Jewish prayer form as in 2 Corinthians 1:3-4.

### **The Body of the Epistle**

It is within the body of the letter that Paul’s ingenuity comes up most because the different epistolary situations would be reflected, and the writer is at freedom to abandon the epistolary structure. Rigorous studies have revealed that the body of Paul’s letters can be determined through the use of the *parakaleo* sentences (such as “I urge you, my brothers”) as in 1 Corinthians 1:10; the disclosure formula (such as “I want you to know”) as in Romans 1:13 and the expression of astonishment in Galatians 1:6.

Within the body of the epistles however are various clusters of epistolary formulas that usually mark significant breaks or turning points in the letter (Mullins, 1972). Usually, when Paul is changing the subject matter at hand, he uses a formula to indicate that there is a change. You will notice this most in 1 Corinthians. The conclusion of the body however is usually signaled by eschatological statements as in Romans 11:25-36 or his own travelling ministry as in Colossians 4:10-17.

### **The Closing**

At the closing again, Paul turn to the Hellenistic style. However instead of using the traditional health wish or the Greek word for farewell, Paul would use a benediction or doxology. Common to Paul in the closing are references to his writing or his amanuensis and at times the phrase ‘a holy kiss’.

## **3.4 Other Literary Traditions in Pauline Epistles**

Paul's literary creativity is also attested to by the way he used other literary traditions in his epistles. The two notable ones are the use of the liturgical forms and the use of the Greco-Roman rhetoric which would be examined here briefly.

### **The Use of Liturgical Forms**

It has been generally accepted that because most of Paul's epistles were intended to be read aloud to the congregations, the use of liturgical forms are most appropriate. The following are classed as liturgical forms: the grace benedictions, the blessings, the doxologies, the hymns and the confessional statements.

### **The Greco-Roman Rhetoric**

Though Paul's letters are written, they are, however similar to oral speeches. This has made scholars to call for a rhetorical analysis of his arguments. O' Brien (1993) notes that each type of speech consists of four elements:

- a. The Exordium, that is, the introduction
- b. The Narratio, that is, the statement of facts
- c. The Probatio, that is, the argument
- d. The Peroratio, that is, the conclusion

In Greco -Roman rhetoric, the introduction and the conclusion were supposed to influence the audience and it concludes by recapitulating the arguments and then makes an appeal. For Aune (1987), Paul's letters consists of three elements: the conciliatory in which he commends the readers for their past performance; the middle segment which consists of the advice and the final section is the paraenesis. Basing his analysis on the epistle to the Galatians, Longenecker (1990) said that:

Paul seemed to have availed himself almost unconsciously of the rhetorical forms at hand, fitting them out with such Jewish theological motifs and exegetical methods as would be particularly significant in countering what the Judaizers were telling his converts.

## **4.0 Conclusion**

In this unit, you have learnt that the word 'epistle' is derived from the Greek word '*epistole*' which is used to describe a written communication between persons that are separated in space. It was the form of this Greco-Roman epistle that Paul used as the structure of his epistles. However, he did not just follow this structure mechanically; he adjusted it to suit his purposes as the occasion demands. Apart from the Greco-Roman structure, Paul also made use of some liturgical forms and the Greco-Roman rhetoric.

## **5.0 Summary**

The following are the major points you have learnt in this unit:

- The epistle is a written communication between persons apart, whether personal and private or official.
- Pauline epistles are structured along the lines of the ancient Greco-Roman letters with modifications to suit his purposes.
- Paul also made use of liturgical forms like the grace benedictions, blessings, doxologies, hymns and confessional statements.
- The Greco-Roman rhetoric also featured in some Pauline epistles.

### **Self-Assessment Exercises**

Discuss the structure of the Greco-Roman epistles using 1 Corinthians as an example.

### **6.0 References/Further Readings**

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## **Module 2 The Missionary Epistles**

Unit 1: The Thessalonian Correspondences  
 Unit 2: Epistle to the Galatians  
 Unit 3: The Corinthian Correspondences  
 Unit 4: Epistle to the Romans

### **Unit 1: The Thessalonian Correspondences**

#### **Content**

1.0 Introduction  
 2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes  
 3.0 Main Content

3.1	The City called Thessalonica
3.2	Paul's Ministry in Thessalonica
3.3	Authorship and date of the Epistles
3.4	Occasion for the Epistles
3.5	Message and Theology of the Epistles
4.0	Conclusion
5.0	Summary
6.0	References/Further Readings

## **1.0 Introduction**

You are welcomed to the second module of this course. The first module has dealt mainly with the situation of the Palestinian world before and during the time of Paul, from the political to the religious and the philosophical and the social. It concluded with a general introduction to the epistles and traced the structure of the Pauline epistles. In this Module, we would begin to examine the epistles of Paul proper by beginning with the missionary epistles. In this unit, which is the first unit of this module, we would begin with the epistles to the Thessalonians.

## **2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Locate the strategic position of Thessalonica in the Roman Province.
- Evaluate the arguments for and against Pauline authorship of the epistles.
- Discuss the issues surrounding the dating of the epistles.
- Pinpoint the messages raised in the epistles.
- Identify the major theological themes of the epistles

## **3.0 Main Content**

### **3.1 The City called Thessalonica**

Thessalonica was the largest and most important city of Macedonia. It was the capital of one of the four Roman districts of Macedonia, and was ruled by a praetor. It was thus the seat of Roman administration. It was named after Thessalonica, the wife of Cassander, who built the city. She was so called by her father, Philip, because he first heard of her birth on the day of his gaining a victory over the Thessalians. The Egnatian Way was built through the city and walls were built around the city. Because of its location, Thessalonica has remained an important city throughout the Christian era.

In Paul's day, Thessalonica had about 200,000 people with an important Jewish community and many Gentile converts. The ease with which the Jews at Thessalonica could influence the civil authorities reveals their power against Paul and Silas. The incident of their imprisonment and deliverance suggests that the

politarchs were bent on justice and legal protection for Paul and his companions, for the inability of free cities to keep public order always raised the threat of Roman interference.

It is important to note that the Greek word translated ‘city authorities’ in Acts 17:6 is the Greek word ‘politarchs’ . This word was a relatively unknown word but was later confirmed by an archaeological discovery at Thessalonica where the word ‘politarchs’ was found on an arch there. This discovery has gone a long way to confirm the historical accuracy of Luke the writer of the book of Acts and the truth of the biblical account concerning Apostle Paul.

### **3.2 Paul’s Ministry in Thessalonica**

Paul’s ministry to the city of Thessalonica took place, according to the book of Acts, during the second missionary journey. Paul and Silas left Philippi for Thessalonica. He might have been attracted there by the presence of a Jewish synagogue in the city. On getting to the city, Paul began to preach the gospel to the Jews and the proselytes. This he did for three successive Sabbaths, explaining the scriptures in the synagogue. The fact that Paul stayed more than these three weeks of synagogue teaching is clear in that a large number of proselytes and Hellenes were converted through Paul’s ministry. This would be corroborated by the fact that Paul was said to have toiled day and night as a tentmaker so as not to burden his converts and the book of Philippians asserted that the church at Philippi sent aids to Paul twice at Thessalonica (Philippians 4:16).

The success of Paul among the proselytes and the Hellenes must have aroused the envy of the Jews hence; they gathered together a mob of idlers from the agora and set the whole city in tumult. They dragged Jason, Paul’s host to the tribunal of the politarchs and charged him with harbouring traitors. That night the brethren made good the escape of their teacher to Berea. The Jews of Thessalonica followed Paul to Berea and stirred up the mob against him there also. He left Silas and Timothy to complete his work and went to Athens (Acts 17:1-15).

When Paul arrived later in Corinth (Acts 18) he wrote the letter to the troubled Thessalonian Christians, who had themselves become the objects of persecution since Paul’s departure (1 Thessalonians 2:14) . In light of Paul’s hope of a personal visit (1 Thessalonians 2:17, 18), the Apostle expresses his thanks to God for the news of the firm stand of the believers, such news having been brought by Timothy (1 Thessalonians 3:6-10). Paul wrote First Thessalonians from Corinth around 49 or 50 A.D. on his second missionary Journey.

### **3.3 Authorship and Authenticity of the Epistles**

The epistle to the Thessalonians is regarded as one of the authentic epistles of Paul. In this section, we would examine the evidences for Pauline authorship of the two epistles.

#### **The First Epistle to the Thessalonians**

##### **External Evidence**

In Marcion's canon, First Thessalonians was listed among the collections of Paul, despite his critical attitude. It is also listed in the Muratorian canon. Apart from these two canons, the following church fathers listed it as Pauline work: Irenaeus quoted the work by name, Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian recognized it as Pauline. Guthrie (1995) notes that there are strong indications to believe that Ignatius cited 1 Thessalonians 2:4. Some early manuscripts, Old Latin and Old Syriac versions had the book as part of the books of the New Testament.

### **Internal Evidence**

Hobbs (1971) said that the internal evidence for Pauline authorship of First Thessalonians is equally strong because:

The church organization is simple, which argues for an early date. The eschatology reflects a time within the apostle's life. The language and thought are Pauline. The situation in Thessalonica is one to be expected from Acts 17.

These evidences notwithstanding Hobbs (1971) noted that attempts by some scholars to harmonize the epistle with the Lukan account of the establishment of the church had brought some problems to the fore. It is because of this that it has been argued that the relationship of the writer to the Thessalonians demand more than a time frame of three Sabbaths that was indicated in Acts 17:2. Another problem is the movement of Silas and Timothy. Going by First Thessalonians 3, Timothy was with Paul in Athens while Acts 18:5 indicates that they rejoined Paul at Corinth.

Despite the disturbing nature of the problems raised, Morris (1965) quoting Clogg in his book, *Introduction to the New Testament* says that, "discrepancies of this nature prove little except that the authors of Acts and of 1 Thessalonians wrote independently of each other" (p. 21). Therefore, one can conclude that "the weight of evidence strongly favors the Pauline authorship of the epistle" (Hobbs, 1971).

## **II Thessalonians**

### **External Evidence**

The strongest external evidence in favour of the authenticity of I Thessalonians is II Thessalonians. This is because it is the very earliest document that clearly presupposes I Thessalonians to have been written by Paul. In its content and style, it is clear that II Thessalonians presupposes I Thessalonians.

#### *Manuscripts*

The evidence of manuscripts alone is such as to set the authenticity of this letter beyond all doubt. It is in the Greek text of the Codex Sinaiticus (fourth century), Codex Vaticanus (fourth century) and Codex Alexandrinus (fifth century). It is in the Old Latin and Syriac Versions. It is important to note that the Syriac version traces its authenticity down to the middle of the second century.

#### *The Apostolic Fathers*



The Apostolic Fathers give evidence of very early use of the Epistle as Sacred Scripture. St. Ignatius of Antioch probably uses the “pray without ceasing,” of I Thessalonians and undoubtedly had in mind I Thess., ii, 4, when writing to the Romans. However, because St. Ignatius, as the other Apostolic Fathers, cites from memory, without the exactness of the later Fathers and without ever mentioning the name of the sacred writer quoted, it is easy to doubt their quotations.

Polycarp of Smyrna had a complete collection thereof before him and veritably lived therein. In the “Pastor of Hermas”, we find the phrase of I Thess. 5:13, “Be at peace among yourselves” several times, used almost as it occurs in the Alexandrian and Vatican Codices.

The Apologetic Fathers are clear and to the point. St Irenaeus cites 1 Thess. 5:23, expressly attributing the words to the Apostle's First Epistle to the Thessalonians and 1 Thess. 5:3 as the saying of the Apostle. Tertullian quotes at length passages from each of the five chapters of 1 Thessalonians to prove his thesis of the resurrection of the body and uses the Epistle against Marcion. Clement of Alexandria very often cites this brief letter. So strong is the external evidence in favour of the authenticity of 1 Thessalonians as to convince all scholars.

### **Internal Evidence**

In I Thessalonians, all the main Pauline doctrines are taught. These include the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ; Christ's Divinity and Sonship; the resurrection of our bodies; the mediatorship of Christ; the call of the nations to the Kingdom of Christ, which is the Church and sanctification by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (4:8). The plain and direct style, the writer's affectionate concern for his spiritual children, his impatience of Judaizers, the preponderance of personal over doctrinal statements, the frank and honest self-revelation of the writer are all distinctly Pauline and argue strongly for the authenticity of this letter.

Baur was the first to wave aside recklessly all external evidence and seriously to attack the authenticity of 1 Thessalonians from internal evidence. He was followed by Nowack, Volkmar, and Van der Vries.

The reasons which propel Baur and his followers are trivial. They argue that the epistle is a clumsy forgery. The author has worked up his story from the book of Acts. Paul could not have written 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16. It is far-fetched to compare the woes inflicted by the Jews upon the Church of Thessalonica with the ills they wrought upon the Church of Judea. They also argue that that it is un-Pauline to set Jewish Christians up as an example to Gentile converts. However, these are purely subjective objections. Apostle Paul was too broadminded to be tied down to such narrow ideas.

### **The Second Epistle to the Thessalonians**

#### **Authorship and Authenticity**

Contemporary scholarship has begun to seriously doubt Pauline authorship of 2 Thessalonians. Their position is best expressed by Best (1972):

... if we only possessed 2 Thessalonians few scholars would doubt that Paul wrote it; but when 2 Thessalonians is put alongside 1 Thessalonians then doubts appear. There is a great similarity between the two; this is not only one of words, small phrases and concepts but extends to the total structure of the two letters which is in addition different from what is taken to be the standard Pauline form. At the same time the second letter is alleged to be less intimate and personal in tone than the first, and in some of its teaching, particularly in relation to eschatology, to conflict with the first.

Though Pauline authorship of 2 Thessalonians has been questioned more often than his authorship of 1 Thessalonians, there is more evidence from early Christian writers for his authorship of Second Thessalonians than that of First Thessalonians (Morris, 1970).

### ***External Evidence***

2 Thessalonians was included in the Marcion canon and the Muratorian fragment. It was mentioned by name by Irenaeus and quoted by Ignatius, Justin and Polycarp.

Another scholar who argues for the authenticity of this letter is Jerome Murphy-O'Connor. Though he admitted that there are stylistic problems between 2 Thessalonians and 1 Thessalonians, he argues that part of the problem is due to the composite nature of 1 Thessalonians.

It is important to note that Murphy-O'Connor is only one of many scholars who argue that the current text of 1 Thessalonians is the product of merging two or more authentic letters of Paul. They argue that once the text of this interpolated letter is removed and both letters are compared, Murphy-O'Connor (1996) asserts that this objection is "drastically weakened", and concludes that "the arguments against the authenticity of 2 Thessalonians are so weak that it is preferable to accept the traditional ascription of the letter to Paul." It is important for you to note that the church tradition mistakes 1 Thessalonians for a letter Paul had sent from Athens.

### ***Internal Evidence***

The opening of the epistle attests to the fact that it was written by Paul and Silvanus as the co-worker with him as at the time of the composition of the epistle.

At the end of the epistle, Paul drew attention to the authenticity of the letter by signing it himself: "I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, which is how I write in every letter." Remember that this kind of phrase is used elsewhere in his epistles. It is on this basis that Metzger (2003) says that "Paul calls attention to his

signature, which was added by his own hand as a token of genuineness to every letter of his (3:17).”

## **Canonicity**

The two Epistles to the Thessalonians are included among the canonical books accepted by the Councils of the Vatican, Trent and Florence, and are among the homologoumena of all early lists of canonical New Testament Scriptures. For instance, to mention only such early lists as accord with the received canon of Trent, these two Epistles are listed in the Muratorian Fragment, in the canons of Athanasius of Alexandria, of the Third Council of Carthage, of Epiphanius, of Innocent I, and of Gelasius. In fact there can be no reason whatsoever to doubt the canonicity of either letter.

