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ST. PAUL.

THAT the apostle Paul was one of the greatest men, if not the greatest, in the spiritual history of our race is universally admitted. "Should any one ask me," said a distinguished French orator (Adolphe Monod), "to name the man who, of all others, has been the greatest benefactor of our race, I should say without hesitation, the apostle Paul. His name is the type of human activity the most endless, and at the same time the most useful that history has cared to preserve." Another Frenchman (Dr. Godet) calls him "a unique man for a unique work." Even Renan, who has no sympathy whatever with Paul's doctrines and inner life, and cannot understand them, yet feels constrained to do homage to the lofty intellect and the noble heart of him whom he designates as the apostle of marching and conquering Christianity ("*le christianisme conquérant et voyageur*"). Baur and the Tübingen school of radical critics almost make Paul rather than Jesus of Nazareth the founder of Christianity as a system of free and universal salvation.

Paul's career was that of a moral hero and conqueror of souls for Christ, far less brilliant indeed, but infinitely more noble, beneficial, and enduring, than that of military conquerors prompted by ambition, sacrificing millions of treasure and myriads of lives, to die at last in a drunken fit at Babylon, or of a broken heart on the lonely rocks of St. Helena. Their empires have long since crumbled into dust, but St. Paul still remains the great moral teacher of victorious faith, of Christian freedom and progress; and the pulses of his mighty heart are beating even with greater force now than ever before throughout the civilized world. His Epistles are to this day, as they have been for eighteen centuries, a mine of wisdom and comfort, an inspira-

tion to great thoughts and deeds, a Magna Charta of freedom from bondage, a lever of reform in countries and languages of which he never heard.

Paul had the natural outfit for his great work. He combined Semitic fervor, Greek versatility, and Roman energy. A Hebrew of the Hebrews of the school of Gamaliel, a Hellenist of Tarsus and master of the Greek tongue, and a Roman citizen by birth, he was better qualified than any other apostle to proclaim, expound, and defend the Christian religion as a power of universal salvation for Jew and Gentile on condition of a living faith.

But his great talents were at first weapons of destruction. He was an architect of ruin before he became an architect of the temple of God. Educated in the strictest school of the Pharisees, he regarded Jesus of Nazareth as a dangerous innovator, as a false Messiah and seducer of the people who was justly put to death. He placed himself at the head of persecution which broke out after the bold speech of Stephen, the protomartyr, and determined to stamp out this dangerous sect, thinking thereby to promote the glory of God and the honor of his ancestral religion. After scattering the congregation of Jerusalem, he proceeded with full authority from the Sanhedrin to Damascus to bring the fugitive Christians back to Jerusalem in chains. But the height of his fanatical opposition was the beginning of his devotion to Christianity.

That event at Damascus marks an epoch not only in the history of Paul and the apostolic church, but also in the history of mankind. The sudden and radical transformation of the most dangerous persecutor into the most successful promoter of Christianity is nothing less than a miracle of divine grace which rests on the greater miracle of the resurrection of Christ. Both are inseparably connected; without the resurrection the conversion would have been impossible, and on the other hand the conversion of Paul is one of the best proofs of the resurrection of Christ. Both stand or fall together.

Attempts have been made, as in the case of the resurrection of Christ,¹ to explain the conversion of Paul from purely natu-

¹ Compare an article on that subject in the *PRINCETON REVIEW* for May, 1880.

ral causes without a miracle, but they have failed. Let us briefly examine them.

1. The old rationalistic theory of thunder and lightning, which has been abandoned in Germany, but recently revived and rhetorically embellished by Renan (in his "Les apôtres," ch. x. pp. 175, *sqq.*), attributes the conversion to physical causes; namely, a violent storm and the delirium of a burning Syrian fever in which Paul superstitiously mistook the thunder for the voice of God, and the lightning for a heavenly vision. But the record says nothing about thunder-storm and fever, and both combined could not produce such an effect upon any sensible man, much less upon the history of the world. Who ever heard the thunder speak in Hebrew or in any other articulate language? And had not Paul and Luke eyes and ears and common-sense, as well as we, to distinguish between an ordinary phenomenon of nature from a supernatural vision?

