Paul: The Transition from *Nazarenism* to Christianity

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Abstract: This study examines the role of the person of Paul in the transition of Christian religion from Nazaren-Christianity to Gentile-Christianity. The goal of this paper is to explore firstly Paul's turning point from being a Jew to a devout Christian and secondly his missionary activities to the Gentiles (non-Jews), which played an important role in the development of Christianity as a religion, its major teachings and thoughts. Paul's great concern regarding the foundation of Christian theology or what is now known as the Pauline Christian theology, is presented in this study. His real contribution is found in his teachings, where the central point is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, who after the crucifixion had risen in glory, headed a new community and guided it through his spirit. The main thrust of this paper will be on: (1) Paul's life and personality, (2) Paul's conversion from an orthodox Jew to a devout Christian, (3) Paul's missionary activities to the Gentiles (Non-Jews), (4) Paul's contribution to the foundation of Christian theology and thought (Paul's central doctrines of Christianity, like original sin, incarnation, crucifixion, redemption, atonement, reconciliation, resurrection, and salvation). Descriptive-analytical-philosophical methodology has been used in this study. The findings of this paper contribute significantly to the existing literature on the subject of the study of religion.
Keywords: Paul, Nazarenism, Christianity, sin, incarnation, resurrection, salvation.

INTRODUCTION

The main problem faced by most contemporary scholars of comparative religion in general and Christian scholars in particular, in their studies of Christianity, is the transition from *Nazaren-*Christianity constructed and promoted by Jesus of Nazareth [1] and his close disciples to Gentile-Christianity constructed and promoted by Paul. The former type of Christianity was exclusive in nature—limited to Jews only. The religion of Jesus was not just a religion. Rather, it was a way of life that requires its adherents to be good. In John (14:6) [2], Jesus informs the people that he is "the way," and his disciples were known by others as followers of "the way" [3]. In the beginning, the followers of Jesus were considered by others as Jews, and as another sect of Judaism. Later on, they were known or called by other Jews and Romans as the *Nazorenes* or *Nazarenes* [4]. This later type of Christianity was inclusive in nature – expanded to non-Jewish communities, i.e., the pagans, who were worshipping man-made gods, idols, or deities. Besides, the teachings and theology of this type of Christianity were rooted in the "religion about Jesus and not the religion of Jesus" [5].

However, the vast literature written about Christianity has shown to its reader that Christianity as a new religion or legacy began with a history. To understand the birth of Christianity, it is very crucial to answer the following questions: How did Christianity come into existence? Who were the first Christians and whose teachings did they follow? Were the first Christians different from the Jews? Who founded Christianity – Jesus or Paul? Finally, who was responsible for the transition from *Nazarenism* to Christianity?

Birth of Christianity: A Historical Assessment

It is of great importance to mention here that Christianity was born in a complex Judeo-Greco-Roman environment. Such complex environment resulted from the succession of empires that controlled the Judean region or Israel at some point, like Babylon, Persia, Greece, and finally Rome. Each of these empires had great impacts on the Jewish religion and culture. [6] Living in a multi-religious society that is also culturally diversified, it was very difficult for the Jews, even those who were living in the heart of Judaism, Jerusalem and Palestine, to maintain their monotheistic faith.

To some people like E. Glen Hinson, Jerusalem is the starting point of Christianity, where its people already exhibited the diversity that would "characterise Christianity everywhere for at least two centuries. At Pentecost, Jews and Jewish proselytes from Parthia, Medea, Elam, Mesopotamia, Judaea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, Libya, Cyrene, Rome, Crete, and Arabia were present in Jerusalem" [7]. However, due to this communal diversity, tension arose between "Hellenists", the

Greek-speaking Jews, and "Hebrews" [8], the Aramaic-speaking natives of Palestine [9].

Daniel Boyarin claims that Judaism in Jerusalem and Palestine "had been in increasing interaction with Greco-Roman-Hellenistic culture for several centuries by the time Paul was born" [10]. It seems that this cultural interaction had led to several striking cultural developments within Judaism itself, including the distortions of some teachings of the Torah and lack of practice especially those who lived outside Israel in Diaspora.

Martin Hengel shows in his writings that in the antiquity world, there was "great appreciation for Judaism on the part of Greek philosophy" [11]. For instance, pure Jewish monotheism was recognized by thoughtful Greek philosophers, like Hecataeus and Posidonius, who "may have acknowledged Jewish belief in its unfalsified form to be a high stage of spirituality ..... to the exclusion of all else, to be acceptable. In their view, truth of even the Jewish faith could be expressed only in a universal way without national and historically conditioned limitations" [12]. It is understood that the Hellenistic culture had played a crucial role in the formation of a new and complex worldview among the Jewish community living in Israel and Diaspora. Also, it is understood from the words of Hegel that the Palestinian version of Judaism was no less Hellenised than its Diaspora version.

