

# **THE DAWN OF CHRISTIANITY**

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The dawn of Christianity by Alfred W. Martin

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**ALFRED W. MARTIN**

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BY

ALFRED W. MARTIN, A.M., S.T.B.

AUTHOR OF

"THE LIFE OF JESUS IN THE LIGHT OF THE HIGHER CRITICISM"

"GREAT RELIGIOUS TEACHERS OF THE EAST"



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## PREFATORY NOTE

The Ethical Culture movement is characterized, in part, by the freedom of its fellowship. Occupying a neutral position on all questions pertaining to theology and philosophy, it accords its lecturers entire freedom of thought and of speech, at the same time leaving the members equally free to accept or reject the platform utterances of leaders.

In the light of this cardinal characteristic of the Ethical movement, it will be understood that the views expressed in this book commit no one but the author, he having no right, as one of the leaders of an Ethical Society, to speak for anyone but himself.

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## INTRODUCTION

This course of lectures, delivered on Sunday evenings in the Meeting House of the Society for Ethical Culture during the winter of 1914, is a continuation of the series given in the preceding year and subsequently published under the title, "The Life of Jesus in the Light of the Higher Criticism." The purpose of this sequel is to carry the story of the origin of Christianity on from the death of Jesus to the birth of the new religion, noting the precise part played in this process by the genius of Paul and the unique contribution made by the author of the Fourth Gospel in supplementing the Christology of the Apostle to the Gentiles with an account of the historic Jesus in terms they could understand. The first two lectures relate to preliminary questions touching the formation of the New Testament as a collection of sacred books and the reliability of the record as a source of information on the development of religious thought and organization during the period under consideration. We shall then see how, after the crucifixion, the bereaved and despondent disciples came to themselves and under the inspiration of a great conviction concerning the immortality of their Master, rallied in Jerusalem to make converts to that convic-

## INTRODUCTION

tion and await the return of Jesus in the rôle of Messiah. We shall then take a survey of the life and missionary labors of this primitive community of disciples and converts into whose midst came Paul after his religious transformation on the way to Damascus. How this quasi-apostle arrived at the conclusion that the heterodox Judaism represented by the Jerusalem church was not radical enough, and how, as a result of his controversy with the brethren, he achieved the advancement of their religion to its logical and necessary outcome in Christianity,—this will form the subject-matter of the fifth lecture in the series.

In the first half of the second century the Christian Church was confronted with a most perplexing difficulty. For nearly a hundred years the hope had been fervently held that Jesus would return from Heaven to usher in the heavenly kingdom. The church in all localities and in all its undertakings had been organized and maintained on the basis of this eschatology. But now that the great expectation had failed of fulfilment after a century of prayerful watching and waiting, the problem arose of meeting the disappointment and saving the newly-created religion from the danger of dissolution. The existing order of society, it was supposed, would soon disappear and many a belief and practice had been instituted on the basis of that assumption. Now that it seemed to be ill-founded, the problem was to readjust inherited beliefs and practices to a society that showed no signs of undergoing the expected miraculous transformation. The solution of that problem introduces us to Hermas, whose "Shepherd" furnishes illustration of how the read-