

## [photocopie]

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course say that in some sense every man has a "legalistic Jew" in his heart. But that is an analogy, and should not be smuggled into the texts as their primary or explicit meaning in Paul. If that is done, something happens to the joy and humility of Gentile Christianity.

Thus, the theologian would note that the Pauline original should not be identified with such interpretations. He would try to find ways by which the church—also in the West—could do more justice to other elements of the Pauline original than those catering to the problems raised by introspection. He would be suspicious of a teaching and a preaching which pretended that the only door into the church was that of evermore introspective awareness of sin and guilt. For it appears that the Apostle Paul was a rather good Christian, and yet he seems to have had little such awareness. We note how the biblical original functions as a critique of inherited presuppositions and an incentive to new thought. Few things are more liberating and creative in modern theology than a clear distinction between the "original" and the "translation" in any age, our own included.

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## EPILOGUE

### The Christian Proteus

WAYNE A. MEEKS

The significance of Paul for the development of European and American religious traditions can hardly be overestimated, however difficult it may be to describe the precise nature of his influence. Sydney Ahlstrom, the historian of American religion, has said:

Just as the European philosophical tradition, in Whitehead's famous phrase, consists of a series of footnotes to Plato, so Christian theology is a series of footnotes to St. Paul, and back of him stretches still another series of rabbinic footnotes on the Law and the Prophets of Israel.<sup>1</sup>

That is not an overstatement, but it must be qualified by the reminder that footnotes can express many things: rejection, for instance, or utter bafflement, as well as agreement and expansion. Harnack was more judicious when he suggested, "One might write a history of dogma as a history of the Pauline reactions in the Church, and in doing so would touch on all the turning points of the history."<sup>2</sup> The history of Paulinism, as we have noted earlier, contains a peculiar ambivalence. The "most holy apostle" of the sacred traditions is at the same time, again and again, "the apostle of the heretics." There is singular irony in the fact that the great system builders of Christian doctrine quarried their choicest propositions from Paul's letters, only to have later generations discover that they had thus built time-bombs into the structure that would, in a moment of crisis, bring the whole tower of syllogisms crashing down. Paul has become the foe of all authoritative systems,

1. Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *Theology in America* (Indianapolis, 1967), p. 23.

2. Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, tr. by Neil Buchanan (Boston, 1902) I, 136 (italics added).

EPICURE

The Christian Proteus

THINE A MERE

The significance of this for the development of the Christian Proteus is that it was the first time that the Proteus was seen as a creature of the sea, and not as a creature of the land.

It is the first time that the Proteus is seen as a creature of the sea, and not as a creature of the land.

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THE PROTEUS

The Proteus is a creature of the sea, and not of the land.

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The Proteus is a creature of the sea, and not of the land.