The Pauline Style
and a discussion about Paul's motivation

Omar Abur-Robb
Library: omr-mhmd.yolasite.com
omar.robb@yahoo.com
May 2023

I need to be upfront and clearly say that this article is just a rough set of assumptions. In order for this article to jump over this level then it would require adequate linguistic and textual analyses and I am not an expert on them. So, I am just exploring here an area, and I am throwing a flashlight deep into the dark field. The outcome might be fruitful or might not. But it is always fun exploring the unknown past.

Having said all that, let us start the discussion:

There is something that I did notice before (as I think all did) but I couldn't put the line under it, except lately. There is a specific common approach that most Christian Preachers follow in their preaching, and I think I am able now to describe it:

> Between every few sentences, a sentences will be added for praising God or for spiritual advice, etc. All of this is presented within spiritual charming-tone and charismatic body-language (as possible). So, in a short description: In every few words, a word will be added related to God.

To give an example: If a talented preacher is demonstrating how to make a Greek Salad, and this demonstration would normally take about 1000 words, then you might find that the preacher used about 1500 words in his demonstration. The extra 500 words is just the added spiritual prayers and praises.

But this approach is not only used by the Christian Preachers: Many atheist motivational speakers are using this exact approach with some modifications: They are not using a spiritual tone, but rather a caring tone, and there is not a big difference between spirituality and caring. Also, atheist speakers would not include praising of God, but rather praising of the audience, nature, or others. Also, atheist speakers would not include prayers, but they would include motivational statements and inspiring punchlines.

However, this approach started from the Christian Preachers. Actually, Pastors of the Megachurches are very talented with this approach, and probably it was the main talent that helped them to establish their Megachurches in the first place.

As most Christian Preachers in all denominations follow this approach (more or less), then I can say that this approach started from the early Christians, and I think it started from Paul; because (I think) he was the first that used it, and it wasn't used before him. Therefore, we will call this approach here the "Pauline Style".

Now ... There are many spiritual poems and speeches in the Old Testament, and there are many spiritual lines in the four Gospels, but these lines were <u>intentioned</u> to be spiritual. In another words, these lines were not inserted within the main subject, but they were the subject. The "Pauline Style" is about inserting spiritual lines within the main subject. So, the subject could be anything, and there will be in it many short spiritual lines. My assumption here is that this style of communication wasn't practiced before Paul.

Did Paul really used this style of communication?

I think so, based on his style of writing, but this need to be confirmed by qualified linguistic and textual scholars. But I think he did put a lot of spiritual lines within the main subject of the letter, and I don't think that this was a standard practice before Paul.

Now ... I truly don't like this style of preaching (I should point here that few Muslim preachers do use this style excessively); because it feel like showing-off (probably because preachers need to project their most spiritual appearance), and it seems that it is just stuffing and repeating of contents, and sometimes it feel that it is just empty.

However, there are large and large number of people who are attracted (or even addicted) to this style. Therefore, it seems that it might be almost similar to hypnotism, especially if the preacher is performing the sermon with a charming-tone and a charismatic body-language.

Looking superficially into this matter, it seems to me that inserting many spiritual subjects within the main subject is similar to the following hypnotic techniques: the nested loops (i.e. nested subjects), affirmations and positive thinking, and the hypnotic logic.

If this is accurate then I shouldn't be surprised on the effect of this approach on many people.

So, my assumption here is that Paul invented this style of preaching, and he was talented in it. This would explain his success with so many people, probably the same success that Pastors of the Megachurches have on their followers.

So, we have a puzzle here: Why Paul didn't create his own Megachurch? Why he favored to go from a place to place rather than to settle in one place and proceed with his preaching?

This is a puzzle because I truly think that the main talent that would allow a person to establish his own "Megachurch" is the talent in the "Pauline Style".

So, let us discuss the possible profile of Paul's personality:

We could say that Paul was very pragmatic. He said in 1 Corinthians 9:19: {Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. 20 To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. 21 To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not

having the law. 22 To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. 23 I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings}.