2. The vision-hypothesis resolves the conversion into a natural psychological process and into an honest self-delusion of Paul; as the resurrection of Christ is supposed to have been a sweet dream of the apostles. This is the favorite theory of the modern rationalists of the Tübingen and Leyden schools and their followers in England. Dr. Baur and Strauss started it, and Holsten, Lipsius, Pfleiderer, Hausrath, and the author of "Supernatural Religion" adopted and defended it. Holsten is its chief expounder and advocate, in his "Christusvision des Paulus." The theory is undoubtedly more rational than the thunder-and-lightning theory, because it ascribes a mighty moral change to intellectual and moral rather than physical and accidental causes. It assumes that a great fermentation was going on in the mind of Paul on his way to Damascus which resulted at last by logical necessity in an entire change of conviction and conduct, without any supernatural influence, the very possibility of which is denied by this school as a breach in the continuity of historical development. The miracle in this case was simply the symbolical reflection of the commanding presence of Jesus in the thoughts of Paul; in other words, a delusion.

It is incredible that a man of such a sound, clear, and strong mind as that of Paul undoubtedly was, should have made such a radical and far-reaching blunder as to confound subjective reflec-

tions with an objective appearance of Jesus whom he persecuted, and to ascribe solely to an act of divine mercy what he must have known to be the result of his own thoughts, if he thought at all.

The advocates of this theory throw the appearances of the risen Lord to the older disciples, the later visions of Peter, Philip, and John in the Apocalypse, into the same category of subjective illusions in the high tide of nervous excitement and religious enthusiasm. It is plausibly maintained that Paul was an enthusiast, fond of visions and revelations, and that he justifies a doubt concerning the reality of the resurrection itself by putting all the appearances of the risen Christ on the same level with his own, altho several years elapsed between those of Jerusalem and Galilee, and that on the way to Damascus.

But this, the only possible argument for the vision-hypothesis, is entirely untenable. When Paul says, "*Last* of all, as unto an *untimely* offspring, Christ appeared to me also," he draws a clear line of distinction between the *personal* appearances of Christ and his own later visions, and closes the former with the one vouchsafed to him at his conversion. Once, and once only, he claims to have seen the Lord in visible form, and to have heard his voice; last, indeed, and out of due time, yet as truly and really as the other apostles. He uses the *realness* of Christ's resurrection as a basis of his wonderful discussion of the future resurrection of believers, which would lose all its force if Christ was not actually raised from the dead.

Moreover, his conversion coincided with his call to the apostleship. If the former was a delusion, the latter must have been a delusion. He emphasizes his direct call to the apostleship of the Gentiles by the personal appearance of Christ without any human intervention, in opposition to his Judaizing adversaries who tried to undermine his labors. (Gal. i. 1-18).

The whole assumption of a long inward preparation, both intellectual and moral, for a change is without any evidence, and cannot set aside the fact that Paul was, according to his repeated confession, at that time violently persecuting Christianity in its followers. His conversion can be far less explained from antecedent causes, surrounding circumstances, and personal motives than that of any other disciple. While

the older apostles were devoted friends of Jesus, Paul was his enemy, bent at the very time of the great change on an errand of cruel persecution, and therefore in a state of mind most unlikely to give birth to a vision so fatal to his present object and his future career. How could a fanatical persecutor of Christianity, "breathing threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," stultify and contradict himself by an imaginative conceit which tended to the building up of that very religion which he was laboring to destroy?

But supposing, with Renan, that his mind was temporarily upset in the delirium of feverish excitement, he certainly soon recovered health and reason, and had every opportunity to correct his error: he was intimate with the murderers of Jesus, who could have produced tangible evidence against the resurrection if it had never occurred; and after a long pause of quiet reflection he went to Jerusalem, spent a fortnight with Peter, and learned from him and from James the brother of Christ their experiences and compared them with his own. Everything in this case is against the mythical and legendary theory which requires a change of environment and the lapse of years for the formation of poetic fancies and fictions.

