

**PAULINISM; A CONTRIBUTION
TO THE HISTORY
OF PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN
THEOLOGY, VOL. II**

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Paulinism; a contribution to the history of primitive Christian theology, Vol. II by Otto
Pfleiderer

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OTTO PFLEIDERER

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THEOLOGY, VOL. II**

PAULINISM:

A Contribution to the
HISTORY OF PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN
THEOLOGY.

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VOL. II
THE HISTORY OF PAULINISM IN THE
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Part Second.

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE ORIGINAL POSITION OF PAULINISM TOWARDS JEWISH CHRISTIANITY.

HAVING investigated in detail the gospel preached by Paul, with its peculiar characteristics, we shall proceed to ascertain what place it occupied in the history of primitive Christianity. We have repeatedly had occasion to remark that it differed on points of essential importance from the Jewish-Christian view; it need not surprise us, therefore, to see a conflict break out on several points between Paulinism and Jewish Christianity. The Epistles to the Galatians and to the Corinthians, whose main purpose is the defence of Paul's apostolic work against his Judaizing opponents, are especially calculated to give us a clear and true insight into the relation between the two parties. (We cannot depend upon the Acts of the Apostles as a source of information on this matter, since the relations of parties in the primitive Church are there viewed in the light of later dogmatic presuppositions, and adjusted accordingly.) The subject of the *Epistle to the Galatians* is partly the independence of the apostolic work of Paul, partly the right of an independent Gentile-Christian body to belong to the Christian community, without at the same time becoming Jews, as the opponents of Paul demanded, by subjecting themselves to the law, especially to circumcision—a disputed question, which eventually led to the

laying down of the principles on which the validity of the Mosaic law among Christians depended. In the Epistles to the Corinthians the disputes about the law fall into the background, as the opponents of Paul in the Gentile-Christian community of Corinth had directed their attack in the first instance less against the contents of Paul's Gospel, than against his claims to apostolical authority. The contest of principles, therefore, takes here the form of personal attack and defence. In the *Epistle to the Romans*, again, the personal element gives place to the actual setting forth of the doctrine of Paul, not, however, polemically, as in the Epistle to the Galatians, but rather in calm and positive development, and, moreover, with a decidedly conciliatory spirit towards the Jewish Christians. The *Epistle to the Philippians*, finally, shows the mixed feelings of the departing Apostle with regard to his opponents, the recognition of their Christianity being combined with irritation at their personal behaviour to him. We shall, therefore, have to distinguish three phases in the relations of Paul to the Jewish Christians; the contest about the law (Epistle to the Galatians), the contest about the apostolic office of Paul (the Epistles to the Corinthians), and the adoption of a conciliatory course regarding the question of principles (Epistles to the Romans and Philippians).

THE CONTEST ABOUT THE LAW.

In order to prove to the Galatians that his gospel was independent of human authority, and depended on divine revelation, Paul relates to them how, after his conversion, he had not communicated with flesh and blood, nor gone to Jerusalem to see those who had been Apostles before him, but had withdrawn for three years to Arabia and Damascus; after which he had travelled to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days, but of the other Apostles he had seen none, except-

ing James, the brother of the Lord; he had therefore remained personally unknown to the other Apostles and to the community until the journey which he made to Jerusalem fourteen years later. The Apostle lays great stress upon these facts, because they prove that at the commencement of his exercise of Apostleship, and for the first fourteen years of it, he had not only been officially independent of the community at Jerusalem, but had in fact been wholly unconnected with it. The fact that he not only did not seek any connection with it, but apparently avoided it, clearly reveals the depth of the chasm by which he felt himself separated from the primitive community, and his gospel from theirs. But, nevertheless, he could not continue for any length of time thus to ignore the community at Jerusalem, because this community itself took up an aggressive attitude against his labours in the mixed community of Antioch, and that with so much success, that he saw the entire work on which he had hitherto laboured in danger of being undone. It was the fear that, in consequence of the reaction set on foot at Jerusalem, his running (striving) in the service of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles might be in vain, or had already been in vain (*μῆπως εἰς κενὸν τρέχω ἢ ἔδραμον*, ii. 2), which finally, after the lapse of fourteen years, induced Paul to try to come to an understanding with the Christians at Jerusalem regarding "the gospel which he preached among the Gentiles;" that is to say, regarding the principle of his Gentile Christianity. The impulse which issued in this resolution, at which the Apostle evidently arrived with reluctance, was given by a "revelation," a recurrence of that miraculous form in which the overwhelming conviction of a higher necessity burst out through the struggles and oscillations of the human soul—psychologically the same phenomenon as we have already seen in the *ἀποκάλυψις* at his conversion (i. 12, 16: see Introduction).

We see from ii. 3—5, what was the main point at issue in this conference. Paul took the uncircumcised Gentile Christian Titus with him, in order to show by this example how unreason-