Now .... This verse could just be a verse of communication, where Paul will match the preaching to the abilities of others. However, Paul's attempt to make amends with James-the-Just and denying the accusation about invalidating the laws of Moses, does give a sign that Paul was truly a pragmatist.

I am assuming here that the pragmatism of Paul and his talent on the "Pauline Style" made many Gentiles to listen to him and to be attracted to him (the same reaction that appear on some people when they meet and hear one of the Megachurch Pastors).

However, there were serious problems that prevented many Gentiles form converting to the Nazarene sect: They couldn't accept the practice of circumcision, and they couldn't accept the ban on pork. And I truly think that pork was the most important reason here: I never tasted pork but some of my Christian friends have told me that pork is the most delicious meal to them. Furthermore, pork was the cheapest meat at that time.

So, Paul had a problem and he probably started to weight the following alternatives to see which one is better:

- People believing in one God rather than the pagan gods, believing in Jesus as the Messiah, following the moral codes of Jesus, but they don't want to circumcise, and they want to continue eating pork.

- People who don't believe in one God, don't believe in Jesus, don't follow the moral codes of Jesus, and still they don't want to circumcise, and they want to continue eating pork.

I think the answer for the pragmatist is very clear, which is alternative-1. Furthermore, I would assume that the pragmatist would probably conclude that it is only FOOL who will go for alternative-2.

I assume that Paul's talent in the "Pauline Style" and the positive and warm reactions from the Gentiles to his style with the reservations of these Gentiles to follow the laws of Moses motivated the departure of Paul from the "Nazarene sect" to form a new sect that was called later Christianity.

I also think that this could explain the Gospel that Paul said that he got from Jesus (Galatians 1:9). I think this Gospel is related to Paul's total belief that Jesus (as a rational logical and loving man) would never favor alternative-2 over alternative-1.

So, all the above discussion would reinforce the puzzle: pragmatists are normally (but not always) power-seeking individuals. So, why Paul didn't settle down and establish his own point of power?

A possible answer for this puzzle is that Paul wasn't really competent in the Laws of Moses, and probably he didn't speak Hebrew or Aramaic fluently. Therefore, he won't be able to withstand a face-to-face debate about Jesus.

Therefore, settling in specific place and preaching for his own Gospel in the name of Jesus, would attract the attention of the followers of James-the-Just, and they would be heading for him, and his Gospel cannot really withstand religious debate.

Furthermore, James-the-Just was the center of the followers of Jesus, and Paul's voice at that time couldn't raise over James: People could refer to Paul as the one who saw Jesus in a dream, but these people will always refer to James as the brother of Jesus. Therefore, Paul wouldn't have a chance in any argument with the followers of James. This was clarified at the end: as Paul went to Jerusalem in an attempt to make amends with James, but Paul failed in this attempt.

However, Paul died before the destruction of the Temple. Then after a short time, Jerusalem was destroyed in 70AD. This also ended the "central recognized authority" of the followers of Jesus, which allowed the Greek churches to be independent.

In general (though not an exact principle), a religion without centralized authority will tend toward pragmatism, and pragmatism would generally lead to liberalism. In Christianity's case, churches started to move toward liberalism from the laws of Moses. At this specific time, the letters and thoughts of Paul became very useful because it provided the arguments to justify this new liberal movement.

I think if Paul lived after the destruction of Temple then he would have probably created the first Megachurch.

So, the assumption here is that Paul wasn't able to settle down and establish his own Megachurch because he wasn't able to withstand the influence and image of the "central recognized authority" in Jerusalem. Therefore, he was moving from a place to a place hoping for a chance.

However, the line "hoping for a chance" is not really convincing, and there should have been something more than just hope:

We have said before that some people might be addicted to the "Pauline Style", but it is also possible that some preachers might be addicted to it as well. This means that they are no longer able to stop preaching.

So, my assumption here is that Paul realized that he cannot really oppose James (therefore, he couldn't settle down to establish a point of influence), but in the same time, he just couldn't stop preaching, as preaching became part of his own identity.

I don't think Paul was very influential at his time, but definitely he became the main pillar in the new Christian faith.