Finally, the whole life-work of Paul from his conversion at Damascus to his martyrdom in Rome is the best possible argument against this hypothesis and for the reality of his conversion as an act of divine grace. "By their fruits ye shall know them." How could such an effective change proceed from an empty dream? Can an illusion change the current of history? By joining the Christian sect Paul sacrificed everthing, at last life itself, to the service of Christ. He never wavered in his conviction of the truth as revealed to him, and by his faith in this revelation he has become a benediction to all ages.

The vision-hypothesis denies objective miracles, but ascribes miracles to subjective imaginations, and makes a lie more effective and beneficial than the truth.

It is evident, therefore, that the rationalistic and natural interpretations of the conversion of Paul turn out to be irrational and unnatural; the supernatural interpretation of Paul himself after all is the most rational and natural.

And to this conclusion honest doubt has been driven at last

in its ablest representatives. Dr. Baur, the master-spirit of sceptical criticism and the founder of the "Tübingen school," felt constrained, shortly before his death (1860), to abandon the vision-hypothesis and to admit that "no psychological or dialectical analysis can explore the inner mystery of the act in which God revealed his son in Paul" (*keine, weder psychologische noch dialektische Analyse kann das innere Geheimniß des Actes erforschen, in welchem Gott seinen Sohn in ihm enthülte*). In the same connection he says that in "the sudden transformation of Paul from the most violent adversary of Christianity into its most determined herald" he could see "nothing short of a miracle" (*Wunder*); and adds that "this miracle appears all the greater when we remember that in this revulsion of his consciousness he broke through the barriers of Judaism and rose out of its particularism into the universalism of Christianity." This frank confession is creditable to the head and heart of the late Tübingen critic, but is fatal to his whole anti-supernaturalistic theory of history. *Si falsus in uno, falsus in omnibus*. If we admit the miracle in one case, the door is opened for all other miracles which rest on equally strong evidence.

Dr. Keim (d. 1879), an independent pupil of Baur, who in his "Life of Jesus" even went beyond Baur on the Johannean question, admits at least *spiritual* manifestations of the ascended Christ *from heaven*, and urges in favor of the objective reality of the Christophany of Paul, as related by him 1 Cor. xv. 3, *sqq.*: "The whole character of Paul; his sharp understanding, which was not weakened by his enthusiasm; the careful, cautious, measured, simple form of his statement; above all, the favorable total impression of his narrative and the mighty echo of it in the unanimous, uncontradicted faith of primitive Christendom."

Prof. Reuss, of Strassburg, likewise an independent critic of the liberal school, in his recent Commentary on the Pauline Epistles (1878), came to a similar conclusion; namely, that the conversion of Paul, if not an absolute miracle, is at least an unsolved psychological problem. "*La conversion de Paul*," he says, "*après tout ce qui en été dit de notre temps, reste toujours, si ce n'est un miracle absolu, dans lesens traditionnel de ce mot, du moins un problème psychologique aujourd'hui insoluble. L'explication dite naturelle, qu'elle fasse intervenir un orage ou qu'elle se retranche dans le do-*

maine de hallucinations . . . ne nous donne pas la clef de cette crise elle-même qui a décidé la métamorphose du pharisien en chrétien."

The conversion of Paul changed his character and course of life, without destroying his identity. The connecting link between Saul the Jew and Paul the Christian was the honest and earnest pursuit of righteousness, or conformity to the holy will of God. First he sought it through works of the law and failed, then he sought and found it through faith in Christ who died and rose for him; and this faith became the most powerful stimulus to holiness. Hereafter he was identified with Christ, and love to Christ was his only passion. The engine was reversed and its direction changed, but it was the same engine, only purged, improved, and intensified in energy. The weapons of destruction became weapons of construction. He remained the same fearless, martial, and heroic nature, but under the banner of the cross against the enemies of the cross. The same vigor, depth, and acuteness of mind, but illuminated by the Holy Spirit; the same imperious temper and burning zeal, but subdued and controlled by wisdom and moderation; the same energy, boldness, and independence, but coupled with gentleness and meekness; and added to all this, as crowning graces, a love and humility, a tenderness and delicacy of feeling, almost without a parallel in the history of saints. The little Epistle to Philemon reveals a perfect Christian gentleman, a nobleman of nature, doubly ennobled by grace; and the seraphic description of charity in the first Epistle to the Corinthians surpasses in beauty anything that has ever been said and written on the same subject. It alone is a sufficient proof of his inspiration.