The influence of Hellenistic and Roman religious and cultural norms that were dominating Judaism for almost five to six centuries before the birth of Jesus and Paul, led to the development of three different worldviews among the Jews in Palestine as well as those in Diaspora. The *first* is the monotheistic worldview [13] maintained by some Jews, introduced to them hundreds of years by a Prophet who had proclaimed the following: "'*But you are my witnesses, O Israel!' says the Lord. 'You are my servant. You have been chosen to know me, believe in me, and understand that I alone am God. There is no other God—there never has been, and there never will be. I, yes I, am the Lord, and there is no other Savior*'" (Bible, Isaiah 43:10-11).

The *second* is the polytheistic worldview [14] which can be seen in the Jewish writings of the Hellenistic era, where additional spiritual forces (angels and demons) promoted by this worldview, which were absent before, were recognized. Thus, during this time, many Jews were following two different worldviews: remaining formally monotheists, on the one hand, and believing in a plurality of spiritual powers, on the other.

The *third* is the dualistic worldview [15], which had at its centre two different spiritual forces opposing one another: good versus evil. This worldview was introduced to the Jewish community by the Persians, who believed in two opposite powers: *Ahura Mazda*, the God, identified as the good spirit and his opposite was identified as *Anra Mainyu*, the evil one.

The system of belief developed inside and outside Jerusalem by the Jewish community proposed two different ultimate forces: Good vs. Evil, and this led to the construction of a system of thought called dualism. The Jews' worldview was affected by this system while they were looking at the history as a struggle between God and the Devil, where for some reasons the Devil prevailed. Jews considered their invaders, i.e., Persians, Greeks, and Romans, as the Devil who destroyed their religious values and culture. Therefore, the Jews believing in one True God understood that the devilish evil age would come to an end and the righteous age would prevail. Although the Jews believed in God as the only Supreme Ruler, the Devil or Satan was the controlling force during that age [16]. It is clearly understood that in the midst of Jewish monotheism, the dualistic worldview emerged, a dualism of good and evil and a dualism of this age and the future. Therefore, the Jews were waiting for the coming of Jesus as their awaited Messiah to liberate them from the chains of the Devil.

E. Earle Ellis, a distinguished New Testament specialist, observes that in the first century Judaism, three different conceptions of ministry were developed: [17] (1) *the priestly ministry* at the Jerusalem temple which had a flourishing and central role for Jewish piety; (2) *the Prophets* who were no longer a dominant factor in first-century Judaism, and many Jews identified John the Baptist and Jesus as Prophets (Mt 16:14); and, (3) *the wise teachers' ministry* at Qumran, that manifested a number of prophetic qualities. However, the early Christian ministry as well as the ministry of the Pauline churches differed from the ministry of Judaism especially in terms of mission, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah [18].

Furthermore, *the first* Christians did not consider themselves different from the ancient people of Israel; rather, they believed that they were the true Israel that experienced the fulfilment of Jewish Messianic hopes through Jesus of Nazareth [19], who was a Jew [20]. In this sense, Christianity for the first Christians was not different from Judaism. However, some other sources have maintained that there were two different groups of early Christians: (1) The original Jewish-Christian group of Jews led by Jesus' closest disciples; and, (2) The Hellenized-Christian group of Jews who had a greater vision and philosophy of a universal religion breaking through the boundaries of Judaism as well as *Nazarenism* of Jesus of Nazareth in a mission to the Gentile World of the non-Jews [21].

According to some scholars, there are some fairly differences between the mission and message of Jesus of Nazareth and the Gospel proclaimed by the earliest Christian apostles including Paul. Jesus of

Nazareth proclaimed the Kingdom of God [22], whereas Paul's Gospel focused on the death and resurrection of Christ, "*for Christ died for us and was raised to life for us*" (Bible, Romans 8:34). Therefore, most scholars would agree that the early church developed a high theology about "Christology" – related to the person of Christ in the light of his death and resurrection. Such theology has never reflected the real person of Jesus according to how he himself understood his identity [23]. John M. Schofield claims that Jesus never indicated in his sermons that he intended to found a new religion. Rather, he came to revive the teachings of the then existing Judaism [24]. Whereas Paul gave a different tune to Christianity, because of his being outside of Jerusalem – Diaspora, in Tarsus a metropolitan city of that time influenced by Hellenistic and Roman worlds. This is made clear in Paul's saying: "*'No,' Paul replied, 'I am a Jew and a citizen of Tarsus in Cilicia, which is an important city....'*" (Bible, Acts 21:39). In this sense, Christianity promoted by the early church in general and Paul in particular, is different from the Christianity promoted by Jesus and his closest disciples.