## **Time and Place**

The Textus Receptus, at the end of the two Epistles, gives a subscription stating that they were written from Athens. This same subscription is contained in the great uncial codices Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, and Alexandrinus. It is likewise translated in important Latin, Syriac and Coptic manuscripts.

However, there is no doubt that the letters were written during Paul's first stay in Corinth. Timothy had been sent to Thessalonica by Paul from Athens (1 Thessalonians 3:2). This is the basis of the inference from the early Fathers that Timothy brought along 1 Thessalonians. This inference however, is wrong. As Rendel Harris says in *The Expositor* (1898), Paul may have sent another letter from Athens by Timothy to the Thessalonians. He could not have sent 1 Thessalonians because Paul clearly states that Timothy had returned from Thessalonica before the writing of 1 Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 3:6).

Acts 18:5 also states that when Timothy returned from Macedonia with Silas to Paul, the Apostle was at Corinth. The news brought him by Timothy was the occasion of 1 Thessalonians. Moreover, in the greeting with which each letter begins, the names of Paul, Silvanus (i.e. Silas), and Timothy are grouped together; and we know that the three were together at Corinth (Acts 18:5) during Paul's first visit to that city (see also 2 Corinthians 1:19). There is no proof that they were ever elsewhere together. 1 Thessalonians was then written during the eighteen months Paul stayed at Corinth, that is, in the year 48 or 49 according to the chronology of Harnack. 2 Thessalonians would have been written in the year 53 or 54 according to the commonly received scheme of Pauline chronology. Both letters are generally considered to be the earliest extant writings of Paul the Apostle.

## **3.4 Occasion for the Epistles**

From available data, the two epistles would have been written shortly after Paul left Thessalonica. Though Paul had it in mind to return to Thessalonica, he was unable to, but instead he sent Timothy. It is clear that these epistles were written after the return of Timothy from this visit to Thessalonica. These letters were written mainly:

to encourage and exhort the fledgling church to attempt to clear up some confusion concerning the eschatological expectation that they had proclaimed and to address a problem of vagrancy on the part of some members (Simpson, 1993).

From the text of the epistles, it is clear that Paul had to deal with the problem of 'over-realized eschatology'. It was the question of what would happen in the time remaining for the return of Jesus Christ. As some members of the church had already died, some among the living were in doubt concerning the way in which the dead would benefit from Christ's return while some console themselves by believing that the parousia must have taken place, maybe spiritually.

### **3.5 Message and Theology of the Epistles**

The significance of the message of the epistles to the Thessalonians was that it gave access to early Pauline theology. The following are important to note:

#### **Christology**

The epistle did not present anything near a developed Christology Jesus is described as the Lord and is placed alongside God the Father as the source of the church's existence, the guide of the apostolic ministry as well as the giver of Christian comfort and hope. There is also an emphasis on the life, death, resurrection and the expected return of the Messiah.

#### **Eschatology**

The eschatological problem in the church of Thessalonica made the treatment of the issue imperative for Paul. As far as Paul is concerned, the coming would be unexpected at least, as far as the unbelievers are concerned and even for the believers, there can not be a set time for the return. Consequently, for the believers, "it is not only the focus of hope but also the fundamental motivation for right living and the building up of the community" (Simpson, 1993). However, to precede the coming of Christ is the manifestation of evil (the man of lawlessness) that would be destroyed at Christ's coming.

### **4.0 Conclusion**

In this unit you have learnt that Thessalonica in the days of Paul was the largest and most important Macedonian city. Paul's ministry in the city was truncated by the envy of the Jews who dragged Paul's host to the tribunal. You have also seen that both internal and external evidences favour Pauline authorship of the epistles. The major significance of the epistles to the contemporary church is their emphasis on Christology and eschatology.

### **5.0 Summary**

The following are the major points that you have learnt in this unit:

- Thessalonica was the largest and the most important city of Macedonia.

- Paul preached in the synagogue for three consecutive Sabbaths.
- Paul escaped from Thessalonica to Berea when the Jews stirred up hostilities against him.
- The Jews at Thessalonica followed him to Berea and Paul had to leave Berea for Athens.
- Internal and external evidence favours Pauline authorship of both epistles.
- Both epistles happen to be Paul's first epistles ever written.
- First Thessalonians was written between AD 48 and AD 49.
- Second Thessalonians was written between AD 53 and AD 54.
- Paul dealt with the problem of over-realized eschatology in Second Thessalonians

### **Self-Assessment Exercises**

Discuss the time and place of the writing of First Thessalonians.

### **6.0 References/Further Readings**

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## **Unit 2: Epistle to the Galatians**

### **Content**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Destination of the Epistle to the Galatians
  - 3.2 Authorship and date of the Epistle

3.3	The Literary Form of Galatians
3.4	Occasion of the Epistle
3.5	Message and Theology of the Epistle
4.0	Conclusion
5.0	Summary
6.0	References/Further Readings

## **1.0 Introduction**

In the previous unit, which is the first unit of the second module, you have been exposed to the first and second epistle to the Thessalonians, which have been adjudged by many as the earliest of all Pauline epistles. You have seen the arguments for the authorship of Paul, based on internal and external evidences. In this unit, you would be examining the epistle to the Galatians which seems to be one the important epistles where the theology of the inclusion of the Gentiles was harped on. The epistle also is one in which Paul for contextual reasons had to abandon the usual epistolary structure.

## **2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Evaluate the arguments for the Pauline authorship of the epistle.
- Identify the epistolary structure
- Explain Paul's deviation from the conventional structure.
- Discuss the dating of the epistle.

## **3.0 Main Content**

### **3.1 Destination of the Epistle to the Galatians**

The question of the destination of the epistle to the Galatians has come to be the most controversial issue about the epistle and it is better for it to be treated first because it would determine every other thing, especially its date and consequently its position among the Pauline epistles. In fact, Heard (1950) describes it as "one of the classical controversies of New Testament criticism". There are two possible locations thus described as Galatia.

The first is the traditional assumption that was first given by Bishop Lightfoot and he identified the Galatians as the inhabitants of North Galatia. This would be in the north central Asia Minor. If this is accepted, then Paul would have visited the region on his second missionary journey as described in Acts 16:6 and 18:23 thus making Paul's visit to Jerusalem recorded in Galatians 2 correspond to Acts 15. If this is again accepted, then the epistle would have been sent on Paul's third missionary journey, possibly from Corinth and would then date the letter between 55 to 56 AD. This view is known as the "North Galatian Theory" since the churches would be in the geographical Galatia, which was in the north.

The second possible location came into being due to the archaeological efforts of Sir William Ramsey. This has been named the "South Galatian Theory." Ramsey and the majority of New Testament scholars today, would hold that Paul wrote

this letter to the churches in the political province of Galatia, that is, an area which the Roman government designated as Galatia. This province included cities substantially to the south of the geographical region of Galatia, including Lystra, Derbe, and Iconium which Paul had visited during his first missionary journey.

Adopting the south Galatian theory would then nullify the traditional identification of Galatians 2 with Acts 15. Doing this would put the events described in Galatians 2 to an earlier visit to Jerusalem. This would thus put the date of the epistle to the Galatians as early as between 47 and 49 AD. Though this is of high importance to the interpretation Galatians 2:1-10; its importance to the dating is of greater importance as the south Galatian theory would make the epistle to the Galatians the first canonical Pauline epistle. We will now proceed to examine the arguments in favour of both positions.

### **Arguments for the North Galatian Theory**

There are four major arguments for the North Galatian theory and they are as follows:

#### *The Traditional Position*

Some scholars hold that since this has been the age long position held by the church and most early church fathers, it should enjoy the benefit of the doubt. In other words, though the non- existence of any alternative position until recent critical tradition places the burden of proof on the more recent position.

#### *The Natural Meaning of Galatia is North Galatia*

The natural usage of Galatia and Galatians in Galatians 1:2 and 3:1 would be a reference to the geographical region in north central Asia Minor. This was how it was used by the inhabitants, that is, the Gauls, from whom the name originated. A closer look at Acts 13:13, 13:14 and 14:6 would reveal that Luke also describes according to geographical region rather than according to political province. In the above passages, Luke speaks of Pamphylia, Pisidia, and Lycaonia respectively, all of which are geographical terms. This indicates that he probably used the term “Phrygian and Galatian region” in 16:6 as a geographical term, too (Guthrie, 1995).

#### *The Acts of the Apostle Account*

According to Acts 16:6 and 18:23, and if what we have said above about the Lukan use of a geographical term is true, then Paul would have visited the North Galatian district twice, therefore establishing churches there.

#### *The Jerusalem Visit*



The most natural Council visit that Paul referred to in Galatians 2:1-10 would naturally be the one described by Luke in Acts 15, except if there is a previous visit of Paul to Jerusalem. According to the diary of Luke in Acts of the Apostles, there are two prior Pauline visits to and these are in Acts 9:26 and Acts 11:30. Acts 9:26 would be ruled out because it is Paul's first visit to Jerusalem as a believer and Acts 11:30 would also be ruled out because there was no record of Paul's meeting with the Apostles except with the elders with the relief fund he had brought from the Gentile churches.

## **Arguments for the South Galatian Theory**

### *The North Galatian District Topography*

It can be deduced from Galatians 4:13 which reads "but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time" that the first time Paul visited Galatia, it was because he went there to recover from his illness. This however would not likely to be northern Galatia because according to Guthrie (1995) the region was not only off the beaten track but necessitated a journey over difficult country which is unlikely to go through with a man who is ill and needed to recover.

### *Paul's Use of Roman Provincial Titles*

Although we can establish that Luke's normal practice may have been to describe regions according to their geographical and ethnic names; it can also be asserted that Paul's practice seems to be different, in fact uniformly different. In 1 Corinthians 16:19 Paul speaks of the churches of Asia; in 2 Corinthians 1:1, he speaks of the churches of Achaia and in 2 Corinthians 8:1, he speaks of the churches of Macedonia. He also speaks of Judea, Syria, and Cilicia, but never of Lycaonia, Pisidia, Mysia, and Lydia (which are not Roman names). The presumption that he is also using the Roman title in speaking of Galatia is therefore strong.

### *The Mention of Barnabas*

Barnabas is thrice mentioned in Galatians 2: 1, 9 and 13. It is also apparent that each time he was mentioned it was as if he was familiar with the people and also he was mentioned in this epistle more than in any other epistle. It is then natural to assume that Barnabas would be that known to the church if the churches were founded in the first missionary trip that involved Paul and Barnabas.

Though the mention of Barnabas in the epistle to the Corinthians has been used to argue for the invalidity of this point, those who hold to it insist that the way Barnabas was mentioned implies that the Galatians knew Barnabas by character (Wallace, 1990).

### *The Non-Reference to Jerusalem Council's Decision*

The non-reference to the decision of the Jerusalem Council to the issue that is so related to it to the Galatians is highly suspicious because the reference to it would have given Paul's argument more strength and discredit the Judaizers. This then would imply that the epistle indeed predate the Jerusalem Council.

### *The Number of Visits to Jerusalem*

It can also be implied from Galatians 2:1 "Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also" that it is only Paul's second visit. This would then correspond to Acts 11:30. If this is then the case, then Acts 15 would be Paul's fourth visit to Jerusalem. This might also be true because Luke might not have recorded all Paul's visit to Jerusalem.

### *Theological Development between Galatians and Romans*

There is an obvious theological development between Galatians and Romans which would force us to accept that the epistles to the Romans must have been written after the epistle to the Galatians. If according to most scholars, Romans was written about AD 56, it is most likely that Galatians was written AD48-49. If this is true, the North Galatian theory cannot hold any longer (Wallace, 1990).

On the whole, Wallace (1990) concludes as follows:

In sum, the south Galatian theory, though not unassailable, seems by far the most satisfactory. In particular, the arguments that seem most compelling on its behalf are: (1) the number of visits implied in Gal. 2:1 and mentioned in Acts; (2) Paul's proven use of Roman provincial terms to describe what Luke would normally describe with geographical/ethnic terms; and (3) the absence of any mention of the decree in Gal. 2:1-10 which would so dramatically serve Paul's purposes and prove, once and for all, that the Judaizers were not really representatives of James or apostolic/Jerusalem Christianity.

## **3.2 Authorship and Date of the Epistle**

It has been generally accepted that "Galatians is without doubt the most secure of all Paul's letters and perhaps of all books of the New Testament (Wallace, 1990). Its Pauline authorship is highly attested that even Baur, the father of the famous critical Tübingen school accepted its authenticity.

### **External Evidence**

The letter was known to and used by Ignatius of Antioch early in the third century (Grant, 1963). It was included in Marcion's collection and the following either quoted or make allusion to the epistle: 1 Peter, Barnabas, 1 Clement, Polycarp in his letter to the Philippians, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria and Origen. It is also listed in the Muratorian canon.

## **Internal Evidence**

### *The Opening and the Closing*

The usual greetings in the epistle as stated in 1:1 identifies Paul as the author of the epistle. The closing also in 5:2 bears the stamp of Pauline authorship.

### *Pauline Style*

The letter unmistakably bears the stamp of Paul's style and vocabulary.

### *The Controversy*

The controversy in the book made Paul to remind his readers a lot about his gospel, including his conversion. As Wallace rightly said, "a later writer would not only be able to pass off this work as genuine, but he would have virtually no motive for writing it".

## **3.3 The Literary Form of Galatians**

As we have said before, this epistle is one that does not conform to the Hellenistic epistolary structure; thus it is important that we examine its structure in this subsection. Unlike his custom, in this letter, there is no thanksgiving section. However, this epistle has been said to conform to the form of letter called the "rebuke-request". This fact is made on the basis of the opening statement Galatians 1:6, "I am astonished that you have so quickly departed from the one who called you by grace." It has been asserted that the phrase "I am astonished" in Paul's time is an expression of disappointment on the part of the writer. On the basis of this, Galatians can be broken down into the following segments:

Salutation	Galatians 1:1-5
Rebuke	Galatians 1:6-4:11
Autobiography	Galatians 1:13-2:21
Argument from Scripture	Galatians 3:6-29
Request	Galatians 4:12-6:10
Autobiography	Galatians 4:12-20
Allegory from Scripture	Galatians 4:21-31
Ethical Instructions	Galatians 5:1-6:10
Subscription	Galatians 6:11-18

## **3.4 Occasion of the Epistle**

Not long after Paul departed from Galatia, it appears that some Jewish Christians came on board and insisted that circumcision and adherence to the Jewish law was essential for salvation. To gain the ears of the Galatians, they stated that Paul was not a real apostle as he was not among the ones chosen by Christ, thereby undermining his authority. They eventually made headway within the church even

before the report could get to Paul. That Paul wrote this letter out of anger cannot be disputed as:

From first to last his extreme agitation is evident. Omitting the usual amenities from the salutation, he launches immediately into a vigorous defense of his apostleship. He affirms ‘that a man is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ (MacGorman, 1971).

### **3.5 Message and Theology of the Epistle**

The greatest contribution of this epistle to the contemporary church is its teaching on the relationship between the Gospel and the Law. This is because of the insistence of Paul that the Galatians should not return to the flesh after beginning from the spirit. Stephens (1991) comments thus on this issue:

There are very few in Africa today who are in danger of believing that God gives salvation to men in return their faithful observance of the Jewish Law. None the less the idea that man earns salvation obeying the new law, the Christian law, is very common.

This idea however is dicey. We need the strength of Christ to do what we have to do because we cannot on our own fulfil the demands of the law. As Stephen (1991) said, “we try to keep the Christian law (the standard of Jesus Christ) and we fail even more completely than the Jews failed to keep their law, because Christ’s standard is far higher”.

### **4.0 Conclusion**

In this unit, you have studied the controversies over the destination of the epistle to the Galatians. You have been exposed to both the North Galatian and the South Galatian theories and the arguments put forward in support of each locations. You have also learnt that the epistle to the Galatians happens to be the least contested of all Pauline epistles in terms of authorship that even Baur of the critical Tubingen school accepted its Pauline authorship.

