

## WSWG 28

11 October 2014

Campus Center, University of Massachusetts at Amherst

### *Stylometrics and the Question of Interpolation in Paul*



#### *The Alpha Contribution*

For several decades the Project has been attending to the question of pre-Pauline Christianity. We find that there definitely is such a thing, one that is not well described by such terms as “Jewish Christians” or “Judaizers.” Among its features are:

- (1) Its concept of salvation is rooted in the teachings of Jesus during his lifetime, as preserved in the earliest layers of the Gospel of Mark, and not in later theories of his death, which arose after his death, and are visible only in the later layers of the Gospel of Mark.
- (2) It accepts the universalized version of the Law (half the Decalogue plus a commandment against fraud) which Jesus articulates – in our view, exhaustively – in Mark 10:19.
- (3) It is continuous with the household Judaism of Jesus’ time, including the Hebrew prayer of Atonement which is visible in the Two Ways document.
- (4) Its manual of procedure (one may not yet properly speak of church order) is the core of the Didache, Did 6:1–12:1.
- (5) It focused on the return of Jesus, a hope embodied in the Aramaic ejaculation prayer Marana tha (“Come, Lord”), which appears, either in transcribed Aramaic or in translated Greek in
- (6) Its paraenetic newsletter is the Epistle of Jacob (in Anglican practice, “James”), which was revised several times to take account of crises in the churches, such as the departure of their wealthy members.
- (7) It contested Paul’s later conception of soteriology, and directly disputed Paul’s statement of that doctrine of faith in the atoning death of Jesus (Romans 3:20-24) in Jacob 2:18. It went on to ridicule Paul’s use of Abraham as an example of faith (Romans 4:1-3) in Jacob 2:20-24.
- (8) A local Alpha prayer, quoted by Paul at Php 2:6-11 (as recovered by Lohmeyer), presents an exalted Christ, but not one whose death is of importance for individual salvation (Paul has intruded a half line mentioning the Cross at Php 2:8b).

Alpha thus had its own form of nomism, its observances, including a memorial meal of Thanksgiving, its prayers, its hymns, and its own network for guiding the local churches between Apostolic visits.

The texts in question (with the exception of the Didache) have been available to the NT community for centuries. All we are doing is to put together the scattered information which they contain about pre-Pauline Christianity.

This note on Alpha is not provided for discussion at the Conference, which is instead devoted to Paul himself. It is mentioned merely to identify, and name, a historical conclusion which may come up during that discussion, and to explain the title of the journal for the Project’s researches in the New Testament field:

Alpha / Studies in Early Christianity

A mockup of volume 1 will be on display at the Conference.