The gap between the message of Jesus and the Gospel of Paul, who had a major influence in the establishment of Christianity, has led some Christian critics to claim that Paul is the "real founder of Christianity" (Friedrich Nietzsche) [25]. Some other scholars hold Paul responsible for creating a Hellenistic salvation religion focusing on the death and resurrection of Christ, whereas Jesus, as the Jewish Prophet [26], had called for the revival of Israel under the rule of one True God [27]. On the other hand, some scholars, looking at the contribution of Paul, have claimed him as the second founder of Christianity [28]. If so, then there will be a double-sided mind-set for the establishment of Christianity. *The first mind-set*: the real founder of Christianity is Paul, and not Jesus. *The second mind-set:* the first founder of Christianity could be Jesus, and the second one Paul.

According to the above information, it seems that Christianity was indeed born and developed in a very complex environment. Therefore, from its birth up to the end of the first century, Christianity went through many phases, as follows [29]: (1) The Jewish-Christianity or *Nazarenian*—Christianity that was formed in Jerusalem had a dynastic or family nature. This was prior to the Jewish-Roman war; (2) The early Gentile-Christianity had been formed on the bases of Gnostic and monastic-spirit tendencies, which were probably promoted by Paul; (3) Mark's proposal in the period of reconstruction of (Christianity) was for a new beginning on the basis of Paul's doctrine of the spirit. This included the devaluation of Peter and the Judaic-Christian faith; (4) Matthew's Gospel was a reinstatement of Peter as the successor of Jesus and head of the church; and (5) Luke's synthesis of the Pauline and Petrine traditions in Acts of the Apostles became the Church's official account of Christian origins and its own development.

Looking at the importance of this study, the researcher has used a descriptive-analytical-philosophical methodology. Descriptions of what scholars of comparative religion and Christianity have said and written about the role of Paul in the transition from *Nazarenism* (Jewish-Christianity) to Christianity (Gentile- Christianity, which is also called as Pauline-Christianity) are carefully analysed for the purpose of this study. On the other hand, the analytical-philosophical method is used to analyse the collected data related to this research as well as to understand Paul's contribution to the construction of Christian theology.

PAUL'S LIFE AND PERSONALITY

Christian history has shown to its readers that since the beginning, there have been great people, who Christians call saints and apostles, and they are those who have dedicated themselves to the construction and sustenance of Christian religion, its theology and thought. However, as mentioned above, Paul is the one who is considered as the most important figure of Christianity to emerge from the pages of the New Testament. He is the author of more New Testament writings than any other authors, and of the earliest. Besides, Paul is the subject of many of the Book of Acts [30], and, therefore, the history of Christianity cannot be told without special attention given to him as the "*apostle to the Gentiles*". This is obviously seen in Paul's saying: "*I am a special messenger from Christ Jesus to you Gentiles. I bring you the Good News so that I might present you as an acceptable offering to God, made holy by the Holy Spirit.*" (Bible, Romans 15:16).

Historical facts mention Paul more than anyone else in the early church, and therefore, people in general and Christians in particular, know more about the message and mission of Paul than about Jesus' own earthly life or teachings [31]. The primary sources that allow for the study of Paul's life and personality are his epistles or letters, for the mere fact that there are no other sources available. Paul's letters and epistles are considered as the earliest sources to refer to for the study of Christianity. Therefore, it will be a bit difficult to give precise information in regard to his background, because his letters themselves lack such information. However, Paul's life and personality will be examined through the following: his name, his birth, his Jewish origin, his Greco-Roman Background, his writings, his knowledge about earthly Jesus and his death.

His Name

Paul has two names, the Hebraic name *Saul* and the Greek name *Paulos*, which is the Greek form of the Latin *Paul (l)us (small, little)* [32]. Prior to that, in Acts he was called *Saul* as evident in these excerpts: "*a young man named Saul*" (Bible, Acts 7:58); "*Saul was one of the witnesses*," (Bible, Acts 8:1) and, "*But*

Saul was going everywhere to destroy the church" (Bible, Acts 8:2); "Saul" refers to the Greek form of *Saoul.* In Paul's conversion accounts, the name Saul appears "*Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?*" (Bible, Acts 9:4,17; 22:7,13; 26:14) and stands for the *Hebrew ŠÉ'ûl*, the name of the first king of the ancient Israel (Bible, Acts 13:22). It means "*ask*" (of God or of Yahweh) [33].

