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THE FOUNDATION OF ST. PAUL'S RELIGION

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MUSAICUM
Books

OK Publishing, 2020
musaicumbooks@okpublishing.info

EAN 4064066396459

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The following discussion is intended to deal, from one particular point of view, with the problem of the origin of Christianity. That problem is an important historical problem, and also an important practical problem. It is an important historical problem not only because of the large place which Christianity has occupied in the medieval and modern world, but also because of certain unique features which even the most unsympathetic and superficial examination must detect in the beginnings of the Christian movement. The problem of the origin of Christianity is also an important practical problem. Rightly or wrongly, Christian experience has ordinarily been connected with one particular view of the origin of the Christian movement; where that view has been abandoned, the experience has ceased.

This dependence of Christianity upon a particular conception of its origin and of its Founder is now indeed being made the object of vigorous attack. There are many who maintain that Christianity is the same no matter what its origin was, and that therefore the problem of origin should be kept entirely separate from the present religious interests of the Church. Obviously, however, this indifference to the question as to what the origin of Christianity was depends upon a particular conception of what Christianity now is; it depends upon the conception which makes of Christianity simply a manner of life. That

conception is indeed widespread, but it is by no means universal; there are still hosts of earnest Christians who regard Christianity, not simply as a manner of life, but as a manner of life founded upon a message—upon a message with regard to the Founder of the Christian movement. For such persons the question of the origin of Christianity is rather to be called the question of the truth of Christianity, and that question is to them the most important practical question of their lives. Even if these persons are wrong, the refutation of their supposed error naturally proceeds, and has in recent years almost always proceeded, primarily by means of that very discussion of the origin of the Christian movement which is finally to be shorn of its practical interest. The most important practical question for the modern Church is still the question how Christianity came into being.

In recent years it has become customary to base discussions of the origin of Christianity upon the apostle Paul. Jesus Himself, the author of the Christian movement, wrote nothing—at least no writings of His have been preserved. The record of His words and deeds is the work of others, and the date and authorship and historical value of the documents in which that record is contained are the subject of persistent debate. With regard to the genuineness of the principal epistles of Paul, on the other hand, and with regard to the value of at least part of the outline of his life which is contained in the Book of Acts, all serious historians are agreed. The testimony of Paul, therefore, forms a fixed starting-point in all controversy.

Obviously that testimony has an important bearing upon the question of the origin of Christianity. Paul was a contemporary of Jesus. He attached himself to Jesus' disciples only a very few years after Jesus' death; according to his own words, in one of the universally accepted epistles, he came into early contact with the leader among

Jesus' associates; throughout his life he was deeply interested (for one reason or another) in the affairs of the primitive Jerusalem Church; both before his conversion and after it he must have had abundant opportunity for acquainting himself with the facts about Jesus' life and death. His testimony is not, however, limited to what he says in detail about the words and deeds of the Founder of the Christian movement. More important still is the testimony of his experience as a whole. The religion of Paul is a fact which stands in the full light of history. How is it to be explained? What were its presuppositions? Upon what sort of Jesus was it founded? These questions lead into the very heart of the historical problem. Explain the origin of the religion of Paul, and you have solved the problem of the origin of Christianity.

That problem may thus be approached through the gateway of the testimony of Paul. But that is not the only way to approach it. Another way is offered by the Gospel picture of the person of Jesus. Quite independent of questions of date and authorship and literary relationships of the documents, the total picture which the Gospels present bears unmistakable marks of being the picture of a real historical person. Internal evidence here reaches the point of certainty. If the Jesus who in the Gospels is represented as rebuking the Pharisees and as speaking the parables is not a real historical person living at a definite point in the world's history, then there is no way of distinguishing history from fiction. Even the evidence for the genuineness of the Pauline Epistles is no stronger than this. But if the Jesus of the Gospels is a real person, certain puzzling questions arise. The Jesus of the Gospels is a supernatural person; He is represented as possessing sovereign power over the forces of nature. What shall be done with this supernatural element in the picture? It is certainly very difficult to separate it from the rest. Moreover the Jesus of

the Gospels is represented as advancing some lofty claims. He regarded Himself as being destined to come with the clouds of heaven and be the instrument in judging the world. What shall be done with this element in His consciousness? How does it agree with the indelible impression of calmness and sanity which has always been made by His character? These questions again lead into the heart of the problem. Yet they cannot be ignored. They are presented inevitably by what every serious historian admits.

The fundamental evidence with regard to the origin of Christianity is therefore twofold. Two facts need to be explained—the Jesus of the Gospels and the religion of Paul. The problem of early Christianity may be approached in either of these two ways. It should finally be approached in both ways. And if it is approached in both ways the investigator will discover, to his amazement, that the two ways lead to the same result. But the present discussion is more limited in scope. It seeks to deal merely with one of the two ways of approach to the problem of Christianity. What was the origin of the religion of Paul?