The epistolary structure of this epistle does not conform to the traditional Pauline epistles but have been said to belong to the ‘rebuke-request’ form of letter. Its most important message is the relationship between salvation of the Law in the Christianity.

### **5.0 Summary**

The following are the major points you have learnt in this unit:

- The controversy over the destination of the epistle is very important as it would determine the date and consequently the position of the epistle among Pauline epistles.
- There are two possible locations for the destination called the North Galatian theory and the South Galatian theory.
- If the South Galatian theory is accepted, the epistle to the Galatians becomes Paul’s first canonical epistle.

- It is the least contested of all Pauline epistles in terms of authorship.
- Its greatest theological importance is the relationship between the Law and salvation.

### **Self-Assessment Exercises**

Evaluate the arguments for the destination of the epistle to the Galatians and decide the most plausible location for the epistle.

### **6.0 References/Further Readings**

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## **Unit 3: The Corinthian Correspondence**

### **Content**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 The Ancient City of Corinth

3.2	The Church at Corinth
3.3	Authenticity and Date of First Corinthians
3.4	Authenticity and Date of Second Corinthians
3.5	Occasion of the Corinthian Epistles
3.6	Message and Theology of the Corinthian Epistles
4.0	Conclusion
5.0	Summary
6.0	References/Further Readings

## **1.0 Introduction**

In the pervious unit you have studied the epistle to the Galatians. You have examined the Northern and the Southern Galatian theories and must have decided where you will throw your lot to. You have also learnt that it is the most authentic of all Pauline epistles. In this unit, you will be examining the Corinthian Correspondences, which includes the First and the Second Corinthians.

## **2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Determine the location of the ancient city of Corinth.
- Explain the constitution of the Church of Corinth.
- Defend the Pauline authorship of the Corinthian Epistles
- Identify the date of writing of the epistles

## **3.0 Main Content**

### **3.1 The Ancient City of Corinth**

Ancient Corinth was the chief commercial city on the Isthmus as well as the capital of the Roman Province of Achaia. Corinth was situated at south western extreme of the Isthmus. The Isthmus connects the mainland of Greece with the Peloponnese. This strategic position made Corinth to control two major harbours and consequently the command of the trade routes between Asia and Rome (Padfield, 2005). According to Abogunrin (1991), three major existences can be traced in the history of Ancient Corinth. The first civilization came to an end when the city was devastated and re-occupied by Dorian Greeks at the beginning of the first millennium. The Dorian civilization was razed down by Roman Consul L. Mummius “who killed the men and sold the women and children into slavery”. After this, the city lay desolate for almost a century. The third civilization came when in 44 BC; the city was re-established as a Roman colony by the decree of Julius Caesar, slightly before his death. Being a coastal settlement, the city attracted people from all over the world. Thus, it was populated by Greeks, Romans, Asians, Jews and Africans and thus, Corinth’s population was highly cosmopolitan in nature. Being an economically viable city, its success went along with moral laxity.

Its moral laxity had become noticeable early in time as:

It became infamous for vice, particularly licentiousness. From the time of the poet Aristophanes (ca 400 B. C.) ‘to live like a

Corinthian' or to 'Corinthianize' has become a proverbial expression for dissolute living. 'To Corinthianize' is also a polite Greek way of saying: "Go to the devil" and "Corinthian words" meant "pretentious philosophy". They revelled in the city and its ports unlike anywhere else in Greece.

It should also be noted that the immorality could have been due to religious rites. This is because many of the religions of the city were associated with fertility cults. For example, "Strabo (d. A. D. 24), a Greek historian and geographer, says that the cult of Aphrodite early in the first century A.D. had a thousand priestess-prostitutes attached to the temple at Corinth" (Abogunrin, 1991).

### **3.2 The Church at Corinth**

According to the book of Acts of the Apostles 18:1, Paul came to Corinth after he had left Athens. Paul was in Corinth during the administration of Lucius Junius Annaeus Gallio, who had been sent to Corinth as the proconsul of Achaia. Brown (1970) confirms the discovery of an inscription at Delhi dating Gallio's proconsulship to the twenty-sixth imperatorship of Claudius which would date Paul's arrival to Corinth to AD 50.

Paul worked in this city for eighteen months. There is no doubt that there was a large Jewish settlement at Corinth and there was a synagogue where they worshipped on the Sabbath. Part of the Jewish synagogue would be the proselytes though they may not be in large number.

There are also the 'God-fearers' who undoubtedly are in large numbers because they cannot afford to undergo the rigours involved in the process of becoming a proselyte. These people are allowed attend the synagogue and observe the Jewish feasts because they have accepted the theological and ethical teachings of Judaism. These are the set of people the New Testament usually refer to as "those who fear God" or "those who worship God".

From this we could discover that the population of the Corinthian church is as mixed as the population of the city itself. The population included Jews, proselytes, God-fearers and Gentiles.

### **3.3 Authenticity and Date of First Corinthians**

Wallace (2004) making reference to Robertson and Plummer says that "both the external and internal evidences for the Pauline authorship are so strong that those who attempt to show that the apostle was not the writer succeed chiefly in proving their own incompetence as critics".

#### **External Evidence**

The external evidence for First Corinthians is so strong because, it was attested to severally by several authors. Wallace (2004) indicating the times it was referred to have this to say:

Clement of Rome (c. 95 CE) states explicitly that it is by Paul and by so doing grants to 1 Corinthians the distinction of being the earliest NT book in which an extra-biblical writer attaches a name. The Didache and Barnabas seem quite familiar with it; Ignatius and Polycarp know it intimately, collectively alluding to it scores of times; Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Basilides all refer to it - some, hundreds of times. This epistle even made Marcion's short list! These data are nothing less than overwhelming on behalf of authenticity.

Overall, about twelve external writers attest to the Pauline authorship of First Corinthians. Indeed, it is an impregnable argument!

### **Internal Evidence**

Wallace (2004) says that the internal evidence for Pauline authorship of First Corinthians is very strong that even F. C. Baur, the Hegelian-minded scholar of the Tübingen school over one hundred and fifty years ago, said of the Pauline *Hauptbriefe* (Romans, 1-2 Corinthians, Galatians), "they bear so incontestably the character of Pauline originality, that there is no conceivable ground for the assertion of critical doubts in their case."

Apart from the opening of the epistle wherein Paul identified himself as the writer of the epistle alongside Sosthenes, Wallace (2004) identified four internal grounds for asserting the authenticity of the Epistle:

- (1) the letter is the product of a strong and original mind, and is altogether worthy of an Apostle
- (2) there are several coincidences (conceptual, verbal and historical) with what we know of Paul from Acts and other Pauline letters which are so unobtrusive as to be undersigned that they bear the stamp of genuineness
- (3) there is controversy in the letter; Paul defends himself and his gospel as though both were doubted; later forgeries hardly recognize the tension and instead put Paul on a pedestal
- (4) there is nothing negative in the epistle (historical discrepancies, language and theological development) to cast any doubts on authenticity.

Since there is no serious contention against the evidences, it is clear that the epistle is written by Paul.

Basing our authority on Acts 18, we can assert that Paul came to Corinth during the second missionary journey and he was able to stay at Corinth for eighteen months. This is likely to be about AD 51 (Slingerland, 1991). During his third missionary journey, Paul settled in Ephesus for about three years and from there he had contact with Corinth. For example, in 1 Corinthians 5:9, Paul referred to a previous letter. It is thus clear that the letter was written from Ephesus. If it can be asserted that Paul was in Ephesus from the fall of AD 52 to the spring of AD 55, then First Corinthians was written at AD 54. On this, Wallace (2004) has this to say:



(1) The letter was written some years after Paul's first visit, since Apollos had ministered there (Acts 18:26-27; 1 Cor. 1:12) and Timothy had also been sent there (Acts 19:22; 1 Cor. 4:17).

(2) This letter was written sometime after his first letter (cf. 1 Cor. 5:9) and probably *not* in the last year of his ministry in Ephesus. He mentions that he intends to spend the next winter with the Corinthians (1 Cor. 16:6), a visit which, nevertheless, is not to be identified with the three-month stay of Acts 20:3. This latter visit (Acts 20:3) reads as though it were at the end of Paul's Ephesian ministry, while it is doubtful that 1 Corinthians was written at the end because otherwise the chronology does not fit with data in 2 Corinthians.

(3) This letter was written in the spring because Pentecost is just around the corner (1 Cor. 16:8).

### **3.4 Authenticity and Date of Second Corinthians**

As we have indicated earlier, Second Corinthians in part of the epistles termed "Pauline *Hauptbriefe*" and thus is also one of the incontrovertible Pauline epistles. It is however important to note the following:

The external evidence for Second Corinthians is not as strong as for First Corinthians. It is quoted by Polycarp, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian. It is also listed in Marcion's and the Muratorian Canon. Internally, using First Corinthians as a benchmark of authenticity, this epistle easily passes the test. The literary style and form of argumentation are the same.

Dating the Second Corinthians is not as straightforward as dating the First Corinthians. This is because of the reference to some letters that we do not have today. Also, there seems to be some visits from Paul to Corinth. These cases are well stated in Wallace (2004) and for clarity sake would be presented here:

(1) Paul arrived in Corinth in the spring of 50 CE and stayed there one and one-half years (Acts 18:11).

(2) In the fall of 51 CE he sailed for Ephesus with Priscilla and Aquila. Priscilla and Aquila stayed in Ephesus while Paul returned to Antioch (Acts 18:18-22). While in Ephesus, Aquila and Priscilla met and trained Apollos, sending him back to Corinth to minister in Paul's absence (Acts 18:24–19:1).

(3) A year later, in the summer/fall of 52 CE, Paul returned to Ephesus (after passing through the Phrygian-Galatian region) on his third missionary journey and ministered there almost three years (Acts 20:31). Probably in the first year of his ministry in Ephesus, Paul wrote a letter to the Corinthians—a letter which is now lost (cf. 1 Cor 5:9).

(4) When Paul learned of other problems from Chloe (1 Cor 1:11) and the delegation of Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus (1 Cor 16:17), he wrote 1 Corinthians. This was probably in the second year of his ministry at Ephesus, in the spring of 54 CE (for reasons which will become evident below).

(5) He then visited the Corinthians in the summer/fall of 54, as he had indicated he would (1 Cor 16:6), but he was not able to spend the winter with them. Most likely, he was forewarned from Timothy that the Corinthians had not fully appreciated even his second letter (cf. 1 Cor 16:10). Hence, what was originally

planned as a positive time ended up being Paul's "painful visit" (2 Cor 2:1). It was painful because of a particular man who was acting immorally (2:5-11; cf. 7:12)—and was, indeed, creating doubts among the congregation about Paul's apostolic authority. It was also painful because it was done in haste (he went directly to Corinth, bypassing Macedonia) and was much shorter than planned.

(6) After the painful visit, Paul returned to Ephesus (fall, 54). Because of his humiliation at Corinth, Paul wrote a "severe letter" (2 Cor 2:3-4; 7:8), which was apparently carried by Titus (cf. 2 Cor 7:5-8). We tentatively suggest a date of spring 55 for this severe letter.

(7) Paul left Ephesus in the spring of 55 CE for Macedonia, probably Philippi (Acts 20:1). On the way he stopped at Troas, intending to meet Titus there on his way back from Corinth. But he could not find Titus and sailed for Macedonia without him (2 Cor 2:12-13), hoping to meet him there.

(8) Paul met Titus in Macedonia, learned from him that the Corinthians are getting straightened out (2 Cor 7:6-16), and while in Macedonia he writes 2 Corinthians. Most likely, it was written in the fall of 55 CE.

(9) Finally, in the winter of 55-56 CE Paul again visits the Corinthians (Acts 20:3; cf. 2 Cor 12:14).

If this reconstruction is correct, Paul visited Corinth three times and wrote four letters to the Corinthians, the second and fourth of which have been preserved; and as stated above, Second Corinthians would have been written by AD 55.

### **3.5 Occasion of the Corinthian Epistles**

#### **Occasion of First Corinthians**

From internal evidence, First Corinthians was written for three reasons which are indicated below:

Firstly, from 1 Corinthians 5:9, it is clear that Paul had written a letter previously that had been misunderstood by the Corinthians. Paul needed to make clarifications as was done from 5:10-13. Secondly, 1 Corinthians 1:11 also makes it clear that there was disunity in the Corinthian church. This report came to Paul from the members of Chloe's house that visited Paul. Part of their report would also have included the reports Paul referred to in 4:1-21; 5:1-5 and 6:1-11. Thirdly, 1 Corinthians 7 makes it clear that there was a letter written to Paul from the Corinthian church that would have been sent through some delegate including Stephanas, Fortunatas and Achaicus as seen in 16:17. These circumstances also gave rise to the compilation of the epistle as Wallace (2004) indicates:

The occasion for the writing of this letter then gives us a great deal of help in deciphering the method of compilation: the first six chapters are written as a response to the report from Chloe (including both the correction of the Corinthians' misreading of Paul's first letter and specific problems raised by Chloe's people); chapters 7-16 are written as a response to the questions raised by the congregation itself in their letter to Paul brought by Stephanas and friends.

#### **Occasion of Second Corinthians**

As stated above, after the painful visit and the sorrowful letter, Paul met Titus in Macedonia who told him that the Corinthians are getting better than he saw (2 Corinthians 7:6-16). It was while in Macedonia he writes 2 Corinthians as a response to the news he had heard from Titus.

### **3.6 Message and Theology of the Corinthian Correspondences**

There are major issues concerning church life that were discussed in these epistles. These are going to be treated one after the other below:

#### **Disunity in the Church**

The source of divisions within the Corinthian church was the spirit of the city which had to do with disputes about the philosophies of men. Describing the situation in the Corinthian church, Stedman (1967) says that:

They were forming little sects and cliques and schisms within the church. These divisions were largely built around certain insights they felt each man contributed, and Paul mentions certain names here to indicate what he means; some were following Peter, some Apollos, some were gathering about his name, Paul.

As far as Paul was concerned, this division is a manifestation of their carnality.

#### **Immorality in the Church**

The second issue that Paul tackled was that of immorality in the church. In such cases, Paul called for judgment on the erring member by the church. Chapters five and six both deal with this matter of immorality and church discipline by extension.

#### **Issues Raised by the Corinthians**

From what can be gleaned from the epistle, they had written to him about four major problems. The first problem had to do with the role of sex vis-à-vis spirituality. On this Paul told them that though asceticism is a way of life, it was preferable to be married than to burn with the passion of sin. The other had to do with the issue of meat offered to idols where Paul had cautioned that the feelings of the other believers should be considered over the freedom of the believer. The third had to do with the right conduct during worship where issues concerning the conduct of women in worship, the issues of the right conduct within the communion service. The fourth is the role of spiritual gifts within the church. On this issue, Paul chastised them that the purpose for spiritual gifts is corporate and not individual. It is expected to lead to unity and not disunity.

### **4.0 Conclusion**

In this unit you have learnt that Paul preached the gospel at the ancient city of Corinth which was the chief commercial city on the Isthmus as well as the capital

of the Roman Province of Achaia. Corinth occupied a strategic position which its location at south western extreme of the Isthmus which connects the mainland of Greece with the Peloponnese. This made Corinth to control two major harbours and consequently the trade routes between Asia and Rome.

You have also learnt that the First and Second epistles to the Corinthians are part of the undisputed letters of Paul and the time of writing of First Corinthians would be fixed to AD 54 and Second Corinthians would be AD 55.

## **5.0 Summary**

The following are the major points you have learnt in this unit:

- Paul preached the gospel at the ancient city of Corinth which was the chief commercial city on the Isthmus as well as the capital of the Roman Province of Achaia.
- Corinth occupied a strategic position which its location at south western extreme of the Isthmus which connects the mainland of Greece with the Peloponnese.
- Corinth controls two major harbours and consequently the trade routes between Asia and Rome.
- First and Second epistles to the Corinthians are part of the undisputed letters of Paul.
- First Corinthians would have been written around AD 54.
- Second Corinthians would have been written around AD 55.

