ANCHOR BIBLE
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PAUL (PERSON) [Cl-Paula]. An early Christian apostle who was perhaps the most important and creative figure in the history of the early Church, whose formulations of Christian faith as expressed in his epistles to the fledgling churches have formed the basis of the foundation for orthodox Christian theology.

3. Education. What kind of education Paul may have received growing up in Tarsus (Acts 22:3) is entirely a matter of speculation, although as Acts 21:29–23:29 is entirely a matter of speculation, although as Acts 22:3 presents it, he had an ideal Jewish education: "I am a Jew, born at Tarsus in Cilicia, brought up in this city [Jerusalem or Tarsus?], educated at the feet of Gamaliel, according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers." This claim suggests that Paul's family moved from Tarsus to Jerusalem, where he received his secondary education (Acts 22:5). But this claim must be weighed carefully because it corresponds with the tendencies in Acts to emphasize the apostles' regard for his Jewish heritage (13:41ff.; 14:1; 15:29–31; 16:1–3; 4; 13; etc.) and to link him with Jerusalem (7:58–8:1a; 8:1b–3; 9:1–2, 26–29; etc.). This latter tendency, together with Luke's attendant assumption of Paul's familiarity with Jerusalem, clashes with Paul's own testimony about his visits to the city (Gal 1:22). Luke's picture of Gamaliel is unclear as well (Acts 5:34; see Acts Hermei., 186). See also GAMALIEL. A further challenge to reconstructing Paul's education arises from our ignorance of the specific content of Jewish education at that time, whether in Tarsus or in Jerusalem, whether elementary or secondary (see Safrai 1976; Jpp 2: 352–354; 415–22; Safrai 1984: 173–39).

The fact that Paul acted as an international envoy, first on behalf of Jewish authorities (Acts 8:5; 9:1–4; 21:23–25; 26:10–11; 11:13, 15; 12:3). Then as a Christian missionary, means that he must have received a good Hellenistic education. He gave speeches, taught, wrote long letters, and was involved in highly specialized theological debates. His abilities as a founder of churches, working with many collaborators on an international level, make it impossible to conceive of him as an uneducated and culturally bound Jew from the East. Comparative figures of the time, especially Josephus and Philo, show that being well-educated and Jewish did not exclude one another.

Objections to Paul's education as having been Hellenistic include recourse to his confession of being a layman in rhetoric (2 Cor 11:6; cf. I Cor 2:1–5) and his use of: secretary (Tertull., Rom 16:22). Such comments, however, miss the fact that 2 Cor 11:6 is itself a rhetorical topic (cf. Betz 1972: 47–69; 1986a) and fail to explain how his letters became literary masterpieces. These letters—while they show their skillful rhetoric, careful composition, and elaborate theological argumentation—reflect an author who was in every way uniquely equipped to become the "apostle of the gentiles" (Rom 11:13; Gal 2:9; Rom 1:1). This much is clear also from a comparison with his sometime mentor and associate Barnabas, whose abilities fell short of what was needed. Similarly, Luke regards Paul as well-equipped to defend himself in court, while the Jewish priests must have a professional orator (Acts 24:1).

5. Conversion. While Paul was approaching Damascus he suddenly experienced a vision of Christ. This experience had dramatic consequences, changing his entire life, self-understanding, theological views, and goals. Whether this vision occurred in his mind (Gal 1:12, 16) or externally (Acts 9:3–8; 22:6–11; 26:12–13) remains unclear, but it turned him from a persecutor to a prophet of Christianity. Christ himself commissioned him to proclaim the gospel among the gentiles (see also 1 Cor 9:1; 15:8, 9–11; Rom 1:5). Although we customarily label this experience Paul's "conversion," this can be done only in retrospect, for at that time Judaism and Christianity were not yet separate religions. In reality, then, Paul changed brands of Judaism, switching from Pharisee to Christian Judaism.

6. Apostolic Career. a. The Autobiographical Résumé in Galatians. As Paul reports in Gal 1:17–24, the first part of his autobiographical résumé (see Betz, Galatians Hermei., 72–81; also GALATIANS, EPISODE TO TJD).

Cross references [see, see also]

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Bibliography


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Bibliography

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