In discussing the apostle Paul the historian is dealing with a subject important for its own sake, even aside from the importance of what it presupposes about Jesus. Unquestionably Paul was a notable man, whose influence has been felt throughout all subsequent history. The fact itself cannot be called in question. But since there is wide difference of opinion about details, it may be well, in a brief preliminary word, to define a little more closely the nature and extent of the influence of Paul.

That influence has been exerted in two ways. It was exerted, in the first place, during the lifetime of Paul; and it has been exerted, in the second place, upon subsequent generations through the medium of the Pauline Epistles.

With regard to the second kind of influence, general considerations would make a high estimate natural. The Pauline Epistles form a large proportion of the New Testament, which has been regarded as fundamental and authoritative in all ages of the Church. The use of the Pauline Epistles as normative for Christian thought and practice can be traced back to very early times, and has been continuous ever since. Yet certain considerations have been urged on the other side as indicating that the influence of Paul has not been so great as might have been expected. For example, the Christianity of the Old Catholic Church at the close of the second century displays a strange lack of understanding for the deeper elements in the Pauline doctrine of salvation, and something of the same state of affairs may be detected in the scanty remains of the so-called "Apostolic Fathers" of the beginning of the century. The divergence from Paul was not conscious; the writers of the close of the second century all quote the Pauline Epistles with the utmost reverence. But the fact of the divergence cannot altogether be denied.

Various explanations of this divergence have been proposed. Baur explained the un-Pauline character of the Old Catholic Church as due to a compromise with a legalistic Jewish Christianity; Ritschl explained it as due to a natural process of degeneration on purely Gentile Christian ground; Von Harnack explains it as due to the intrusion, after the time of Paul, of Greek habits of thought. The devout believer, on the other hand, might simply say that the Pauline doctrine of grace was too wonderful and too divine to be understood fully by the human mind and heart.[1]

Whatever the explanation, however, the fact, even after exaggerations have been avoided, remains significant. It remains true that the Church of the second century failed to understand fully the Pauline doctrine of the way of salvation. The same lack of understanding has been observable only

too frequently throughout subsequent generations. It was therefore with some plausibility that Von Harnack advanced his dictum to the effect that Paulinism has established itself as a ferment, but never as a foundation, in the history of doctrine.[2]

In the first place, however, it may be doubted whether the dictum of Von Harnack is true; for in that line of development of theology which runs from Augustine through the Reformation to the Reformed Churches, Paulinism may fairly be regarded as a true foundation. But in the second place, even if Von Harnack's dictum were true, the importance of Paul's influence would not be destroyed. A ferment is sometimes as important as a foundation. As Von Harnack himself says, "the Pauline reactions mark the critical epochs of theology and of the Church.... The history of doctrine could be written as a history of the Pauline reactions in the Church."[3] As a matter of fact the influence of Paul upon the entire life of the Church is simply measureless. Who can measure the influence of the eighth chapter of Romans?

The influence of Paul was also exerted, however, in his own lifetime, by his spoken words as well as by his letters. To estimate the full extent of that influence one would have to write the entire history of early Christianity. It may be well, however, to consider briefly at least one outstanding aspect of that influence—an aspect which must appeal even to the most unsympathetic observer. The Christian movement began in the midst of a very peculiar people; in 35 A.D. it would have appeared to a superficial observer to be a Jewish sect. Thirty years later it was plainly a world religion. True, the number of its adherents was still small. But the really important steps had been taken. The conquest of the world was now a mere matter of time. This establishment of Christianity as a world religion, to almost as great an extent

as any great historical movement can be ascribed to one man, was the work of Paul.

This assertion needs to be defended against various objections, and at the same time freed from misinterpretations and exaggerations.

In the first place, it might be said, the Gentile mission of Paul was really only a part of a mighty historical process—the march of the oriental religions throughout the western world. Christianity was not the only religion which was filling the void left by the decay of the native religions of Greece and Rome. The Phrygian religion of Cybele had been established officially at Rome since 204 B.C., and after leading a somewhat secluded and confined existence for several centuries, was at the time of Paul beginning to make its influence felt in the life of the capital. The Greco-Egyptian religion of Isis was preparing for the triumphal march which it began in earnest in the second century. The Persian religion of Mithras was destined to share with Isis the possession of a large part of the Greco-Roman world. Was not the Christianity of Paul merely one division of a mighty army which would have conquered even without his help?