## **Self-Assessment Exercises**

In what ways had the situation of Corinth contributed to the issues occurring in the Corinthian church

## **6.0 References/Further Readings**

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## **UNIT 4: Epistle To The Romans**

### **Content**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 The Ancient City of Rome
  - 3.2 The Church at Rome
  - 3.3 Authenticity and Date of Romans
  - 3.4 Occasion of Rome
  - 3.5 The Message of Romans
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 Introduction**

Welcome to the last unit of this module. I believe you would have be richly enlightened from your study of this module which have taken you through 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians and now the epistle to the Romans. In this unit, you would be examining the epistle to the Romans, which is also acclaimed as one of the most theologically loaded of Pauline epistles. This epistle is also the last of the ecclesiastical epistles. It would also interest you to know that the Church of Rome was not founded by Paul unlike all the other epistles that were written to churches founded by the Apostle.

### **2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Discuss the relationship between Paul and the Roman Church.
- Identify the purpose of the epistle to the Romans.
- Discuss the issues surrounding the authorship of the epistle

### **3.0 Main Content**

#### **3.1 The Ancient City of Rome**

The ancient city of Rome was the capital and the largest city of the Roman Empire. It is thought that Rome 's population was over 1 million people when the city was at the height of its power.

#### **3.2 The Church at Rome**

It has been generally accepted the apostle was not the founder of this church. Moody (1970) quotes Erasmus as saying that the “Romans had embraced the faith of Christ, albeit according to the Jewish rite, without any sign of mighty works or any of the apostles”. Though later tradition tried to ascribe apostolic origin to the church, “it is now the growing consensus of scholarship, both Protestant and Roman Catholic, that Hellenistic Jewish converts from Palestine and Syria brought the gospel to Rome at a very early date” (Moody, 1970).

However, by the time Paul was writing this epistle to the Church of Rome, the church had become predominantly Gentile. This is because Claudius had the Jews banished from Rome around AD 49 because they were continually fermenting trouble maybe as a result of the gospel of Christ. What is sure however is that they were expelled and this expulsion from Rome was also confirmed in Acts 18:2, where it is reported that Paul met Aquila and Priscilla who had been expelled from Rome at Corinth. This expulsion of the Jews brought the Gentile Christian population to the majority.

### **3.3 Authenticity and Date of Romans**

At the beginning of the modern critical period, a few Dutch, Swiss, and English scholars contested the authenticity of the book on the ground that the apostle was acquainted with so many individuals by name in a city where he had never been as could be seen in the Romans 16 list. But this argument has been repeatedly shown to be weak because travel was extensive in Paul's day, and he probably met these individuals elsewhere in the empire before they went to Rome to live. Below are the external and internal evidences on Pauline authorship.

#### **External Evidence**

The following church fathers had evidently used this epistle and had attributed it to Paul: Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Polycarp, Hippolytus, Marcion and the Muratorian Canon. From the time of Irenaeus onward the epistle was universally recognized as Pauline and canonical. The two major old versions, the Old Latin and the Syriac versions also had them attributed to Paul.

#### **Internal Evidence**

The internal evidence of genuineness is also strong. The writer claims to be Paul (Rom 1:1) and makes personal references that can only be identified with the great apostle (see 11:13; 15:15-20). Style, argument, theology, and many other factors point to Pauline authenticity.

Internal evidence from the epistle is such that the period of writing can be determined with all certainty. It is clear from the epistle that Paul wrote the epistle after he had been to Macedonia. He indicated that he had completed the collection of money meant for the relief of the saints at Jerusalem and was on his way to hand over the collection. Meck (1912) indicated that "the time of composition is thus exactly determined; the Epistle was written at the end of the third missionary journey, which brought the Apostle back from Ephesus finally to Corinth. Stephens (1991) coming up more specifically says that the letter would have thus been written somewhere between Philippi and Jerusalem (Stephens, 1991). The book is usually dated somewhere between AD 57 to AD 59.

### **3.4 Occasion of Rome**

As at the time of writing this epistle, Paul believes his task in the East had practically finished; he has preached the Faith as far as Illyricum and he is about to bring back to Palestine the alms contributed in Galatia, Achaia, and Macedonia. The question being asked is this: why did Paul have to write an epistle to the Roman church, a church he neither founded nor visited before? Though different views have been canvassed over the issue, there are three prominent reasons:

**a. A Missionary Purpose**

It seems as if Paul was writing to Rome with the view of getting the churches of Rome to provide a support base for his projected mission to Spain. This could be explicitly derived from Romans 15: 24, 28. Commenting on this, Stott (1994) writes:

But he could have decided to go to Spain without ever visiting Rome on the way or even telling the Romans his plans. So why did he write to them? Surely because he felt the need of their fellowship. Rome was about two-thirds of the way from Jerusalem to Spain. He asked therefore if they would ‘assist’ him on his journey there (15:28) presumably with their encouragement, financial support and prayers. Indeed he wanted to use Rome as base of operations in the Western Mediterranean, much as he had used Antioch (originally) as a base in the East.

**b. A Conciliation Purpose**

The established fact of the tension in the Roman churches between the Jews and the Gentiles would have attracted Paul’s attention. Explaining Paul’s response to the issue, Stott (1994) writes again:

Paul’s second theme is the consequent redefinition of the people of God, no longer according to descent, circumcision or culture but according to faith in Jesus, so that all believers are the true children of Abraham, regardless of their ethnic origin or religious practice. So “there is no difference” now between Jews and Gentiles either in the fact of their sin and guilt or in Christ’s offer and gift of salvation.

**c. An Apologetic Purpose**

It also looks as if Paul felt the need to explain his understanding of the gospel to the Romans. Romans 1:16; 3:8 and 9:1-2 are passages that point to this. Thus, the letter also functions as Paul’s apology for his gospel and therefore a self-apologia since his whole life’s work was bound up with the gospel he preached.

### **3.5 The Message of Romans**



If the Gospel of John is the lobster of the New Testament, then Romans is filet mignon. This letter addresses the following concepts:

## **God and Revelation**

As it is painted in the epistle to the Romans, Paul believed in the revelation of God which he classified as general revelation which is found in the order of creation and the special revelation in Christ. He sees the creation as a manifestation of the one God. God is also seen as the God of righteousness and wrath as well as God of kindness, love and mercy.

## **Reconciliation of God and Man**

Humanity is subjected to the wrath of God because humanity is in the bondage of sin, the law and death. To effect this reconciliation between God and humanity, Christ has to come to effect this reconciliation on the cross. This thus leads us to the next issue which is Christology.

## **Christology**

According to Moody (1970), “death and resurrection constitute the crux of Paul’s Christology”. The Christology of Paul also goes beyond the life, death and resurrection it also embraces the pre-existence of the Son of God.

## **Justification and Sanctification**

The life of a believer begins from justification. From justification, the believer moves on to salvation and sanctification. “Salvation and sanctification are a process of transformation that is completed only at the resurrection” (Moody, 1970).

## **4.0 Conclusion**

In this unit, you have learnt that the church at Rome was founded by Hellenistic Jewish converts from Palestine and Syria. It thus started as a multi-racial church. However, with the expulsion of the Jews from Rome by Emperor Claudius, the Roman church became a predominantly Gentile church. It has been said that the epistle was written at the end of the missionary work of Paul at the West. Paul must have written to the epistle to the Roman church because he intends making the Roman church the missionary base for his mission to Spain as he had used Antioch for the previous missionary enterprises. Finally, this epistle is a theological compendia running themes like revelation of God, reconciliation between God and humanity, Christology and justification and sanctification.

## **5.0 Summary**

The following are the major points you have learnt in this unit:

- The church at Rome was founded by Hellenistic Jewish converts from Palestine and Syria.
- It started as a multi-racial church.
- With the expulsion of the Jews from Rome by Emperor Claudius, the Roman church became a predominantly Gentile church.
- The epistle was written at the end of the missionary work of Paul at the West.
- Paul must have written to the epistle to the Roman church because he intends making the Roman church the missionary base for his mission to Spain as he had used Antioch for the previous missionary enterprises.
- This epistle is a theological compendia running themes like revelation of God, reconciliation between God and humanity, Christology and justification and sanctification.

### **Self-Assessment Exercises**

Discuss the Pauline authorship of the epistle to the Romans.

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## **Module 3      The Prison Epistles**

Unit 1:	Epistle to the Ephesians
Unit 2:	Epistle to the Colossians
Unit 3:	Epistle to Philemon
Unit 4:	Epistle to Philippians

### **Unit 1:          Epistle to the Ephesians**

#### **Content**

1.0	Introduction
2.0	Intended Learning Outcomes
3.0	Main Content
3.1	Destination of the Epistle to the Ephesians
3.2	Authenticity and Date of Ephesus
3.3	Occasion of the Epistle
3.4	The Message of Ephesus
4.0	Conclusion
5.0	Summary
6.0	References/Further Readings

#### **1.0      Introduction**

In the last module, we studied the ecclesiastical epistles, beginning from the epistle to the Thessalonians that is regarded as the earliest of Paul's epistle, (depending on the side of the argument of North or South Galatia theory you are) and ending with the epistle to the Romans.

I welcome you to the third module of this course that is titled "the Prison Epistles". They are so called because all of them were written while Paul was in one form of incarceration or the other. In this unit, you would be dealing with the epistle to the Ephesians. This epistle has been variously described. Robinson (1903) called it "the crown of St. Paul's writings"; Barclay (1958) quoted Coleridge who described it as "the divinest composition of man" while he, that is, Barclay, called it "the Queen of the epistles". Welcome to the queen of the epistles.

#### **2.0      Intended Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Defend Pauline authorship of the epistle to the Ephesians.
- Evaluate the date of the writing of the epistle.
- Critically examine the arguments surrounding the destination of the epistle.

#### **3.0      Main Content**

##### **3.1      Destination of the Epistle to the Ephesians**

The first person to point attention to the problem of the destination of the epistle to the Ephesians was Charles Ellicott. He said in his commentary that, “That the Epistle was addressed to the Christians of the important city of Ephesus seems scarcely open to serious doubt” (Ellicott, 1855).

It has to be noted that the letter is believed to have been written to the Church in Ephesus because of the superscript, “To the Ephesians ” and the prescript, “to the saints who are in Ephesus”. It has been noted however that the phrase “at Ephesus” is not found in the manuscripts regarded as authentic and reliable. For example, the great fourth century Vatican and Sinaitic codices, that is, Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, as well as the second century papyrus, Chester Beatty P<sup>46</sup> do not have these words in the text. It is also important to note that Origen in the third century also attested to this fact and “Marcion in the middle of second century referred to Ephesians as having been addressed ‘to the Laodiceans’. So the question arises: where was this epistle directed?

Some have attempted to solve this mystery by examining the possibility of accepting that the text was without the phrase, ‘at Ephesus’. For example, Schnackenburg (1991) attempted reading the manuscript as translating, “to the saints and to those who are faithful in Christ Jesus”. As good as this is, it has definitely given us a awkward participial expression.

Others, like Best (1994) introduced some form of conjectural emendation. He said the text would have been “to the saints and faithful ones in Christ Jesus ”. He then argued that the address on the outside of the papyrus roll must have read “to the saints” and was later modified to read “to the saints who are in Ephesus”. If this however is the case, there would have been some traces of his so-called original reading in some of the manuscripts.

Some scholars felt that they were left with no other option than to part ways with the so -called reliable manuscripts and accept that since all other manuscripts have the phrase, “at Ephesus” as the entire Western and Byzantine manuscript traditions favour the presence of the phrase (Arnold, 1993). Stott (1979) however favours the explanation of Beza that was later popularized by the Archbishop Ussher in the seventeenth century that:

Ephesians was originally a kind of apostolic encyclical or circular letter intended for several Asian churches, that a blank space was left in the first verse for each church to fill in its own name, and that the name of Ephesus became attached to the letter because it was the principal Asian city.

This theory of a general readership would not only explain the absence of the destination of the epistle, it would also explain the seeming “absence from the letter of all particular allusions and personal greetings” (Stott, 1979). It has to be noted however that no matter how plausible all these explanations are, they are merely conjectural.

### **3.2 Authenticity and Date of Ephesus**

The Pauline authorship of the epistle to the Ephesians was not challenged until the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century. The greatest influence of the anti-Pauline authorship had come expectedly from F. C. Baur and the Tübingen school. Since the rejection of Pauline authorship of this epistle is only dated to the modern period, it is better to begin by examining their arguments against Pauline authorship.

## **Arguments against Pauline Authorship of the Epistle to the Ephesians**

### **Language and Style**

According to Stott (1979), most of those that argue against Pauline authorship of the epistle from the viewpoint of language and style draw attention to the letter's distinctive style and vocabulary. The number of words in Ephesians which do not occur in any other epistle as well as the number of Paul's favourite words that are not found in the epistle are used as the basis of the argument. Arnold (1993) points out that the style "is often characterized as 'pleonastic,' that is, a fullness of style seen in the repeated use of prepositional phrases, abundant participles, numerous relative clauses, genitive upon genitive and lengthy sentences".

On the issue of style, the main argument raised is the so-called impersonal character of the letter. It is argued that this impersonal tone is at divergence with the historical account in the book of Acts where it is indicated that Paul had spent almost three years plus, teaching from house to house and an account of an emotion filled departure (Acts 20:17-38). On the other hand, in the epistle to the Romans, where Paul did not have any personal acquaintance, no fewer than twenty-six people are mentioned by name (Romans 16).

### **Theology**

Those who are canvassing for the non-Pauline authorship of this epistle usually contend that there are significant theological divergence between the epistle of the Ephesians and the eight authentic letters of Paul. Firstly, they harp on the cosmic Christology found in the epistle. Stott (1979) describes the cosmic Christology as follows: "the role of Christ assumes a cosmic dimension, that the sphere of interest is 'the heavenly places' (a unique expression occurring five times) in which the principalities and powers operate". Arnold (1993) went further to explain that for the non-Paulinists, these developments are a later stage of theological reflection and could not have come from Paul.

The second theological issue is that of ecclesiology. Stott (1979) discloses that it seems that the focus of the epistle to the Ephesians is unlike Paul:

The focus of concern is the church, that 'justification' is not mentioned, that 'reconciliation' is more between Jews and Gentiles than between the sinner and God, that salvation is not portrayed as dying with Christ but only as rising with him, and that there is no reference to our Lord's second coming.

## **Arguments for Pauline Authorship of the Epistle to the Ephesians**

All these arguments against Pauline authorship of this epistle however are not water-tight. The following are the arguments for Pauline authorship of the epistle.

### **Internal Evidence**

#### *The Opening*

As usual, the opening of the epistle is clear on who the author is. It reads, “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God” (1:1). Thus, in keeping with the convention of the time, Paul identified himself as the author of the epistle.

#### *Autobiographical Information*

Though usually regarded as impersonal, the epistle to the Ephesians contains substantial amount of materials that are presented in the first person. Paul, in this epistle discussed the nature of his apostolic ministry as well as a reflection on his stewardship. This information, it has been argued, could not have come from the pen of forgery and yet exudes such confidence.

#### *External Evidence*

Tradition has shown that this epistle was long attributed to Paul the apostle and has been acclaimed as such by many early church fathers. The list includes Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Hermas and Polycarp. It was also listed as authentic Pauline epistle in Marcion’s canon as well as in the Muratorian canon. It is also important to note that:

Ephesians is quoted as Pauline in some Nag Hammadi documents (as early as the second century) . For instance, Ephesians 6:12 is quoted in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* as from “the great apostle” (II.86.20-25). The same verse is cited in the *Exegesis on the Soul* (II.6.131) as the words of Paul.

