At the very end of his *Apology*, Tertullian emphasises the incongruity between Christ believers and philosophers:

> So, then, where is there any likeness between the Christian and the philosopher? Between the disciple of Greece and of heaven? Between the man whose object is fame, and whose object is life? Between the talker and the doer? Between the man who builds up and the man who pulls down? Between the friend and the foe of error? Between the one who corrupts the truth, and one who restores and teaches it? Between its chief and its custodier?

*(Apol. 46:18)*

Tertullian’s fervent disavowal of Greek *paideia*—elegantly formulated in a rhetorical mould that exploits the very same tradition that is being denigrated—resembles his even more famous renunciation of Greek learning in the *De praescriptione hereticorum*:

---

* It is as a small token of profound gratitude that I dedicate this essay to the memory of my former teacher and mentor, Professor Dr. Dr. h.c. mult. Martin Hengel who passed away on the 2nd of July 2009. Since Hengel in all his research was perpetually preoccupied by the relationship between Judaism (Christianity) and Hellenism, it is appropriate to dedicate this contribution on one particular form of relationship between Hellenism and Judaism (Christianity) to his memory. An earlier version of the paper was given at the NOSTER conference organised by J.W. van Henten and J. Verheyden under the auspices of the Dutch School for Advanced Studies in Theology and Religion held in Bovendonk from the 9th to 10th of March 2008. I benefitted considerably from the comments of the other participants and, particularly, from the response given to my paper by George van Kooten. I am grateful to Professor van Kooten for his valuable comments of which I have integrated some in the present version.

* The translations used in this article from the Church fathers are, unless otherwise stated, taken from A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (eds.), *The Writings of the Fathers down to AD 325: Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995). Translations from classical Greek and Latin literature are, if nothing else is stated, taken from the Loeb Classical Library. Translations of the New Testament texts are, when nothing else is stated, based on the New King James Revised Version.
What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church? What between heretics and Christians? Our instruction comes from “the porch of Solomon”, who had himself taught that “the Lord should be sought in simplicity of the heart”. Away with all attempts to produce a mottled Christianity of Stoic, Platonic and dialectical composition.

(De praescr. 7:9–13)

2. The Need for a Model for Thinking about Culture

Why should one begin a contribution on New Testament ethics from a Greco-Roman philosophical perspective by quoting Tertullian, when during recent years it has become conspicuously clear that no watertight boundaries existed between the early Christian and the Greco-Roman tradition? Despite significant scholarly challenges that lately have been raised against Tertullian’s (and, particularly, subsequent exponents of the same manner of thought) way of posing the problem, I believe that the dichotomy between Hellenism and (Judaism/)Christianity continues to exert a considerably more profound influence on the manner in which we conceive of the relationship between the early Christian and the Greco-Roman traditions than is commonly acknowledged. Although important scholarly efforts have been carried out to resolve the time-honoured dualism—verging on a dichotomy—the tendency to think of the two entities in terms of duality lingers on.² Do, for instance, ancient Greco-Roman philosophy, on the one hand, and Jewish/Christian religiosity, on the other, belong to two different realms, i.e., that of rationality and that of revelation, which are not at all

² See the important collection of essays, T. Engberg-Pedersen (ed.), Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide (Louisville, London and Leiden: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), and, in particular, the essay by D.B. Martin, “Paul and the Judaism/Hellenism Dichotomy: Toward a Social History of the Question,” in Engberg-Pedersen (ed.), Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide, 29–61. See also the great number of recent works within the tradition of the Wayne Meeks’ and Abraham Malherbe’s “school” that have all pointed to the importance of interpreting not only Paul, in particular, but also the New Testament texts in general from the perspective of the Greco-Roman tradition. Additionally, see my essay, A. Klostergaard Petersen, “Kristendom og hellenisme—en skæbesvanger konstruktion,” (“Christianity and Hellenism—a Fateful Construction,”) in Religionsvidenskabeligt Tidsskrift 41 (2002): 51–75. Needless to say, this whole line of scholarship would have been unthinkable had it not been for the groundbreaking work of M. Hengel, Judentum und Hellenismus: Studien zu ihrer Begegnung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Palästinas bis zur Mitte des 2. Jh.s v. Chr. (WUNT 10; 3rd ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1969, 1988), that once and for all made it clear that there could be no Judaism of the late Second Temple period, which was not to a greater or lesser extent embedded in the wider Hellenistic culture, that which Hengel used to designate a common cultural and social koinè.