With regard to this objection a number of things may be said. In the first place, the apostle Paul, as over against the priests of Isis and of Cybele, has perhaps at least the merit of priority; the really serious attempt at world-conquest was made by those religions (and still more clearly by the religion of Mithras) only after the time of Paul. In the second place, the question may well be asked whether it is at all justifiable to class the Christianity of Paul along with those other cults under the head of Hellenized oriental religion. This question will form the subject of a considerable part of the discussion which follows, and it will be answered with an emphatic negative. The Christianity of Paul will be found to

be totally different from the oriental religions. The threat of conquest made by those religions, therefore, only places in sharper relief the achievement of Paul, by showing the calamities from which the world was saved by his energetic mission. If except for the Pauline mission the world would have become devoted to Isis or Mithras, then Paul was certainly one of the supreme benefactors of the human race.

Even apart from any detailed investigation, however, one difference between the religion of Paul and the oriental religions is perfectly obvious. The oriental religions were tolerant of other faiths; the religion of Paul, like the ancient religion of Israel, demanded an absolutely exclusive devotion. A man could become initiated into the mysteries of Isis or Mithras without at all giving up his former beliefs; but if he were to be received into the Church, according to the preaching of Paul, he must forsake all other Saviours for the Lord Jesus Christ. The difference places the achievement of Paul upon an entirely different plane from the successes of the oriental mystery religions. It was one thing to offer a new faith and a new cult as simply one additional way of obtaining contact with the Divine, and it was another thing, and a far more difficult thing (and in the ancient world outside of Israel an unheard-of thing), to require a man to renounce all existing religious beliefs and practices in order to place his whole reliance upon a single Saviour. Amid the prevailing syncretism of the Greco-Roman world, the religion of Paul, with the religion of Israel, stands absolutely alone. The successes of the oriental religions, therefore, only place in clearer light the uniqueness of the achievement of Paul. They do indeed indicate the need and longing of the ancient world for redemption; but that is only part of the preparation for the coming of the gospel which has always been celebrated by devout Christians as part of the divine economy, as one indication that "the fullness of the time"

was come. But the wide prevalence of the need does not at all detract from the achievement of satisfying the need. Paul's way of satisfying the need, as it is hoped the later chapters will show, was unique; but what should now be noticed is that the way of Paul, because of its exclusiveness, was at least far more difficult than that of any of his rivals or successors. His achievement was therefore immeasurably greater than theirs.

But if the successes of the oriental religions do not detract from the achievement of Paul, what shall be said of the successes of pre-Christian Judaism? It must always be remembered that Judaism, in the first century, was an active missionary religion. Even Palestinian Judaism was imbued with the missionary spirit; Jesus said to the Pharisees that they compassed sea and land to make one proselyte. The Judaism of the Dispersion was no doubt even more zealous for winning adherents. The numberless synagogues scattered throughout the cities of the Greco-Roman world were not attended, as Jewish synagogues are attended to-day, only by Jews, but were also filled with hosts of Gentiles, some of whom had accepted circumcision and become full Jews, but others of whom, forming the class called in the Book of Acts "God-fearers" or "God-worshipers," had accepted the monotheism of the Jews and the lofty morality of the Old Testament without definitely uniting themselves with the people of Israel. In addition to this propaganda in the synagogues, an elaborate literary propaganda, of which important remnants have been preserved, helped to carry on the missionary work. The question therefore arises whether the preaching of Paul was anything more than a continuation, though in any case a noteworthy continuation, of this pre-Christian Jewish mission.

Here again, as in the case of the longing for redemption which is attested by the successes of the oriental religions, an important element in the preparation for the gospel must

certainly be detected. It is hard to exaggerate the service which was rendered to the Pauline mission by the Jewish synagogue. One of the most important problems for every missionary is the problem of gaining a hearing. The problem may be solved in various ways. Sometimes the missionary may hire a place of meeting and advertise; sometimes he may talk on the street corners to passers-by. But for Paul the problem was solved. All that he needed to do was to enter the synagogue and exercise the privilege of speaking, which was accorded with remarkable liberality to visiting teachers. In the synagogue, moreover, Paul found an audience not only of Jews but also of Gentiles; everywhere the "God-fearers" were to be found. These Gentile attendants upon the synagogues formed not only an audience but a picked audience; they were just the class of persons who were most likely to be won by the gospel preaching. In their case much of the preliminary work had been accomplished; they were already acquainted with the doctrine of the one true God; they had already, through the lofty ethical teaching of the Old Testament, come to connect religion with morality in a way which is to us matter-of-course but was very exceptional in the ancient world. Where, as in the market-place at Athens, Paul had to begin at the very beginning, without presupposing this previous instruction on the part of his hearers, his task was rendered far more difficult.

Undoubtedly, in the case of many of his converts he did have to begin in that way; the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, for example, presupposes, perhaps, converts who turned directly from idols to serve the living and true God. But even in such cases the God-fearers formed a nucleus; their manifold social relationships provided points of contact with the rest of the Gentile population. The debt which the Christian Church owes to the Jewish synagogue is simply measureless.