On the issue of the date of the epistle, one needs to ascertain the period of imprisonment so as to ascertain the date of writing. Traditionally, it has been dated to Paul’s first imprisonment (Barth, 1974) and Bruce (1984). If it is written during a possible Ephesian’ imprisonment, it would be likely dated around AD60 – AD 62.

### **3.3 Occasion of the Epistle**

It has been asserted that of all Pauline epistles, the epistle to the Ephesians is the least situational (Arnold, 1993). By way of explanation, he said that it means that “Ephesians simply does not have the same sense of urgency and response to crisis

as do the apostle's other letters" (Arnold, 1993). The situation of the epistle has however been described as follows:

Ephesians is therefore a genuine letter, without a specific crisis, but addressed in pastoral way to a multiplicity of needs shared by the readership. It was written by the apostle Paul to a network of churches in Ephesus, but also intended for a broader readership among the churches of that region.

### **3.4 The Message of Ephesus**

Almost eight themes can be deduced from the epistle to the Ephesians. They are discussed below.

#### **The Greatness of God**

In this epistle, God is magnified as the father of the Lord Jesus Christ and is magnified for all that He has done for the people in Christ. He declared boldly that God has chosen for himself a people that he has redeemed them from the bondage of sin. It is also important that for Paul in this epistle, all that we have access to in Christ was actually made possible by God the Father.

#### **The Exalted Christ**

As we have said earlier, the epistle has focused on what is called 'cosmic Christology'. This is because in this letter, Paul stressed Jesus dominion over the powers and principalities (Ephesians 1:21-22) as well as the role of Christ in bringing the purpose of creation to reality. This notwithstanding, Paul also hinted on the suffering of the Christ as it was through his blood that redemption was bought and that reconciliation was achieved through the cross (Ephesians 1:7; 2:16).

#### **Present Dimension of Salvation**

Though the discussion on the future aspect of salvation is not entirely omitted in the epistle, the epistle focused more on realized eschatology. It has been noted that the use of the perfect tense of *sozo*, the emphasis is on the present state of affairs (Arnold, 1993). The saints are said to have been saved and are saved, and they have been raised and exalted with Christ.

#### **The Status of Believers**

Using the 'in Christ' formula, which occurred thirty-four times in the epistle to the Ephesians alone, Paul describes what the status of the believers are in their new-found relationship with the Lord. This was captured as follows:

As people who are united with Christ, believers have redemption, forgiveness of sins, a heavenly existence, access to the Father, knowledge of the truth and the gift of the Holy Spirit. They possess a new existence created by God and characterized by righteousness (Arnold, 1993).

## **Unity of Humanity**

In the Jewish cosmology, they regarded anybody who is not a Jew as an outsider to the covenant of God. Consequently, it has always been a 'we' and 'them' relationship between the Jews and people of the other races. However, in this epistle, Paul announced that in Christ the dividing wall between the Jews and the Gentiles had been torn down as Christ has destroyed all obstacles dividing humanity. As far as he is concerned, both Jews and Gentiles now have access to the one God. There is now a unity of humanity as the church is now composed of both Jews and Gentiles.

## **Powers and Principalities in the Cosmic Struggle**

The issue of cosmic struggle between the powers of darkness and the powers of Christ is stressed more in this epistle than any other Pauline epistles. However, he concluded his thesis on this struggle with the ultimate victory of Christ. For Paul, the believers can access the supreme power of Christ through their union with Him.

## **Ethical Obligation of Christians**

Towards the end of the epistle, Paul began to express what the Christian character ought to be in all areas of life, beginning from his life in the society, to the church and to the family. He stated that this change in behaviour expected of the believers is available to them through their union with Christ and that it is expected of them to change their attitude and become Christ-like.

## **The Church**

As stated earlier, the epistle to the Ephesians have a strong ecclesiastical focus. In the epistle he projects the church as an organism using the head-body imagery. The church is also called the household of God. It is also known as the bride in relation to her loving and caring bridegroom, which is Jesus Christ.

## **4.0 Conclusion**

In this unit you have learnt that the epistle to the Ephesians was said to have a circular nature because most manuscripts that have been seen do not contain the phrase "to the Ephesians". You have also been taken through the various arguments for and against the Pauline authorship of the epistle. The date of the epistle is directly related to the date and you have been taught that if it had been written during the Ephesian imprisonment, it would have been written between AD 60 and AD 62.

## **5.0 Summary**

The following are the major points you have learnt in this unit:



- The uniqueness of the epistle to the Ephesians had earned it many titles like “the crown of St. Paul’s writings” (Robinson, 1903) and “the Queen of the epistles” (Barclay, 1958).
- The phrase “at Ephesus” is not found in the manuscripts regarded as authentic and reliable. For example, Codex Vatican and Codex Sinaiticus as well as Chester Beatty P<sup>46</sup> do not have these words.
- To resolve the destination, the theory of a general readership was propounded. This theory would not only explain the absence of the destination of the epistle, it would also explain the seeming “absence from the letter of all particular allusions and personal greetings”.
- The arguments for and against Pauline authorship ranging from theology and style had been examined.

### Self-Assessment Exercise

Examine critically the arguments for and against Pauline authorship of the epistle to the Ephesians.

### 6.0 References/Further Readings

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## **Unit 2: Epistle to the Colossae**

### **Content**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 The Ancient City of Colossae
  - 3.2 The Church at Colossae
  - 3.3 Authenticity and Date of Epistle to the Colossians
  - 3.4 Occasion of the Epistle to the Colossians
  - 3.5 The Message of the Epistle to the Colossians
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 Introduction**

In the previous unit you have studied about the epistle to the Ephesians, which is regarded usually as the first among the prison epistles. You have been taught about the theory of the circular nature of the epistle as a result of the omission of the phrase “to the Ephesians ” from the early ancient reliable manuscripts. In this unit, you would be learning about the Colossian epistle which is one of the epistles regarded as being short but it “has an importance and value out of all proportion to its size” (Vaughan, 1980).

### **2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss about the ancient city of Colossae.
- Discuss the circumstances surrounding the church at Colossae.
- Evaluate Pauline authorship of the epistle to the Colossians.
- Enumerate the major teachings of the epistle

### **3.0 Main Content**

#### **3.1 The Ancient City of Colossae**

Colossae was a small town situated on the south bank of the Lycus River in the interior of the Roman province of Asia, which is in modern day Turkey. In the period of the Persian and Greek empires, Colossae was located on the main trade route that linked Ephesus in the West and Persia in the East. The population of Colossae went on the decline when the road system changed. In the New Testament times, the people occupying Colossae are the indigenous Phrygians, the Greeks and the Jews.

### 3.2 The Church at Colossae

It is surprising that Colossae was not mentioned anywhere in the Acts account and therefore all information about the church are those that are derived from the epistle that was written to the church. It has to be asserted that Antiochus transplanted 2,000 Jewish families into the district from Mesopotamia (Josephus) and this means that “for good and ill, the church at Colossae was subject to strong Jewish influence ” (White, 1971). Despite the strong presence of the Jewish community, the church at Colossae was predominantly Gentile and this is not surprising as White (1971) confirms:

Epaphras was Gentile (4:10f). It is not surprising therefore that the church also appears predominantly Gentile, as 1:21, 27; 2:13; (perhaps 1:12), the scarcity of Old Testament allusions, and the kinds of vice named in 3:5-7, all imply.

Vaughn (1980) identified the following about the church at Colossae:

- The Church was founded by Epaphras, who was undoubtedly a convert of Paul (Colossians 1:5-8).
- It was a predominantly Gentile church. This can be gleaned from Colossians 1:21, 27.
- The church is being troubled by heresy.

### 3.3 Authenticity and Date of Epistle to the Colossians

The traditional ascription of the epistle to the Colossians was never questioned until 1838. The objections are usually classified under four major subheadings, namely: its style, its Christology, the heresies and its similarities with the epistle to the Ephesians.

#### Style

It has been argued that if Colossians is compared with Corinthians, Romans, and Galatians the style of Colossians would be markedly different.

Those upholding Pauline authorship however explain that as at the time of writing this epistle, Christianity had taken a firm root and that the position of Paul as an apostle is established. Apart from this, Paul is already advanced in years and therefore his style might have changed.

It has also been argued that favourite Pauline expressions are not found in the epistle. For example, words like *dikaïos* (righteousness), *nomos* (law) and *soteria* (salvation) are not found in the Epistle. This argument also cannot hold water because *dikaïos* is not found in First Corinthians and First Thessalonians, *nomos* is not found in First Thessalonians and Second Corinthians.

Finally, it is also argued that the epistle to the Colossians contained many words that are not found in other Pauline letters. But it also has to be noted that this is very much like Paul because all his epistles contained other words not used elsewhere since situation may determine the words to be used. For example, out of the thirty-two words unique to Colossians, eighteen of them, representing about 56%, occurred in the second chapter where the errors troubling the Colossian church is discussed. This points to the fact that the heresies necessitated the use of the new words.

## **Christology**

It has been argued that the Christology presented in the epistle to the Colossians is that of an exalted Christ that could not have come from Paul. If one however compares the Christology presented in Philippians, First and Second Corinthians and Galatians with that of Colossians, there would not be a marked difference.

## **The Heresies**

Some scholars have said that the heresy of the Colossians was that of the second century Gnosticism and use this as a guise to deny Pauline authorship. However, as Vaughn (1980) has concluded that at the heart of the system “was a combination of Judaism and paganism, but it wore the mask of Christianity” . In other words, the error discussed in the Colossians was a kind of Judaic Gnosticism and not the full-blown Greek Gnosticism of the second century.

## **Similarity to Ephesians**

As had been said earlier, Colossians and Ephesians are remarkably similar. Describing this similarity, Vaughn (1980) has this to say:

They are alike, for instance, in historical background. Both epistles were written by Paul out of an experience of imprisonment. Both were sent originally to believers in Asia. Both were entrusted to Tychicus, the messenger who was to bear them to their respective destinations. Moreover, many of the topics treated are common to both (the person of Christ, the church as Christ's body, ethical duties, relationship within the family, etc.). Even the language of the two epistles is strikingly similar. Moulton points out that in Colossians, the margin of the English Revised Version has 72 references to Ephesians, but only 88 to all of the other Pauline epistles. Ephesians seems to be an expansion by Paul of ideas presented in compact form in Colossians.

This has made some people to think that Paul would not have been spending time repeating himself. If however, these two epistles were written by the same man at the same time, such similarities cannot be out of place. It has to be noted however that despite the similarities, there are significant differences between them. For example, while discussing the Lordship of Christ and the unity of the body, “ in Ephesians the stress is on the church as the body of Christ; in Colossians the emphasis is on Christ as the head of the church” (Vaughn, 1980).

Having gone through the arguments for and against Pauline authorship, let us now turn our attention to the internal and external evidence for Pauline authorship.

### **External Evidence**

The church had traditionally ascribed the authorship of the epistle to the Colossians to Paul. There are evidences that the following Apostolic and Church Fathers are familiar with the epistle to the Colossians. It was known to the writer of the Epistle of Barnabas, Polycarp and Theophilus of Antioch. It was quoted by Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria among others.

It is also listed in the Muratorian Fragment. Its presence in some early versions attests to the fact that it was contained in the very first collections of Paul's Epistles. It was used as Scripture early in the second century, by Marcion and the Valentinians.

### **Internal Evidence**

As usual, the opening greetings of the letter indicated that it was written by Paul (and Timothy as co-author). The closing greetings are also characteristic of Paul as he began to list people that are known to him in the Colossian church.

One of the major strong internal evidence for the Pauline authorship is the relationship between the epistle and the epistle to Philemon. On this relationship Vaughn (1980) has this to say:

Both of these books, sent to the same town and in all likelihood conveyed by the same messenger, contains the name of Paul, Timothy, Onesimus, Archippus, Epaphras, Mark, Aristachus, Demas and Luke. The consensus of scholarly opinion is that Philemon is incontestably Pauline, and it is the feeling of many that the strength of its position carries over to Colossians.

We can now shift attention to the date of the writing of the epistle. Based on Colossians 4:10 and 18, we can conclude that the epistle to the Colossians was written during an imprisonment of Paul though there is no indication of the place of imprisonment. Traditionally, it has been said that the epistle was written during Roman imprisonment and this would place the epistle to around AD 62 or AD 63. It has to be noted however that some people are thinking of Caesarea and Ephesus.

### **3.4 Occasion of the Epistle to the Colossians**

The writing of the epistle to the Colossians was occasioned by the arrival of Epaphras in Rome with the disturbing news of the heresy troubling the Colossian church. It would also not be out of place that the meeting of Paul with Onesimus, the slave of Philemon who had deserted his master would also have occasioned the writing of the epistle. The purpose of the epistle was threefold:

- To express his personal interest in the Colossians
- To warn them against reverting to the former pagan vices
- To refute the heresies troubling the church

### **3.5 The Message of the Epistle to the Colossians**

The greatest contribution of the epistle to the Colossians to theology is found in its Christology. The emphasis on Christology in the epistle is due to the heretical teachings that are troubling the church. The main theme of the heresy is to see Christ as one among many supernatural beings. This type of teaching is however not absent in Africa as there are people who are trying to syncretize Christianity and Islam on the one hand and Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion on the other hand. The message of Paul to the Colossians in their situation still stands for us today:

- Christ, is God and no mere created being and he has conquered all powers and principalities on the cross.
- All Christians have died to the old life and have entered into a new life in their relationship with Christ.
- Since we have risen with Christ, we can live a resurrected life above every power and principalities and consequently we need not fear any power.

### **4.0 Conclusion**

In this unit you have learnt that the ancient city of Colossae was located on a major trade route linking Ephesus to the West and Persia to the East. The influence of Colossae declined when the road system changed. The church at Colossae was predominantly Gentile, having been founded by Epaphras, a Gentile. Objections to Pauline authorship are based on style, Christology, the heresies dealt with and its similarities with the epistle to the Ephesians. However, both internal and external evidences still favour Pauline authorship. The immediate circumstances leading to the writing of the epistle is Epaphras' visit to Paul in Rome informing him of the heresies troubling the church. The major contribution of this epistle to theology is its Christology.

### **5.0 Summary**

The following are the major lessons you have learnt in this unit:

- The ancient city of Colossae was located on a major trade route linking Ephesus to the West and Persia to the East.
- The influence of Colossae declined when the road system changed.
- The church at Colossae was predominantly Gentile, having been founded by Epaphras, a Gentile.
- Objections to Pauline authorship are based on style, Christology, the heresies dealt with and its similarities with the epistle to the Ephesians.
- Internal and external evidences still favour Pauline authorship.

- The immediate circumstances leading to the writing of the epistle is Epaphras' visit to Paul in Rome informing him of the heresies troubling the church.
- The major contribution of this epistle to theology is its Christology.

### **Self-Assessment Exercise**

Discuss the arguments against Pauline authorship of the epistle to Colossae.

### **6.0 References/Further Readings**

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## **Unit 3: Epistle to the Philemon**

### **Content**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Introducing the Epistle to Philemon
  - 3.2 Occasion of the Epistle to Philemon
  - 3.3 Authenticity and Date of Ephesus
  - 3.4 The Nature of the Epistle to Philemon
  - 3.5 Theological Significance of the Epistle to Philemon
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 Introduction**

In the last unit you have examined into details the epistle to the Colossians. You have examined the writer, the recipients and the occasion surrounding the epistle. For your information, this epistle is closely related to the epistle to Philemon which you are going to examine in this unit. They are so closely related that Patzia (1993) posits that:

*Both (that is, the epistle to the Colossians and the epistle to Philemon) are written from the same place, addressed to the same church, were carried to Colossae by Tychicus, both mention similar circumstances about Paul's imprisonment and an almost identical list of personal greetings (parenthesis words are mine).*

You are welcome to the study of the epistle to Philemon.