The work of Paul was twofold—practical and theoretical. We can only glance at it and present it in its general outline. He was the greatest missionary and the profoundest theologian among the apostles. He preached the gospel of free and universal grace from Damascus to Rome, and secured its triumph in the Roman Empire, which means the civilized world of that age. At the same time he built up the church from within by the exposition and defence of the gospel in his Epistles. He descended to the humblest details of ecclesiastical administration and discipline, and mounted to the sublimest heights of theological speculation.

His inspiring motive was love to Christ and to his fellow-men. "The love of Christ," he says, "constraineth us; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died: and he died for all that they who live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again." He regarded himself as a bondman and ambassador of Christ, entreating men to be reconciled to God. Animated by this spirit, he became "as a Jew to the Jews, as a Gentile to the Gentiles, all things to all men, that by all means he might save some."

He made Antioch, the capital of Syria and the mother-church of Gentile Christendom, his point of departure for and return from his missionary journeys, and at the same time he kept up his connection with Jerusalem, the mother-church of Jewish Christendom. Altho an independent apostle of Christ, he accepted a solemn commission from Antioch for his first great missionary tour. He followed the westward current of history, commerce, and civilization from Asia to Europe, from Syria to Asia Minor, Greece, Italy, and perhaps as far as Spain and Gaul; and had America been discovered earlier he might have crossed the ocean and preached to the native Indians. As it was, he came, as Clement of Rome says, "to the extreme boundary of the West." In the larger and more influential cities—Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, Rome—he resided a considerable time. From these salient points he sent the Gospel by his pupils and fellow-laborers into the surrounding towns and villages. But he always avoided collision with other apostles, and sought new fields of labor where Christ was not known before, that he might not build on any other man's foundation. This is true independence and missionary courtesy, which is so often, alas! violated by missionary societies inspired by sectarian rather than Christian zeal.

His chief mission was to the Gentiles, without excluding the Jews, according to the message of Christ delivered through Ananias: "Thou shalt bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel." Considering that the Jews had a prior claim in time to the Gospel ("to the Jews *first*," Rom. i. 16), and that the synagogues in heathen cities were pioneer stations for Christian missions, he very naturally ad-

dressed himself first to the Jews and proselytes, taking up the regular lessons of the Old Testament Scriptures, and demonstrating their fulfilment in Jesus of Nazareth. But almost uniformly he found the half-Jews, or "proselytes of the gate," more open to the Gospel than his own brethren; they were honest and earnest seekers of the true religion, and formed the natural bridge to the pure heathen and the nucleus of his congregations, which were generally composed of converts from both religions.

In noble self-denial he earned his subsistence with his own hands, as a tent-maker, that he might not be burdensome to his congregations (mostly belonging to the lower classes), that he might preserve his independence, stop the mouths of his enemies, and testify his gratitude to the infinite mercy of the Lord, who had called him from his headlong, fanatical career of persecution to the office of an apostle of free grace. He never collected money for himself, but for the poor Jewish Christians in Palestine. Only as an exception did he receive gifts from his converts at Philippi, who were peculiarly dear to him. Yet he repeatedly enjoins upon the churches to care for the liberal temporal support of their teachers who break to them the bread of eternal life.