This acknowledgment, however, does not mean that the Pauline mission was only a continuation of the pre-Christian missionary activity of the Jews. On the contrary, the very earnestness of the effort made by the Jews to convert their Gentile neighbors serves to demonstrate all the more clearly the hopelessness of their task. One thing that was fundamental in the religion of the Jews was its exclusiveness. The people of Israel, according to the Old Testament, was the chosen people of God; the notion of a covenant between God and His chosen people was absolutely central in all ages of the Jewish Church. The Old Testament did indeed clearly provide a method by which strangers could be received into the covenant; they could be received whenever, by becoming circumcised and undertaking the observance of the Mosaic Law, they should relinquish their own nationality and become part of the nation of Israel. But this method seemed hopelessly burdensome. Even before the time of Paul it had become evident that the Gentile world as a whole would never submit to such terms. The terms were therefore sometimes relaxed. Covenant privileges were offered by individual Jewish teachers to individual Gentiles without requiring what was most offensive, like circumcision; merit was sought by some of the Gentiles by observance of only certain parts of the Law, such as the requirements about the Sabbath or the provisions about food. Apparently widespread also was the attitude of those persons who seem to have accepted what may be called the spiritual, as distinguished from the ceremonial, aspects of Judaism. But all such compromises were affected by a deadly weakness. The strict requirements of the Law were set forth plainly in the Old Testament. To cast them aside, in the interests of missionary activity, meant a sacrifice of principle to practice; it meant a sacrifice of the zeal and the good conscience of the missionaries and of the true satisfaction of the converts. One of the chief attractions of Judaism to the world of that

day was the possession of an ancient and authoritative Book; the world was eagerly searching for authority in religion. Yet if the privileges of the Old Testament were to be secured, the authority of the Book had to be set aside. The character of a national religion was therefore too indelibly stamped upon the religion of Israel; the Gentile converts could at best only be admitted into an outer circle around the true household of God. What pre-Christian Judaism had to offer was therefore obviously insufficient. Perhaps the tide of the Jewish mission had already begun to ebb before the time of Paul; perhaps the process of the withdrawal of Judaism into its age-long seclusion had already begun. Undoubtedly that process was hastened by the rivalry of Christianity, which offered far more than Judaism had offered and offered it on far more acceptable terms. But the process sooner or later would inevitably have made itself felt. Whether or not Renan was correct in supposing that had it not been for Christianity the world would have been Mithraic, one thing is certain—the world apart from Christianity would never have become Jewish.

But was not the preaching of Paul itself one manifestation of that liberalizing tendency among the Jews to which allusion has just been made and of which the powerlessness has just been asserted? Was not the attitude of Paul in remitting the requirement of circumcision, while he retained the moral and spiritual part of the Old Testament Law—especially if, as the Book of Acts asserts, he assented upon occasion to the imposition of certain of the less burdensome parts even of the ceremonial Law—very similar to the action of a teacher like that Ananias who was willing to receive king Izates of Adiabene without requiring him to be circumcised? These questions in recent years have occasionally been answered in the affirmative, especially by Kirsopp Lake.[4] But despite the plausibility of Lake's representation he has thereby introduced a root error into his reconstruction of the

apostolic age. For whatever the teaching of Paul was, it certainly was not "liberalism." The background of Paul is not to be sought in liberal Judaism, but in the strictest sect of the Pharisees. And Paul's remission of the requirement of circumcision was similar only in form, at the most, to the action of the Ananias who has just been mentioned. In motive and in principle it was diametrically opposite. Gentile freedom according to Paul was not something permitted; it was something absolutely required. And it was required just by the strictest interpretation of the Old Testament Law. If Paul had been a liberal Jew, he would never have been the apostle to the Gentiles; for he would never have developed his doctrine of the Cross. Gentile freedom, in other words, was not, according to Paul, a relaxing of strict requirements in the interests of practical missionary work; it was a matter of principle. For the first time the religion of Israel could go forth (or rather was compelled to go forth) with a really good conscience to the spiritual conquest of the world.

Thus the Pauline mission was not merely one manifestation of the progress of oriental religion, and it was not merely a continuation of the pre-Christian mission of the Jews; it was something new. But if it was new in comparison with what was outside of Christianity, was it not anticipated within Christianity itself? Was it not anticipated by the Founder of Christianity, by Jesus Himself?

At this point careful definition is necessary. If all that is meant is that the Gentile mission of Paul was founded altogether upon Jesus, then there ought to be no dispute. A different view, which makes Paul rather than Jesus the true founder of Christianity, will be combated in the following pages. Paul himself, at any rate, bases his doctrine of Gentile freedom altogether upon Jesus. But he bases it upon what Jesus had done, not upon what Jesus, at least during His earthly life, had said. The true state of the case may therefore be that Jesus by His redeeming work really made

possible the Gentile mission, but that the discovery of the true significance of that work was left to Paul. The achievement of Paul, whether it be regarded as a discovery made by him or a divine revelation made to him, would thus remain intact. What did Jesus say or imply, during His earthly ministry, about the universalism of the gospel? Did He make superfluous the teaching of Paul?