### **2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this epistle you should be able to:

- Explain why Philemon is the shortest of all Pauline epistles.
- Narrate the circumstances surrounding the writing of the epistle.
- Explain the relationship between Paul, Onesimus and Philemon.
- Identify the theological significance of the epistle.
- Pinpoint major concepts about slavery in the first century AD Palestine

### **3.0 Main Content**

#### **3.1 Introducing the Epistle to Philemon**



The epistle to Philemon is the shortest of all Pauline epistles. In the Greek original text (that is, NA<sup>28</sup> and GNT<sup>4</sup>), the epistle consists of only 335 words. It is also the most personal of all Pauline epistles. The epistle is so significant, not in terms of its literary, historical and interpretative problems, but because “it offers a fascinating window not only on a corner of the social world of the first century, but on Christian principles at work in a particular setting within the early church” (Patzia, 1993).

### **3.2 Occasion of the Epistle to Philemon**

This epistle has been dated between AD 58 and AD 60 during Paul’s imprisonment in Rome. The epistle was addressed to Philemon, a wealthy Gentile Christian in Colossae who became a believer during Paul’s ministry. The epistle centres on Onesimus, one of Philemon’s slaves who had escaped from his master and one way or the other found his way to Paul in prison where he was converted and became useful to Paul. Paul, however, wishing to obey the laws governing slavery at his time decided to return Onesimus to the rightful owner, Philemon.

In the epistle, Paul implored Philemon to receive Onesimus as a brother (and no longer as a slave), forgive him and also release him (that is, Onesimus) to serve him (Paul) further. The epistle can be outlined as follows:

Opening and Greeting	Philippians 1-3
Thanksgiving and Prayer	Philippians 4-17
Intercession for Onesimus Final	Philippians 18-22
Greetings and Benediction	Philippians 23-25

### **3.3 Authenticity and Date of Ephesus**

Internal evidence favours Pauline authorship of this epistle. The opening address (1:1) identifies Paul as the author of this epistle. As had been said earlier, though Timothy is mentioned as the co-author, there is no further reference to him throughout the epistle. Hence, one could easily conclude that Paul possibly made Timothy a joint author of the letter possibly because Timothy might have personal acquaintance with Philemon.

The place of writing of this epistle would definitely affect the dating. Unfortunately, there is no strong evidence that would make us be sure of any place of writing, hence we can only guess. For those who propose Rome because they support that the epistle was written along with Colossians and they uphold Rome as the place of writing of Colossians, then, AD 62 would have been the date of writing. Some scholars hold on to Caesarea and others hold on to Ephesus.

### **3.4 The Nature of the Epistle to Philemon**

The brevity of this epistle, the personal appeal to only one person, that is, Philemon and the manner in which Paul handled the case made some scholars to conclude that this epistle is a private and not a public document. Martin (1981) however lists six factors that would contradict such a claim. They are as follows:

- a. The length of the epistle exceeded that of most private letters.
- b. The greetings are extended to more than one person. The greetings actually were extended to the house church that meets in Philemon's place.
- c. It was customary to read Paul's epistles to the entire church in worship.
- d. The legal and technical languages are more characteristic of public documents than a private letter.
- e. It has all the characteristics of Paul's longer epistles addressed to the churches such as: including Timothy as a co-writer, salutation, thanksgiving, body and final greetings.
- e. Some designations used, such as: "fellow-worker," "sister" and "fellow-soldier" suggests church titles.

It is all these characteristics of a public document that makes Wickert as quoted by Loshe (1971) concludes that though personal issues are raised in the letter but "in the Body of Christ personal affairs are no longer private". Martin (1981) also concludes that "this brief epistle is to be seen not so much as a private letter of Paul as an individual but as an apostolic letter about a personal matter".

### **3.5 Theological Significance of the Epistle to Philemon**

The epistle to Philemon is significant for the following reasons:

1. It opens a window on the nature of Paul's imprisonment and the personal relationship that he enjoyed with his friends and co-workers. It is this personal relationship that formed the basis for Paul's request from Philemon in this epistle.

2. It provides the contemporary reader with a small commentary on slavery in the ancient world. The contents of Philemon alongside Colossians would make us appreciate how conversion to the Christian faith breaks down all barriers in their time, be it social, racial and economical (Patzia, 1991).
3. This epistle is a masterpiece of pastoral diplomacy. Firstly, Paul's request to have Onesimus released is not by any threat or coercion. Secondly, the reconciliation between Philemon and Onesimus is based on the principles of Christian love and forgiveness and not on any iota of apostolic authority.
4. The fourth theological significance is brought out by William Barclay (1960). He said, "here is one of the great romances of grace in the early church". If Philemon actually forgave Onesimus and released him to Paul, he would have demonstrated the grace of Christ in his life in all its practical sense.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

You have learnt that the epistle to Philemon is the shortest of all Pauline epistles with only 335 words in the Greek text. The epistle is very important because it gives us a view of the social world of the first century. It was addressed to Philemon, one of Paul's convert in Colossae. Paul, in this epistle, implored Philemon to receive Onesimus, no longer as a slave, but as a brother and also to release Onesimus to him for future services. Though some argue that this epistle is a private and not a public document, but most scholars argue that this is because in the body of Christ, personal affairs are no longer private. This epistle is a masterpiece of pastoral diplomacy.

#### **5.0 Summary**

The following are the major units you have learnt in this unit:

- The epistle to Philemon is the shortest of all Pauline epistles with only 335 words in the Greek text.
- The epistle is very important because it gives us a view of the social world of the first century.
- Paul, in this epistle, implored Philemon to receive Onesimus, no longer as a slave, but as a brother and also to release Onesimus to him for future services.
- Though some argue that this epistle is a private and not a public document, but most scholars argue that this is because in the body of Christ, personal affairs are no longer private.
- This epistle is a masterpiece of pastoral diplomacy.

#### **Self-Assessment Exercise**

What are the implications of the theological significances of the epistle to Philemon to the contemporary church?

## 6.0 References/Further Readings

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## **Unit 4: Epistle to the Philippians**

### **Content**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 The Ancient City of Philippi
  - 3.2 The Church at Philippi
  - 3.3 Authorship
  - 3.4 Place of Writing
  - 3.5 Date of Writing
  - 3.6 The Message and Theology of Philippi
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 Introduction**

In the last unit you have examined the epistle to Philemon which has been described as the most personal of all Pauline epistles. You have seen how the conversion to the Christian faith in the ancient times affects all the sphere of life of the believer as seen in the demand Paul is making of Philemon in the epistle. In this unit you would be dealing with the epistle to the Philippians which is the last epistle to deal with among the prison epistles. This is to say that after this unit, we will be moving to the last module of this course.

### **2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Narrate the history of ancient Philippi.
- Determine the composition of the church at Philippi.
- Evaluate the arguments for the place of writing of the epistle.
- Pinpoint the major theological teachings of the epistle

### **3.0 Main Content**

#### **3.1 The Ancient City of Philippi**

The city of Philippi, even before Paul's arrival there has a rich history. Its history can be traced back to Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexandria the Great. Between 358 and 357 BC, Philip built the city on the site of an ancient Thracian city. He fortified the city and then named it after himself. Later, Philippi became a Roman city and was made one of the stations on the route connecting Rome with the East. After it had been destroyed by wars, it was rebuilt by Emperor Octavian and under him; it became a Roman colony, with the highest privilege obtainable by a provincial municipality called *ius italicum*. As a result of this, citizens of

Rome and Philippi could engage in commercial activities without having to pay land and poll tax and yet be entitled to protection by the Roman law.

It was this strategic and unique position of Philippi that made Paul to “purposely neglected the port city of Neapolis to begin preaching the gospel in the small but more important city of Philippi of the first district of Macedonia” (Hawthorne, 1993). The city was predominantly populated by Romans, followed by Macedonian Greeks and then a small settlement of the Jews. It was on record that the citizens of Philippi were proud of their city and its ties with Rome.

### **3.2 The Church at Philippi**

According to Acts 16:9-10, Paul came to Philippi as a result of the vision he had in Troas, wherein he saw a man saying, “come over to Macedonia and help us”. Following the same account, the first convert in Philippi was Lydia, a god-fearer who was baptized alongside her household. The only other convert mentioned was the Roman soldier who guarded Paul and Silas while they were in jail. Though little is known of the composition of this church, it is most likely to be highly dominated by the Greeks. For example, going by the names of some of the members of the church mentioned by Paul, like Epaphroditus, Syntyche, Euodia and Clement, which are all Greek names, it is an indication that there were many Greeks in the church. It is also important to know that from inception women played key roles in the life of this church. Hawthorne (1993) comments thus:

It is a fact worth of note that of the four Philippians mentioned by name in this letter, two of them are women and are designated by Paul as women who worked hard alongside him in the proclamation of the gospel.

### **3.3 Authorship**

Internal evidence based on Philippians 1:1 shows clearly that Paul was the author of this epistle, though the name of Timothy was mentioned as a co-author. Content-wise, Pauline authorship was confirmed by frequent use of the singular personal pronoun. Hawthorne (1993) indicates that the singular personal pronouns occurred 51 times in this epistle despite its brevity considering the other epistles.

External evidence favours also Pauline authorship as many of the early church fathers knew the book and attributed it to Paul. Church Fathers such as Polycarp of Smyrna, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian all quoted copiously from the epistle and also attributed it to Paul.

It is important to note however that critical scholarship led by F. C. Baur had in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century began to question Pauline authorship of this epistle. However, the arguments had been without conviction that they gradually died out. Hawthorne (1993) said, “in spite of the great power and erudition with which Baur argued, his arguments were not convincing nor widely accepted. Eventually they fell into disuse and essentially disappeared”.

### **3.4 Place of Writing**

Unlike the authorship, the problems surrounding the place of writing are more complicated. Unfortunately, it cannot be wished away because the determination of the place of writing is significant as far as the dating and the interpretation of the text is concerned especially the identity and nature of Paul's opponent at Philippi. To accurately determine the place of writing of this epistle, the following factors must be critically examined:

1. Paul was in prison when he wrote (1:7, 13, 17)
2. He was facing a trial that could end in his death (1:19-20; 2:17) or acquittal (1:25; 2:24).
3. Timothy was with him when he wrote (1:1; 2:19-23).
4. There was a praetorium where he was held (1:13).
5. Evangelical activities were going on all around him (1:14-17).
6. He planned visiting Philippi if acquitted (2:24)
7. The place had to be one that would allow several trips back and forth Philippi for the contents of the letter seems to indicate not less than four trips from that place to Paul by various groups of people.

The following places: Rome, Ephesus, Corinth and Caesarea have been put forward by various scholars as the possible place of writing. The following are the arguments in favour of the places.

#### **Rome**

Apart from the fact that Rome meets most of the factors listed above, it is also the oldest and the longest-held view being held by church tradition as far back as the second century AD. This was also the view held by Marcion, the heretic in his Marcionite prologue. Now, let us examine the factors one after the other.

Definitely, Paul was in prison when he was in Rome, he was however given freedom to receive guests and gifts and also to write and send letters. He was free to preach the gospel and he was to stand before Caesar where his fate would be ultimately decided (Acts 28:16-31). The praetorium was also in Rome and so he had the access to the people of Caesar's household.

The problem of identifying Rome as the place of writing however is as follows:

One, the distance between Rome and Philippi is too long to accommodate the number of visits that went on within the timeframe of Paul's imprisonment. Two, there is no indication in the account of the book of Acts that Timothy was with Paul in Rome, thus mentioning his name as in (1:1) would be out of place. Three, the intent in the letter was to visit Philippi but according to the epistle to Romans 15:24-28, he was planning to focus on Spain and abandon the mission fields in the West. Thus, Rome becomes incompatible with the authorship of Philippians. Finally, if according to 1:30 and 4:15-16, Paul is saying that he had not been to Philippi since the establishment of the church, then he could not be writing from

Rome because according Acts 16 he had been to Philippi at least twice between the establishment of the church at Philippi and his journey to Rome.

## **Ephesus**

Ephesus has been touted by some people because of the following reasons:

It has been argued that the praetorium can actually be used to designate the residence of any provincial governor and since Ephesus had one, it would not be a problem. Timothy was also with Paul at Ephesus (Acts 19:22) hence Philippians 1:1 would fit in. The distance between Philippi and Ephesus is minimal and thus can accommodate the said frequent visits to and fro Paul and Philippi. While Paul was in prison at Ephesus, there were extensive evangelistic activities all around him (Acts 19:10, 25-26; cf. Philippians 1:15). Paul also referred to his being imprisoned at Ephesus and hence the argument that this was not mentioned in the book of Acts cannot hold.

Despite the increasing popularity of the Ephesus option, it has the following flaws. It has been argued that the hypothesis rests on purely inferences. It has also been pointed out that despite the importance of the collection for the saints to Paul, it was not mentioned and thus it might not have been with him. Finally, the tone by which Paul referred to the Christians all around him except Timothy was inconceivable considering the close relationship between Paul and those around him at Ephesus. For example, Priscilla and Aquila, his very good friends were at Ephesus at that time.

## **Corinth**

In terms of distance, Corinth was very close to Philippi, in fact closer than Ephesus. There was a proconsul at Corinth which would mean that those of the household of Caesar would be present. It has also been argued that since Paul did not argue over his apostleship in this there is then the possibility that the letter was written before first Corinthians. Paul also faced serious opponents and was threatened with death and he was divinely assured of release and he could have visited Philippi as he intended in the letter. However, like the Ephesians proposition, this is also based seriously on conjectures. Again, the harsh statement from Paul about the Christians around him would also be misplaced because Priscilla and Aquila were also with him at Corinth.

## **Caesarea**

This had been the last option that is being touted as the possible place for the writing of the letter to the Philippians and it “makes a great deal of sense and harmonizes with most of the essential facts” (Hawthorne, 1993). Firstly, Luke specifically mentioned that Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea, in the praetorium of Herod (Acts 23:53). This was the residence of the Roman procurator and the headquarters of the Roman garrison in Palestine. Secondly, the period of Paul’s imprisonment in Caesarea was a fairly long one to have been able to contain the several communications back and forth Philippi. Thirdly, although he



was in custody, Paul was given enough liberty to be with his friends and to live a normal life. Fourthly, as could be inferred from Acts 28:16-31, Paul had given his defence and this would harmonize with the impression that Paul gives in Philippians 1:16. Fifthly, the confidence of release from prison and the hope to visit Philippi would harmonize with Paul's visit to the west after being released from prison.

### **3.5 Date of Writing**

As we have said earlier, the date of writing this epistle is directly related to the place of writing. Thus, if the epistle was written from Rome, it would be dated between AD 60 and AD 63. If it is written from Ephesus, it would be dated between AD 54 to AD 57. If it is Corinth, it would be dated around AD 50 and if we concede that the epistle is written from Caesarea, then it would be dated between AD 58 and AD 60.

### **3.6 The Message and Theology of Philippi**

The greatest contribution of this epistle to the church is the fact that Christians ought not to despair in moments of gloom. Though written from a prison, it is a letter that is aglow with joy of faith in Christ. Against the general belief of the time that suffering is the result of God's punishment for the sins committed by the one suffering or by his family. In the New Testament, the spirit is that peace and joy comes from the believers' complete reliance on Christ which strengthens the believer.

### **4.0 Conclusion**

You have learnt in this unit that Philippi has a rich history which can be traced back to Philip, the King of Macedon and father of Alexander the Great. Philippi became a Roman colony under Emperor Octavian and was given the highest municipality status. The church at Philippi was predominantly Greek. The Pauline authorship of this epistle was not questioned until the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The anti-Pauline authorship movement was led by F. C. Baur but the arguments he had put forward have been largely unconvincing. Four places have been proposed as the place of writing of the epistle, namely: Rome, Ephesus, Corinth and Caesarea. Though Rome had been the traditionally supported place of writing, the factors most favour Caesarea. If the epistle is written from Caesarea then it would be dated between AD 58 and AD 60.