Of the innumerable difficulties, dangers, and sufferings which he encountered with Jews, heathens, and false brethren we can hardly form an adequate idea; for the book of Acts is only a summary record. He supplements it incidentally. "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Three times was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, three times I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers, in perils from my countrymen, in perils from the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in labor and toil, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, there is that which presseth upon me daily, the anxious care for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?" Thus he wrote reluctantly to the Corinthians, in self-vindication against his calumniators, in the year 57, before his longest and hardest trial in the prisons of Cæsarea and Rome, and at least

seven years before his martyrdom. He was "pressed on every side, yet not straitened; perplexed, yet not in despair; pursued, yet not forsaken; smitten down, yet not destroyed." His whole public career was a continuous warfare. He represents the church militant or "marching and conquering Christianity." He was *unus versus mundum* in a far higher sense than this has been said of Athanasius the Great when confronted with the Arian heresy and the imperial heathenism of Julian the Apostate. But in all his conflicts with foes from without and from within, Paul was "more than conqueror" through the grace of God, which was sufficient for him. "For I am persuaded," he writes to the Romans, in the strain of a sublime ode of triumph, "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." And his dying word is an assurance of victory: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing."

The life and labors of such a man furnish the best possible evidence of Christianity, next to the character of Christ himself, who alone was free from sin and imperfection. Paul nowhere claims perfection. He no doubt had a violent temper, which he did not always sufficiently control. He may have handled good old Peter too severely when he called him a hypocrite in the face of the congregation at Antioch for a sin of weakness and temporary inconsistency. He may have been too rigorous when he separated from his old friend and companion, Barnabas, on account of his cousin Mark, whom he refused to take along on his second missionary journey because he had become homesick on the first and returned to his mother in Jerusalem. But Paul grew in humility as he advanced in life. First, in 57, he thought he was "the least of the apostles and not meet to be an apostle"; five years later, in the prison at Rome, he spoke of himself as "the least of all saints;" and two years afterwards, writing to his beloved disciple Timothy, he called himself "the

chief of sinners." The voice of history adds: "and the chief of saints."

The value of his Epistles to the facts of the gospel history is incalculable. At least four of them, and they by far the most important—namely, the Romans, First and Second Corinthians, and the Galatians—are accepted as genuine by the most exacting of the modern critics. Hilgenfeld, Pfleiderer, and Lipsius—all of the Tübingen school—admit seven, adding First Thessalonians, Philippians, and Philemon. Renan goes still further and concedes also Second Thessalonians and Colossians to be genuine, thus swelling the number of Pauline Epistles to nine. The Ephesians will soon be surrendered, and the three pastoral Epistles alone will remain more or less doubtful among scholars until the second Roman captivity can be more fully established; for it is almost impossible to locate them at any period before the first Roman captivity, with which the Acts conclude. Yet even in these Epistles the evidence of their Pauline origin greatly preponderates over the difficulties and objections which have been raised by Schleiermacher, Baur, and Holtzmann.

But even if we confine ourselves to the four great Epistles which Baur acknowledged and made the very basis of his attacks on the credibility of the Acts, they are sufficient to establish all the prominent facts of the life of Christ as well known and generally believed among the Christians at the time when those Epistles were composed; *i.e.*, between A.D. 54 to 58, within less than thirty years after the crucifixion. They refer to our Lord's birth from a woman of the royal house of David, his sinless life and perfect example, his atoning death, his triumphant resurrection on the third day, his repeated manifestations to his disciples, his ascension and exaltation to the right hand of God, whence he will return to judge all men in righteousness; the adoration of Christ by his followers, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and establishment of the church in Jerusalem, the martyrdom of Stephen, the conversion and calling of Paul by the appearance of Christ to him at Damascus, the rapid spread of Christianity from Jerusalem to Rome and all intervening places of importance, the council at Jerusalem, the controversy about circumcision and the law, the celebration of baptism, and

the Lord's Supper in commemoration of the Lord's dying love for sinners. He alludes most frequently to the crucifixion and the resurrection of Christ as the two most important events by which our redemption was accomplished and our victory over sin and death is divinely secured. It is unnecessary to quote passages which the reader can easily find on every page of those Epistles. All the Pauline and other Epistles of the New Testament are brimful of Christ, and are absolutely inconceivable without the historic foundation of his divine-human life and work on earth, which was to Paul, as it is still to all true Christians, the most certain as well as the most important and sacred fact in the history of mankind.

PHILIP SCHAFF.