The latter question must be answered in the negative; attempts at finding, clearly expressed, in the words of Jesus the full doctrine of Gentile freedom have failed. It is often said that Jesus, though He addressed His teaching to Jews, addressed it to them not as Jews but as men. But the discovery of that fact (whenever it was made) was no mean achievement. Certainly it was not made by the modern writers who lightly repeat the assertion, for they have the benefit of the teaching of Paul and of nineteen centuries of Christian experience based upon that teaching. Even if Jesus did address not the Jew as a Jew, but the man in the Jew, the achievement of Paul in the establishment of the Gentile Church was not thereby made a matter of course. The plain man would be more likely to stick at the fact that however Jesus addressed the Jew He did address the Jew and not the Gentile, and He commanded His disciples to do the same. Instances in which He extended His ministry to Gentiles are expressly designated in the Gospels as exceptional.

But did He not definitely command His disciples to engage in the Gentile work after His departure? Certainly He did not do so according to the modern critical view of the Gospels. But even if the great commission of Matt. xxviii. 19, 20 be accepted as an utterance of Jesus, it is by no means clear that the question of Gentile liberty was settled. In the great commission, the apostles are commanded to make disciples of all the nations. But on what terms were the new disciples to be received? There was nothing startling, from the Jewish point of view, in winning Gentile converts; the non-Christian

Jews, as has just been observed, were busily engaged in doing that. The only difficulty arose when the terms of reception of the new converts were changed. Were the new converts to be received as disciples of Jesus without being circumcised and thus without becoming members of the covenant people of God? The great commission does not answer that question. It does indeed mention only baptism and not circumcision. But might that not be because circumcision, for those who were to enter into God's people, was a matter of course?

In a number of His utterances, it is true, Jesus did adopt an attitude toward the ceremonial Law, at least toward the interpretation of it by the scribes, very different from what was customary in the Judaism of His day. "There is nothing from without the man," He said, "that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man" (Mark vii. 15). No doubt these words were revolutionary in their ultimate implications. But there is no evidence that they resulted in revolutionary practice on the part of Jesus. On the contrary, there is definite reason to suppose that He observed the ceremonial Law as it was contained in the Old Testament, and definite utterances of His in support of the authority of the Law have been preserved in the Gospels.

The disciples, therefore, were not obviously unfaithful to the teachings of Jesus if after He had been taken from them they continued to minister only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. If He had told them to make disciples of all the nations, He had not told them upon what terms the disciples were to be received or at what moment of time the specifically Gentile work should begin. Perhaps the divine economy required that Israel should first be brought to an acknowledgment of her Lord, or at least her obduracy established beyond peradventure, in accordance with the mysterious prophecy of Jesus in the parable of the Wicked

Husbandmen,[5] before the Gentiles should be gathered in. At any rate, there is evidence that whatever was revolutionary in the life and teaching of Jesus was less evident among His disciples, in the early days of the Jerusalem Church. Even the Pharisees, and at any rate the people as a whole, could find nothing to object to in the attitude of the apostles and their followers. The disciples continued to observe the Jewish fasts and feasts. Outwardly they were simply loyal Jews. Evidently Gentile freedom, and the abolition of special Jewish privileges, had not been clearly established by the words of the Master. There was therefore still need for the epoch-making work of Paul.

But if the achievement of Paul was not clearly anticipated in the teaching of Jesus Himself, was it not anticipated or at any rate shared by others in the Church? According to the Book of Acts, a Gentile, Cornelius, and his household were baptized, without requirement of circumcision, by Peter himself, the leader of the original apostles; and a free attitude toward the Temple and the Law was adopted by Stephen. The latter instance, at least, has ordinarily been accepted as historical by modern criticism. Even in founding the churches which are usually designated as Pauline, moreover, Barnabas and Silas and others had an important part; and in the founding of many churches Paul himself was not concerned. It is an interesting fact that of the churches in the three most important cities of the Roman Empire not one was founded by Paul. The Church at Alexandria does not appear upon the pages of the New Testament; the Church at Rome appears fully formed when Paul was only preparing for his coming by the Epistle to the Romans; the Church at Antioch, at least in its Gentile form, was founded by certain unnamed Jews of Cyprus and Cyrene. Evidently, therefore, Paul was not the only missionary who carried the gospel to the Gentile world. If the Gentile work consisted merely in

the geographical extension of the frontiers of the Church, then Paul did not by any means stand alone.