### **5.0 Summary**

The following are the major points you have learnt from this unit:

- Philippi has a rich history which can be traced back to Philip, the King of Macedon and father of Alexander the Great.
- Philippi became a Roman colony under Emperor Octavian and was given the highest municipality status.
- The church at Philippi was predominantly Greek.

- The Pauline authorship of this epistle was not questioned until the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The anti-Pauline authorship movement was led by F. C. Baur but the arguments he had put forward have been largely unconvincing.
- Four places have been proposed as the place of writing of the epistle, namely: Rome, Ephesus, Corinth and Caesarea.
- Rome had been the traditionally supported place of writing but the factors most favour Caesarea.
- If the epistle is written from Caesarea then it would be dated between AD 58 and AD 60.

### **Self-Assessment Exercises**

Using the arguments above, decide the place of writing of the epistle to the Philippians.

### **6.0 Reference/Further Readings**

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## **Module 4: The Pastoral Epistles**

Unit 1:	Introduction to Pastoral Epistles
Unit 2:	First Epistle to Timothy
Unit 3:	Epistle to Titus
Unit 4:	Second Epistle to Timothy

### **Unit 1: Introduction to Pastoral Epistles**

#### **Content**

1.0	Introduction
2.0	Intended Learning Outcomes
3.0	Main Content
3.1	Authenticity of the Pastoral Epistles
3.2	Arguments for Pauline Authorship
3.3	Arguments against Pauline Authorship
4.0	Conclusion
5.0	Summary
6.0	References/Further Readings

#### **1.0 Introduction**

You are welcomed to the last module of this course. In the previous module which focuses on the Prison Epistles, you have studied the book of the Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon and the Philippians. This module focuses on the Pastoral Epistles, which is used to describe just only three epistles: First Timothy, Second Timothy and Titus. The 1st and 2nd epistles to Timothy and the epistle to Titus are the three epistles grouped together and tagged 'the Pastoral Epistles'. This name was first applied to the three epistles by Paul Anton of Halle in 1726 and since then has been accepted as fitting and appropriate.

#### **2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- List all arguments in support of Pauline authorship of the Pastorals.
- Discuss the arguments against Pauline authorship of the Pastorals.
- Puncture all the arguments against Pauline authorship.

#### **3.0 Main Content**

##### **3.1 Authenticity Of The Pastoral Epistles**

J. E. Schmidt was the first person to attack Pauline authorship of the Pastorals. This was in 1804. He was followed by Schleiermacher in 1807 and finally by F. C. Baur of the Tübingen school in 1835. Since then voices of critical orthodoxy have confidently followed this tradition and various positions have been postulated.

One, some scholars argue that the Pastorals were written after Paul's death by a writer who used the apostle's name to strengthen the authority of the letters. Two, other scholars conclude that these epistles were composed by a disciple or later admirer of Paul who included some genuine Pauline fragments in his work. An example of such scholars is I. H. Marshall who believes that the Pastorals are not pseudonymous but allonymous, that is, a later compiler arranged Pauline traditions and materials without any intention to deceive his readers.

### **3.2 Arguments for Pauline Authorship**

#### **External Evidence**

External evidence favors the Pauline authorship of the Pastorals. Clement and Ignatius alluded to the Pastorals in several places. Polycarp in a letter to the Philippians quoted from all the three epistles. Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian and the Muratorian Canon attributed them to Paul by name. Eusebius of Caesarea, who was regarded as a critic of such matters listed the three epistles among the universally acknowledged and undisputed works of Paul. The Syriac version of the New Testament, which was published around 150 -200 BC contained all the three epistles. It seems that among all the early church fathers, those who had problem with the Pastorals are mainly heretics like Marcion, Basilides and Valentius.

#### **Internal Evidence**

Though all the objections raised against the Pastoral Epistles are all based on the strength of internal evidence, it is important to know that all the three epistles are self-attested. They contain the characteristic Pauline blessing at the beginning, end with the customary salutation, they reveal the usual solicitude of Paul for the churches and co-workers associated with him and finally points to the same relation that exists between Paul and Timothy on the one hand and Paul and Titus on the other hand as we can gather from other sources. For example, the structure of 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy reveals that the epistle is interspersed with his instructions to Timothy as well as many personal references like his ordination (1:18, 4:14); his youthfulness (4:11f) and his gastric problems (5:23). 2nd Timothy is the most personal of all the three epistles. In it, Paul says he recalls Timothy's tears, the faith and the ministry of his mother and grandmother (1:4ff) as well as his begging of Timothy twice to come to him.

### **3.3 Arguments against Pauline Authorship**

The arguments against can be summed up under four major headings: historical, linguistic, theological and ethical. These will be discussed in turn:

#### **The Historical Argument**

The text of the Pastorals does furnish readers with the information they need about the historical circumstances of their composition. For example, in 1st Timothy, Paul states that he asked Timothy to stay in Ephesus to combat heresy there when he proceeded to Macedonia, and Titus was left in Crete to appoint suitable elders for the churches. These statements raise some questions, namely:

- a. When did Paul leave for Macedonia leaving Timothy and Titus in Ephesus and Crete respectively?
- b. When did Paul spend the winter in Nicopolis according to Titus 3:12?
- c. When did Paul leave his cloak and scroll behind in Troas as suggested in 2Timothy 4:13?
- d. When did Paul abandon Trophimus at Miletus when he was ill as indicated in 2 Timothy 4:20?
- e. Where are we to place Paul's stay in Rome, his imprisonment and trial as recorded in 2 Timothy 1:16ff; 4:16ff?

One has to confess that despite the spirited attempts by the fundamentalists and the conservatives, it is simply impossible to fit in these historical allusions in the Pastorals into Luke's records in the Acts of the Apostles.

In order to counteract the rejection of Pauline authorship on this ground, the supporters of Pauline authorship appeals to the theory of double imprisonment as developed by Eusebius in *Ecclesiastical History*. Commenting on this theory, Stott (1997:24) says:

He wrote that Paul was released at the end of his two- year period of house arrest, where Luke takes leave of him and that he then resumed his missionary travels, penetrating even as far as Spain as he had hoped, before being re-arrested, re-imprisoned, re-tried and finally condemned and beheaded.

Hinson (1971, 11:303), in support of the two-imprisonment theory also states that:

Against the silence of Acts, the tradition of two imprisonments is early and strong. First Clement 5:7 (AD 96) records that Paul reached 'the limits of the West', which to a Roman writer could hardly have meant anything other than Spain. The Apocryphal Acts of Peter, written by an Asian Christian (ca. 200-210), and the Roman Muratorian Canon both attest the journey to Spain. Origen and many later church fathers knew the same tradition.

The acceptance of this tradition will provide the framework into which the historical references in the Pastorals would perfectly fit. Though the reconstruction is entirely speculative, it would now read thus:

Upon Paul's release in AD 63, he embarked on his projected trip to Spain after which he returned to Ephesus and stayed with Timothy who had been his co-worker there. He left to Crete with Titus where he left Titus and returned to Ephesus. After a brief stay in Ephesus, he left through Troas for Macedonia to stay in Philippi where he had probably composed 1 Timothy. He must have left Philippi to Nicopolis where he spent the winter and wrote Titus. By the time he was writing 2 Timothy, he was again a prisoner in Rome and expected soon to be put to death (Hinson, 1971, 11:303).

### **The Linguistic Argument**

The linguistic argument against Pauline authorship of the Pastorals was popularized in 1921 with the publication of P. N. Harrison's book: *The Problem of the Pastoral Epistles*. Harrison (1971) advances four main arguments in the book.

- a. Firstly, he argues that out of 848 words which occurs in the Pastorals, about 306 are not found in other authentic Pauline letters. Apart from this, there are 175 *hapaxes* (*hapax legomena* are words occurring only once) which is the highest when compared with other Pauline letters.
- b. Secondly, he argues that when compared with other ten authentic letters of Paul, only 542 words would be found in common which may strongly suggests that the Pastorals were written by another hand.
- c. Thirdly, he argues that out of the total words that are considered genuine Pauline words, 1,635 are absent from the Pastorals. To worsen the case, 580 of these words, which can be considered characteristically Pauline words are also absent. He thus concludes that the omission of so much distinctively Pauline terminology constitutes a very serious abjection to the acceptance of Pauline authorship.
- d. The peak of his argument is that if the vocabulary of the Pastorals are compared with that of the apostolic fathers and the early apologists of the first half of the second century AD, it would reveal that out of the 175 hapaxes in the Pastorals, as many as 94 recurred in the early church fathers. He thus concludes that the author of the Pastorals does speak the language of the apostolic fathers and the early apologists, while diverging from that of the other New Testament writers.

With the foregoing, one cannot but agree that these linguistic peculiarities of the Pastorals create a very serious doubt about their Pauline authorship. In order to counteract these arguments, three major theories have been advanced by the fundamentalists and the conservatives.

### **The Use of an Amanuensis or Secretary**

Otto Roller in a short book titled *Das Formular*, written 1933 was the first to investigate Paul's letters in the light of ancient letter-writing practices whereby the author could use an amanuensis. Moule, in his appraisal of Roller's work concludes that Roller sees the act of verbatim dictation as too laborious and inhibiting to a fast thinker like Paul and would have given the amanuensis the free hand in writing the letter. This thesis was elaborated by Randolph Richards in his book *The Secretary in the Letters of Paul*, written in 1991. In his study of Greco-Roman letter writing practices classified the role of the amanuensis into four:

- (a) he might serve as a recorder (taking a verbatim dictation);
- (b) he might serve as editor (working from instruction, or from an oral or a written draft);
- (c) working as co-author and
- (d) working as composer.

This is plausible enough to the extent that it may account for the divergence in style and vocabulary.

### **The Advanced Age of Paul**

Some scholars also appealed to the fact by the time of the writing of the Pastorals, Paul must have aged very considerably and thus would have affected his style of writing and his choice of vocabulary. This however is not a water tight argument.

### **The Variety of an Intelligent Writer**

Some others have equally argued that the style of any intelligent writer like Paul is bound to vary with each write-up. This too is also not a water tight argument.

### **The Nature of the Pastorals**

It was Ellis who first drew attention to the nature of the Pastorals. This is the fact that in most of the Pastorals, especially 1 Timothy, Paul made use of pre-formed materials, such as doxologies, creedal confessions and hymns. For example, 1 Timothy 3:16 contains this hymn:

He was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit  
Seen by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on  
in the world, Taken up in glory.

In his study, Ellis (1992) concludes that pre-formed materials account for 43% of 1 Timothy, 46% of Titus and 16% of 2 Timothy. With these propositions, the question of the divergence of vocabulary and style can be put to rest.

### **The Theological Argument**

The most serious issue raised in the case of theology is that of ecclesiology. It has been argued that the church organization as described in the Pastorals reflects an age later than Paul's. Quoting the argument, Ellis (1992) states that: "The Baur tradition (and also Harnack) supposed that the qualification demanded for the ministry of 'bishop' or 'overseer' reflected a developed church order that was post-Pauline." However, in Kasemann's submission, he opines that "it is simply not true that the church structures envisaged by Paul in the Pastorals are those of the second century". He concludes that "in the Pastorals there is no threefold order of bishops, presbyters and deacons, for bishops and presbyters are still the same person and office" (Stott, 1997).

Another theological objection which has been raised against Pauline authorship of the Pastorals is the conclusion by most anti -Pauline authorship that the heresy attacked by the writer of the epistles reflects more of second century Marcionism or Gnosticism. It has to be pointed out however that in all the three letters, there is no trace of Docetic theology which is the trade-mark of Gnosticism. From the various comments in the epistles, (examples of which are: ‘word battling’ (1 Timothy 6:4; 2 Timothy 2:14, 16, 23); ‘quarrels over the law’ (Titus 3:9); ‘teachers of the law’ (1 Timothy 1:7) and ‘Jewish myths’ (Titus 1:14) one can safely conclude that the heresy would be Jewish in background and this is why some conclude that it is Hellenistic Gnosticism.

Other objections raised under theological argument are quite erratic. While some scholars like Hanson (1968) declare that the author of the Pastorals has no theology of his own, others argue that the theology is post-Pauline. It has to be stated however that the doctrine of the pastorals agree with that found in the undisputed letters of Paul.

### **The Ethical Argument**

Having peruse the atmosphere of respectability and of conformity to the prevailing social values which seem to permeate the ethical instructions in the Pastorals, some scholars have described the ethics of the Pastorals as either ‘bourgeois’ or ‘middleclass ethics’ and feel this is not akin to the picture of Paul as revealed in the scriptures. It has been pointed out however that as in all Pauline letters, the Pastorals lay emphasis on the paramount Christian qualities of faith, love, purity, good works and the future hopes. As Stott (1997) concludes: “the Christian existence for which Paul called is a combination of theology and ethics, which originates in the Christ event and the salvation he achieved, and which directly counters the perversions of behaviors introduced by the false teachers”.

## **4.0 Conclusion**

In this unit, you have studied about the Pastoral Epistles. The traditional ascription of the authorship of the Pastorals to Paul was first attacked by Schmidt in 1804 and was followed by Schleirmacher in 1807 and Baur in 1835. Arguments against Pauline authorship had been discussed under the following sections: the historical argument, the linguistic argument, the theological argument and the ethical argument. It has to be noted that unless the theory of double imprisonment of Paul is accepted, the Pastorals would not fit in into the accounts given by the book of the Acts of the Apostles.

## **5.0 Summary**

The following are the major points you have learnt in this unit:

- The traditional ascription of the authorship of the Pastorals to Paul was first attacked by Schmidt in 1804 and was followed by Schleirmacher in 1807 and Baur in 1835.



- Arguments against Pauline authorship had been discussed under the following sections: the historical argument, the linguistic argument, the theological argument and the ethical argument.
- Unless the theory of double imprisonment of Paul is accepted, the Pastorals would not fit in into the accounts given by the book of the Acts of the Apostles.

### **Self-Assessment Exercises**

Evaluate into details, the arguments against Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles.

## **6.0 References/Further Readings**

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## **Unit 2: First Epistle to Timothy**

### **Content**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 The Recipient of First Timothy
  - 3.2 The Situation and Date of First Timothy
  - 3.3 The Message of First Timothy
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 Introduction**

In the previous unit, we have treated the general issues surrounding the authorship of the Pastoral Epistles, of which First Timothy is one. We have been able to establish that it is indeed a Pauline epistle, even if the double-imprisonment theory has to be used. In this unit, we would go on and examine the first epistle to Timothy into details.

### **2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Determine the kind of person Timothy was.
- Discuss the circumstances surrounding the writing of the first epistle to Timothy.
- Summarize the messages of the first epistle to Timothy

### **3.0 Main Content**

#### **3.1 The Recipient of First Timothy**

Paul actually met Timothy in his home town of Lystra and from there Timothy joined Paul's team. Since then, for a period of about fifteen years, Timothy had

been a faithful companion of Paul. He was with him during the most of the second and third missionary trips. During these trips, he had been sent as a trusted apostolic delegate on special missions. Examples are his trips to Thessalonica and Corinth (1 Thessalonians 3:1ff and 1 Corinthians 4:17).

He was one of those who accompanied Paul to Jerusalem (Acts 20:1-5). The relationship between Paul and the Timothy is one that had grown from a child in the Lord to a friend and to a trusted co-worker. It is important to note that there is a disagreement among scholars as to the spiritual relationship between Paul and Timothy. Some argued that Paul called Timothy his child in the Lord (1 Corinthians 4:17) because it was Paul that led him to the Lord while others maintain that Timothy was already a believer by the time Paul met him. However, one has to maintain that Timothy might have been an adherent of the Jewish faith because his mother was a Jewess, but was converted to Christianity during the ministry of Paul since the Christian faith first got to Lystra through Paul's ministry. Timothy was endeared to Paul because like Paul had said, he was genuinely concerned about the welfare of the brethren. By the time Paul was writing to the Philippians, he was able to say of Timothy, "I have no one like him" (Philippians 2:20-22). There are certain things one has to notice about Timothy.