Even in the geographical sphere, however, his achievements must not be underestimated; even in that sphere he labored far more abundantly than any other one man. His desire to plant the gospel in places where it had never been heard led him into an adventurous life which may well excite the astonishment of the modern man. The catalogue of hardships which Paul himself gives incidentally in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians shows that the Book of Acts has been very conservative in its account of the hardships and perils which the apostle endured; evidently the half has not been told. The results, moreover, were commensurate with the hardships that they cost. Despite the labors of others, it was Paul who planted the gospel in a real chain of the great cities; it was he who conceived most clearly the thought of a mighty Church universal which should embrace both Jew and Gentile, barbarian, Scythian, bond and free in a common faith and a common life. When he addressed himself to the Church at Rome, in a tone of authority, as the apostle to the Gentiles who was ready to preach the gospel to those who were at Rome also, his lofty claim was supported, despite the fact that the Church at Rome had itself been founded by others, by the mere extent of his labors.

The really distinctive achievement of Paul, however, does not consist in the mere geographical extension of the frontiers of the Church, important as that work was; it lies in a totally different sphere—in the hidden realm of thought.[6] What was really standing in the way of the Gentile mission was not the physical barriers presented by sea and mountain, it was rather the great barrier of religious principle. Particularism was written plain upon the pages of the Old Testament; in emphatic language the Scriptures imposed upon the true Israelite the duty of separateness

from the Gentile world. Gentiles might indeed be brought in, but only when they acknowledged the prerogatives of Israel and united themselves with the Jewish nation. If premonitions of a different doctrine were to be found, they were couched in the mysterious language of prophecy; what seemed to be fundamental for the present was the doctrine of the special covenant between Jehovah and His chosen people.

This particularism of the Old Testament might have been overcome by practical considerations, especially by the consideration that since as a matter of fact the Gentiles would never accept circumcision and submit to the Law the only way to carry on the broader work was quietly to keep the more burdensome requirements of the Law in abeyance. This method would have been the method of "liberalism." And it would have been utterly futile. It would have meant an irreparable injury to the religious conscience; it would have sacrificed the good conscience of the missionary and the authoritativeness of his proclamation. Liberalism would never have conquered the world.

Fortunately liberalism was not the method of Paul. Paul was not a practical Christian who regarded life as superior to doctrine, and practice as superior to principle. On the contrary, he overcame the principle of Jewish particularism in the only way in which it could be overcome; he overcame principle by principle. It was not Paul the practical missionary, but Paul the theologian, who was the real apostle to the Gentiles.

In his theology he avoided certain errors which lay near at hand. He avoided the error of Marcion, who in the middle of the second century combated Jewish particularism by representing the whole of the Old Testament economy as evil and as the work of a being hostile to the good God. That error would have deprived the Church of the prestige which

it derived from the possession of an ancient and authoritative Book; as a merely new religion Christianity never could have appealed to the Gentile world. Paul avoided also the error of the so-called "Epistle of Barnabas," which, while it accepted the Old Testament, rejected the entire Jewish interpretation of it; the Old Testament Law, according to the Epistle of Barnabas, was never intended to require literal sacrifices and circumcision, in the way in which it was interpreted by the Jews. That error, also, would have been disastrous; it would have introduced such boundless absurdity into the Christian use of the Scriptures that all truth and soberness would have fled.

Avoiding all such errors, Paul was able with a perfectly good conscience to accept the priceless support of the Old Testament Scriptures in his missionary work while at the same time he rejected for his Gentile converts the ceremonial requirements which the Old Testament imposed. The solution of the problem is set forth clearly in the Epistle to the Galatians. The Old Testament Law, according to Paul, was truly authoritative and truly divine. But it was temporary; it was authoritative only until the fulfillment of the promise should come. It was a schoolmaster to bring the Jews to Christ; and (such is the implication, according to the Epistle to the Romans) it could also be a schoolmaster to bring every one to Christ, since it was intended to produce the necessary consciousness of sin.

This treatment of the Old Testament was the only practical solution of the difficulty. But Paul did not adopt it because it was practical; he adopted it because it was true. It never occurred to him to hold principle in abeyance even for the welfare of the souls of men. The deadening blight of pragmatism had never fallen upon his soul.

The Pauline grounding of the Gentile mission is not to be limited, however, to his specific answer to the question,

"What then is the law?" It extends rather to his entire unfolding of the significance of the Cross of Christ. He exhibited the temporary character of the Old Testament dispensation by showing that a new era had begun, by exhibiting positively the epoch-making significance of the Cross.

At this point undoubtedly he had precursors. The significance of the Cross of Christ was by no means entirely unknown to those who had been disciples before him; he himself places the assertion that Christ "died for our sins according to the Scriptures" as one of the things that he had "received." But unless all indications fail Paul did bring an unparalleled enrichment of the understanding of the Cross. For the first time the death of Christ was viewed in its full historical and logical relationships. And thereby Gentile freedom, and the freedom of the entire Christian Church for all time, was assured.