Firstly, Timothy is a young man, or a youth. Thus in First Timothy 4:12, Paul admonished him, "let no one despise your youth ". Again in 2 Timothy 2:22, Paul advised him to "shun youthful passions". Though his age cannot be cited with all certainty, the Greek word used to describe him is *neos* and according to Simpson (1954) it can be used for "adults in the full vigor of life and of soldiers of military age to the verge of forty" . Based on this, one can conclude that Timothy would be in his thirties, and to head a church at such an age is a great responsibility.

Secondly, Timothy was prone to illness. In 1 Timothy 5:23, Paul made reference to the fact that Timothy usually has frequent ailments, although he did not specify what the ailment was.

Thirdly, Timothy was timid by temperament. Stott (1973) comments thus:

If he had lived in our generation, I think we would have described him as an 'introvert'. He evidently shrank from difficult tasks, so that Paul in writing to the Corinthians had to pave the way for his ministry: 'When Timothy comes, see that you put him at ease among you'.

### **3.2 The Situation of First Timothy**

Out of the three epistles making up the Pastorals, it seems that First Timothy and Titus share the same structure, characteristics and circumstances and were probably written about the same time.

As indicated in 2 Timothy 4:10; 4:20; Titus 1:5 and 3:12, the mission work of Paul extended to Gaul with churches in Crete, Miletus and Nicopolis. The main

problem however, was that these churches were variously endangered by a judaizing-gnostic counter mission (this is detected in 1 Timothy 1:3-7, 19-20; 4:1-2; 6:20; 2 Timothy 4:3-4 and Titus 1:10-16). The heretical wave was so strong that even some former coworkers of Paul and church leaders were swept off, and some house churches were on the verge of collapse. This is reflected in Titus 1:5, 10-11:

The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town as I directed you... For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group. They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach – and that for the sake of dishonest gain.

To face this challenging situation, Paul adopted a new strategy. Instead of writing to the churches and sending the letters through some co-workers, he started writing trusted co-workers that he had appointed to take charge of the areas. Thus, First Timothy was sent to Timothy who had been appointed to take charge of Ephesus and the Epistle to Titus was sent to Titus who had been in charge of Crete. The letters thus served dual purposes. As Ellis (1993) puts it, they “served both as instruments of personal communication and encouragement and also as *vade mecums* to give apostolic authorization for their teachings’.

The dating of First Timothy and Titus is purely conjectural because there is no indication in the letters for appropriate dating. However, they have been largely dated early AD 65.

### **3.3 The Message of First Timothy**

In all of the epistles of Paul, it is the First epistle to Timothy that is most concerned with the life of the church. The message of First Timothy can be grouped into the following sub-groups:

#### **The Apostolic Doctrine**

The purpose for which Paul had left Timothy in Ephesus was for Timothy to uphold the apostolic doctrines against the waves of heresies that was blowing against the churches he had found. For Paul, heresies are nothing but deviation from the truth that has been revealed. In such a situation, the minister of God is expected to take his stand against heresies by condemning heresies and defending the truth of the gospel, “contending earnestly for the truth” (Stott, 1997).

#### **Public Worship**

In the areas concerned with public worship, two major issues were addressed, and these are the scope and the need for global concern in public worship as well as the roles of the various sexes in public worship. It has to be stated here that the most controversial verses of Paul are contained in the role of women in worship and these needed to be studied carefully.

## **Pastoral Oversight**

For the church to run effectively, that is, combating heresies and conducting its public services effectively, the local church has to be run by people who are fit. A major section of the epistle discusses the qualifications of people that could be ordained as pastors and or deacons.

## **Local Leadership**

According to Stott (1997), since the local church is the main arena where the struggle between truth and falsehood is slugged out, the local leaders must be equipped in detecting error and commending truth.

## **Social Responsibilities**

In this epistle, three sets of people are set apart for the social responsibility of the church. These are the widows, the presbyters and the slaves. The church is expected to support the widows who have no one to take care of them and also tailor them to work in the church. The presbyters are to be well taken care of in terms of their wages and the slaves are urged to work wholeheartedly for their masters be they believers or not.

## **4.0 Conclusion**

In this unit you have examined the first epistle of Paul to Timothy. Timothy, to whom the epistle was directed, was a half Jew and a native of Lystra. Paul met him at Lystra and ever since became a companion to Paul who had brought him up. The first epistle was written to encourage Timothy in the task he had been left to do at Ephesus. Various ecclesiastical issues were discussed: the Apostolic doctrine, public worship, pastoral oversight, local leadership and social responsibilities.

## **5.0 Summary**

The following are the major points you have learnt in this unit:

- Timothy, to whom the epistle was directed, was a half Jew and a native of Lystra.
- Paul met him at Lystra and ever since became a companion to Paul who had brought him up.
- The first epistle was written to encourage Timothy in the task he had been left to do at Ephesus.
- Various ecclesiastical issues were discussed: the Apostolic doctrine, public worship, pastoral oversight, local leadership and social responsibilities.

## Self-Assessment Exercises

Evaluate into details, the arguments against Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles.

### 6.0 References/Further Readings

Adewale 'Biyi (2006). "Pastoral Epistles" *An Encyclopaedia of the Arts*, 10(3). Lagos: Lagos State University, 154-162. Also available on <http://artslasu.org/publications/index.html>

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### **Unit 3:        The Epistle to Titus**

#### **Content**

- 1.0    Introduction
- 2.0    Intended Learning Outcomes
- 3.0    Main Content
  - 3.1    The Recipient of Titus
  - 3.2    The Situation and Date of Titus
  - 3.3    The Message of Titus
- 4.0    Conclusion
- 5.0    Summary
- 6.0    References/Further Readings

#### **1.0    Introduction**

In the previous unit, we have treated the first epistle of Paul to Timothy. We have asserted that Paul wrote that letter to Timothy when he was still at Ephesus trying to fulfil the task that has been handed over to him by Paul. Issues thus discussed were what are expected of a church leader and the functions of the church. In this unit, we would be examining the counterpart of First Timothy and that is the epistle to Titus which would have been written about the same period with First Timothy.

#### **2.0    Intended Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Discuss the relationship between Paul and Titus.
- Narrate the situation out of which the epistle to Titus grew.
- Identify the date the epistle was written.
- Discuss the major themes of the epistle.

### **3.0 Main Content**

#### **3.1 The Recipient Of Titus**

The first time the name of Titus occurs in the New Testament, it was in connection with the circumcision controversy. The orthodox Jews were putting pressure on Paul to circumcise Titus when he brought him to Jerusalem with Barnabas. Though Paul later circumcised Timothy (who was a half Jew) he refused to circumcise Titus who was a full blooded Gentile. Titus was one of Paul's converts who later became a member of the missionary team. Like Timothy too, he had been sent as an apostolic delegate to Corinth. After his first trip to Corinth, which was very successful, Paul entrusted him with a second mission to Corinth. It was then that he took 2 Corinthians with him. The only other thing that is known of Titus is his being left in Crete to complete the re-organization of the church. From this point onward, the New Testament is silent about Titus.

#### **3.2 The Situation and Date of Titus**

This epistle was written by the apostle Paul to encourage his brother in the faith, Titus, whom he had left in Crete to lead the church which Paul had established on one of his missionary journeys. This letter advises Titus regarding what qualifications to look for in leaders for the church. He also warns Titus of the reputations of those living on the island of Crete so that he would take precautions. In addition to instructing Titus in what to look for in a leader of the church, Paul also encouraged Titus to return to Nicopolis for a visit. In other words, Paul continued to disciple Titus and others as they grew in the grace of the Lord.

#### **3.3 The Message of Titus**

Though like First Timothy, the epistle to Titus has to do with church organizations, but as Stott (1997) posits, it goes beyond this:

But further reflections reveals that the three chapters of Titus relate to the three main contexts of Christian living, namely the church, the home and the world, while all three illustrate the vital nexus between doctrine and duty.

Based on this, Stott adopted the following analysis which would also be followed here:

#### **Doctrine and Duty in the Church (1:5-16)**

In this section Paul discussed the qualifications and duties expected of the elders and the teachers in the church. These include being blameless in their marriage and home as well as in their character and conduct. To complete this section he



discussed the characters and influence of false teachers that were troubling the church.

### **Doctrine and Duty in the Home (2:1-15)**

Under this section Paul dealt with ethical issues by gender and by age. He stated what is expected of the older men and women as well as the younger women and young men as well as slaves. What is expected of Titus himself is also stated.

### **Doctrine and Duty in the World (3:1-11)**

Major discussions in this section dealt with the duties expected of Christians in their public life and these include relationship with rulers and then interpersonal relationships.

## **4.0 Conclusion**

In this unit you have studied the relationship between Paul and Titus. You have been taught that Titus was a complete Greek that Paul refused to circumcise because of his principle that salvation does not need to include the observance of the Jewish rites. The situation out of which the epistle to Titus has grown was also examined. The basic themes of the epistle revolved around the Christian duty in the Church, in the home and in the society.

## **5.0 Summary**

The following are the major points you have learnt in this unit:

- Titus was a convert of Paul.
- Titus was a complete Greek that Paul refused to circumcise because of his principle that salvation does not need to include the observance of the Jewish rites.
- The basic themes of the epistle revolved around the Christina duty in the church, in the home and in the society.

## **Self-Assessment Exercise**

What is the relevance of the lessons of the epistle to Titus in the contemporary world?

## **6.0 References/Further Readings**

Adewale 'Biyi (2006). "Pastoral Epistles" *An Encyclopaedia of the Arts*, 10(3). Lagos: Lagos State University, 154-162. Also available on <http://artslasu.org/publications/index.html>

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## **Unit 4:        Second Epistle to Timothy**

### **Content**

- 1.0    Introduction
- 2.0    Intended Learning Outcomes
- 3.0    Main Content
  - 3.1    The Situation and Date of Second Timothy
  - 3.2    The Message of Second Timothy
- 4.0    Conclusion
- 5.0    Summary
- 6.0    References/Further Readings

### **1.0    Introduction**

In the previous unit, we have treated the first epistle of Paul to Timothy. We have asserted that Paul wrote that letter to Timothy when he was still at Ephesus trying to fulfil the task that has been handed over to him by Paul. Issues thus discussed were what are expected of a church leader and the functions of the church. In this unit, we would be examining the second epistle to Timothy and because of topics treated earlier we would just examine the situation and the possible date of the epistle and the message of the epistle.

### **2.0    Intended Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Identify the circumstances leading to the writing of the second epistle to Timothy.
- Determine the date the second epistle to Timothy was written.
- Determine the situation of Paul when the epistle was written

### **3.0 Main Content**

#### **3.1 The Situation And Date Of Second Timothy**

The epistle seems to offer a great deal of help in the understanding of the special circumstances out of which 2 Timothy grew. In 1:8 Paul described himself as “our Lord’s prisoner” and according to our acceptance of the double imprisonment theory; this would be the second imprisonment. It is also important to point out that some passages in the letter actually depict an imprisonment different from that of Acts. 2 Timothy 1:16 and 2:9 implies that he was certainly put in chains as Hendriksen (1957:234) says; he was in a “dismal underground dungeon with a hole in the ceiling for light and air” unlike the Acts account which depicts a house arrest.

It is also clear from 4:16-17 that the preliminary hearing of the case had already taken place and Paul was awaiting the full trial. It is clear also that Paul anticipates the result of the trial to be condemnation (4:6-8). Commenting on the circumstances of the surrounding the writing of 2 Timothy, Stott (1973:18) writes:

Shortly before he died, during his further and more severe imprisonment, Paul sent this second message to Timothy. His execution seemed to him imminent, so that he was writing under its shadow. Although it was an intensely personal communication to his young friend, Timothy, it was also – and consciously – his last will and testament to the church.

One can actually view the letter as a hand over note from the last of the apostles’ generation to a trusted co-worker who now has the mandate to carry on the ‘apostolic doctrine’ without corruption in the face of the wide-spreading heresy that has swept other co-workers away.

To clear the date, one needs to ascertain the time of Paul’s death. Eusebius in the Chronicle, said Paul was martyred together with Peter in the fourteenth year of the reign of Nero, 67-68. If Paul was executed in late AD 67, he would have probably written the letter either early or late AD 67. It should be pointed out however that some scholars like Stott posit AD 64 or AD 65 based on the interpretation of Eusebius that Paul and Peter were executed at the same time.

#### **3.2 The Message of Second Timothy**

Going by the outline of Stott (1973), the message of second Timothy can be broken down chapter by chapter as follows:

Chapter Three Chapter Four

Chapter One

Chapter Two

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Suffer for the Gospel  
The Charge to Continue in the Gospel  
The Charge to Preach the Gospel

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## **The Charge to Guard the Gospel**

In giving Timothy the charge to guard the gospel, Paul first stated the ground in which the appeal would be made, and these are: Timothy's upbringing, their spiritual relationship and the gifts that Timothy had been endowed with. Paul went on to now charge Timothy to take care of the gospel that he had been entrusted with against all forms of heresies that are eroding the church. He reminded him that the gospel Timothy had heard him preached should be the standard.

## **The Charge to Suffer for the Gospel**

In the second chapter, Paul reminded Timothy in verses three and four that every good soldier of Christ must have his own share in the part of the suffering for the gospel. He used six metaphors to describe the lot of every gospel worker and these are: the dedicated soldier, the law-abiding athlete, the hardworking farmer, the good workman, the clean vessel and the Lord's servant. Through these metaphors, he was able to picture not only the sufferings expected of the workman but also the gains after the sufferings.

## **The Charge to Continue in the Gospel**

In the third chapter Paul reminded Paul that in the last days that they had started encountering at their own time, difficult times would come as a result of the behavior of humanity as they would begin to place emphasis on self rather than on God. He also reminded him of the ability of the scriptures to fulfill the endeavours of all humanity and so there is no need to look for additions anywhere else.

## **The Charge to Preach the Gospel**

In the last chapter, Paul charged Timothy to continue preaching the gospel even when it is difficult for him to do so because it is only through the gospel that humanity can experience salvation. He also reminded him that his departure is imminent and he remains the only one that could be trusted with the gospel.

## **4.0 Conclusion**

In this unit, you have studied the circumstances out of which the epistle grew. Paul wrote this epistle shortly before his death. It is clear from the passage that his death was imminent. The letter can be viewed as a handover note from the last of the apostle's generation to a trusted co-worker who would now have the mandate to carry on the apostolic doctrine. There are two possible dates for the gospel: if Paul was executed in the late AD 67, the epistle would have been written late AD 67, but if he was executed late AD 64 or AD 65, it would have been written at the same period.

## 5.0 Summary

The following are the major points you have learnt in this unit:

- Paul wrote this epistle shortly before his death.
- It is clear from the passage that his death was imminent.
- The letter can be viewed as a handover note from the last of the apostle's generation to a trusted co-worker who would now have the mandate to carry on the apostolic doctrine.
- There are two possible dates for the gospel: if Paul was executed in the late AD 67, the epistle would have been written late AD 67, but if he was executed late AD 64 or AD 65, it would have been written at the same period.
- The message of the epistle can be classes as follows, based on the chapters: the charge to guard the gospel, the charge to suffer for the gospel, the charge to continue in the gospel and the charge to preach the gospel.

## Self-Assessment Exercises

Discuss the major themes of the second epistle to Timothy.

## 6.0 References/Further Readings

Adewale 'Biyi (2006). "Pastoral Epistles" *An Encyclopaedia of the Arts*, 10(3). Lagos: Lagos State University, 154-162. Also available on <http://artslasu.org/publications/index.html>

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