Inwardly, indeed, the early Jerusalem disciples were already free from the Law; they were really trusting for their salvation not to their observance of the Law but to what Christ had done for them. But apparently they did not fully know that they were free; or rather they did not know exactly why they were free. The case of Cornelius, according to the Book of Acts, was exceptional; Cornelius had been received into the Church without being circumcised, but only by direct command of the Spirit. Similar direct and unexplained guidance was apparently to be waited for if the case was to be repeated. Even Stephen had not really advocated the immediate abolition of the Temple or the abandonment of Jewish prerogatives in the presence of Gentiles.

The freedom of the early Jerusalem Church, in other words, was not fully grounded in a comprehensive view of the meaning of Jesus' work. Such freedom could not be

permanent. It was open to argumentative attacks, and as a matter of fact such attacks were not long absent. The very life of the Gentile mission at Antioch was threatened by the Judaizers who came down from Jerusalem and said, "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." Practical considerations, considerations of church polity, were quite powerless before such attacks; freedom was held by but a precarious tenure until its underlying principles were established. Christianity, in other words, could not live without theology. And the first great Christian theologian was Paul.

It was Paul, then, who established the principles of the Gentile mission. Others labored in detail, but it was he who was at the heart of the movement. It was he, far more than any other one man, who carried the gospel out from Judaism into the Gentile world.

The importance of the achievement must be apparent to every historian, no matter how unsympathetic his attitude toward the content of Christianity may be. The modern European world, what may be called "western civilization," is descended from the civilization of Greece and Rome. Our languages are either derived directly from the Latin, or at any rate connected with the same great family. Our literature and art are inspired by the great classical models. Our law and government have never been independent of the principles enunciated by the statesmen of Greece, and put into practice by the statesmen of Rome. Our philosophies are obliged to return ever anew to the questions which were put, if not answered, by Plato and Aristotle.

Yet there has entered into this current of Indo-European civilization an element from a very diverse and very unexpected source. How comes it that a thoroughly Semitic book like the Bible has been accorded a place in medieval

and modern life to which the glories of Greek literature can never by any possibility aspire? How comes it that the words of that book have not only made political history—moved armies and built empires—but also have entered into the very fabric of men's souls? The intrinsic value of the Book would not alone have been sufficient to break down the barriers which opposed its acceptance by the Indo-European race. The race from which the Bible came was despised in ancient times and it is despised to-day. How comes it then that a product of that race has been granted such boundless influence? How comes it that the barriers which have always separated Jew from Gentile, Semite from Aryan, have at one point been broken through, so that the current of Semitic life has been allowed to flow unchecked over the rich fields of our modern civilization?

The answer to these questions, to the large extent which the preceding outline has attempted to define, must be sought in the inner life of a Jew of Tarsus. In dealing with the apostle Paul we are dealing with one of the moving factors of the world's history.

That conclusion might at first sight seem to affect unfavorably the special use to which it is proposed, in the present discussion, to put the examination of Paul. The more important Paul was as a man, it might be said, the less important he becomes as a witness to the origin of Christianity. If his mind had been a blank tablet prepared to receive impressions, then the historian could be sure that what is found in Paul's Epistles about Jesus is a true reflection of what Jesus really was. But as a matter of fact Paul was a genius. It is of the nature of genius to be creative. May not what Paul says about Jesus and the origin of Christianity, therefore, be no mere reflection of the facts, but the creation of his own mind?

The difficulty is not so serious as it seems. Genius is not incompatible with honesty—certainly not the genius of Paul. When, therefore, Paul sets himself to give information about certain plain matters of fact that came under his observation, as in the first two chapters of Galatians, there are not many historians who are inclined to refuse him credence. But the witness of Paul depends not so much upon details as upon the total fact of his religious life. It is that fact which is to be explained. To say merely that Paul was a genius and therefore unaccountable is no explanation. Certainly it is not an explanation satisfactory to modern historians. During the progress of modern criticism, students of the origin of Christianity have accepted the challenge presented by the fact of Paul's religious life; they have felt obliged to account for the emergence of that fact at just the point when it actually appeared. But the explanations which they have offered, as the following discussion may show, are insufficient; and it is just the greatness of Paul for which the explanations do not account. The religion of Paul is too large a building to have been erected upon a pin-point.

Moreover, the greater a man is, the wider is the area of his contact with his environment, and the deeper is his penetration into the spiritual realm. The "man in the street" is not so good an observer as is sometimes supposed; he observes only what lies on the surface. Paul, on the other hand, was able to sound the depths. It is, on the whole, certainly no disadvantage to the student of early Christianity that that particular member of the early Church whose inner life stands clearest in the light of history was no mere nonentity, but one of the commanding figures in the history of the world.

But what, in essence, is the fact of which the historical implications are here to be studied? What was the religion of Paul? No attempt will now be made to answer the question

in detail; no attempt will be made to add to the long list of expositions of the Pauline theology. But what is really essential is abundantly plain, and may be put in a word—the religion of Paul was a religion of redemption. It was founded not upon what had always been true, but upon what had recently happened; not upon right ideas about God and His relations to the world, but upon one thing that God had done; not upon an eternal truth of the fatherhood of God, but upon the fact that God had chosen to become the Father of those who should accept the redemption offered by Christ. The religion of Paul was rooted altogether in the redeeming work of Jesus Christ. Jesus for Paul was primarily not a Revealer, but a Saviour.

The character of Paulinism as a redemptive religion involved a certain conception of the Redeemer, which is perfectly plain on the pages of the Pauline Epistles. Jesus Christ, Paul believed, was a heavenly being; Paul placed Him clearly on the side of God and not on the side of men. "Not by man but by Jesus Christ," he says at the beginning of Galatians, and the same contrast is implied everywhere in the Epistles. This heavenly Redeemer existed before His earthly life; came then to earth, where He lived a true human life of humiliation; suffered on the cross for the sins of those upon whom the curse of the Law justly rested; then rose again from the dead by a mighty act of God's power; and is present always with His Church through His Spirit.

That representation has become familiar to the devout Christian, but to the modern historian it seems very strange. For to the modern historian, on the basis of the modern view of Jesus, the procedure of Paul seems to be nothing else than the deification by Paul of a man who had lived but a few years before and had died a shameful death.[7] It is not necessary to argue the question whether in Rom. ix. 5 Paul actually applies the term "God" to Jesus—certainly he does so according to the only natural interpretation of his words

as they stand—what is really important is that everywhere the relationship in which Paul stands toward Jesus is not the mere relationship of disciple to master, but is a truly religious relationship. Jesus is to Paul everywhere the object of religious faith.

That fact would not be quite so surprising if Paul had been of polytheistic training, if he had grown up in a spiritual environment where the distinction between divine and human was being broken down. Even in such an environment, indeed, the religion of Paul would have been quite without parallel. The deification of the eastern rulers or of the emperors differs *in toto* from the Pauline attitude toward Jesus. It differs in seriousness and fervor; above all it differs in its complete lack of exclusiveness. The lordship of the ruler admitted freely, and was indeed always accompanied by, the lordship of other gods; the lordship of Jesus, in the religion of Paul, was absolutely exclusive. For Paul, there was one Lord and one Lord only. When any parallel for such a religious relationship of a notable man to one of his contemporaries with whose most intimate friends he had come into close contact can be cited in the religious annals of the race, then it will be time for the historian to lose his wonder at the phenomenon of Paul.

But the wonder of the historian reaches its climax when he remembers that Paul was not a polytheist or a pantheist, but a Jew, to whom monotheism was the very breath of life.[8] The Judaism of Paul's day was certainly nothing if not monotheistic. But in the intensity of his monotheism Paul was not different from his countrymen. No one can possibly show a deeper scorn for the many gods of the heathen than can Paul. "For though there be that are called gods," he says, "whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we unto him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." (I

Cor. viii. 5, 6.) Yet it was this monotheist sprung of a race of monotheists, who stood in a full religious relation to a man who had died but a few years before; it was this monotheist who designated that man, as a matter of course, by the supreme religious term "Lord," and did not hesitate to apply to Him the passages in the Greek Old Testament where that term was used to translate the most awful name of the God of Israel! The religion of Paul is a phenomenon well worthy of the attention of the historian.

In recent years that phenomenon has been explained in four different ways. The four ways have not always been clearly defined; they have sometimes entered into combination with one another. But they are logically distinct, and to a certain extent they may be treated separately.

There is first of all the supernaturalistic explanation, which simply accepts at its face value what Paul presupposes about Jesus. According to this explanation, Jesus was really a heavenly being, who in order to redeem sinful man came voluntarily to earth, suffered for the sins of others on the cross, rose from the dead, ascended to the right hand of God, from whence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. If this representation be correct, then there is really nothing to explain; the religious attitude of Paul toward Jesus was not an apotheosis of a man, but recognition as divine of one who really was divine.

The other three explanations are alike in that they all reject supernaturalism, they all deny the entrance into human history of any creative act of God, unless indeed all the course of nature be regarded as creative. They all agree, therefore, in explaining the religion of Paul as a phenomenon which emerged in the course of history under the operation of natural causes.

The most widespread of these naturalistic explanations of the religion of Paul is what may be called the "liberal" view.