The name "Saul," is made known to us through Luke, but his credibility cannot be taken for granted, because his usage smacks of artificiality. In Bible, Acts 13:9, the following is mentioned: "*Then Saul,* (who is also called Paul,)" which is a transition from the exclusive use of "Saul" previously and the exclusive use of "Paul" subsequently [34]. It is evident that Paul used a Semitic name while working among the Jews (i.e., the Jewish Christians) [35] and a Gentile name while working among the Gentiles.

His Birth
The date of Paul's birth is unknown and he himself had not mentioned when and where he was born. He has called himself "*an old man and now also a prisoner for the sake of Christ Jesus*" (Bible, Philemon 1:9), and thus, his age could be between 50 to 56 years of age. Most probably he was born during the first decade A.D [36]. However, according to some other sources, he was born outside Palestine (a Jewish Diaspora), probably in the later years of the reign of Augustus, who died in A.D. 14 [37]. Also, it is mentioned in another source that Paul was born, perhaps in A.D. 10, in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia on the main trade route between the East and West, and the home of the famous Stoic philosophers [38].

His Jewish Origin:
It is of great importance to mention that Paul, according to his own testimony, was always proud of his Jewish background, and he identified himself in his letters as an ethnic Jew and Pharisee by origin [39]. This fact is shown while he gave the following information about his origin(s) [40]: "*I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham and a member of the tribe of Benjamin.*" (Bible, Romans 11: 1); and "*I am a pure-blooded citizen of Israel and a member of the tribe of Benjamin—a real Hebrew if there ever was one! I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law.* (Bible, Philippians 3:5). Besides, Paul firmly claimed his Jewish origin in his saying: "*Are they Hebrews? So am I! Are they Israelites? So am I! Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I!*" (Bible, 2 Corinthians 11:22).

Moreover, Paul was also able to speak Aramaic and read Hebrew. He was a Pharisee trained in Jerusalem under one of the leading rabbis of the day, Gamaliel [41]. All the above information derived from his letters let us understand that Paul was an important Jewish thinker and monastic who lived and died convinced that he was a Jew by origin, but living out of Judaism (i.e., a Jew living in Diaspora) [42].

His Greco-Roman Background
The city of Tarsus into which Paul was born was well governed and prosperous. Also, this city was made up of a multi-faceted society, which had different nations with different cultural and religious backgrounds. The Jews were members of these nations, which were brought in to increase the productivity of the oriental population. Although firmly rooted in the soil of the east, Tarsus had a Hellenic respect for education, and the means to pay for it [43]. If Tarsus was the birthplace of Paul, then "he might have had innumerable opportunities to listen to the vast fauna of itinerant lecturers or acquired a handbook that crammed together philosophical doctrines and literacy excerpts," according to Bruno [44]. In other words, both Hellenistic and Roman world influenced the atmosphere of Tarsus City.

In this type of society was born and brought up the Heretic Jew Paul, who was living in Diaspora with his family. Thus, we can say that Paul was a learned citizen of the Hellenistic and Roman world, who spoke and wrote *koine* (common Greek) and was familiar with various Hellenistic philosophies and mystery religions, whose influence can also be seen in his letters [45]. Besides, he was able to read the Old Testament in its original language (Greek language). He even had the privilege of Roman citizenship, which, according to the accounts in Acts, he was able to use to his advantage in demanding a trial from the Roman Emperor, as he said: "*But I am a citizen by birth!*" (Bible, Acts 22-28) after his arrest in the temple of Jerusalem. Moreover, his name, *Paulus*, sheds more light on his Greco-Roman background.

His Writings
Paul wrote neither theological treatises nor sermons but letters that were collected, edited, some of which were published. His letters were written as a substitute for his personal presence, as emergency efforts to resolve congregational issues that neither he nor his travelling colleagues could deal with in person. They were real letters, and so were directed to specific people in specific situations [46]. According to some sources, Paul's writings, which speak about Lord's gracious and patient work leading to humans' salvation [47], "*…are hard to understand, and those who are ignorant and unstable have twisted his letters to mean something quite different, just as they do with other parts of Scripture. And this will result in their destruction*" (Bible, II Peter [48] 3:16).

The letters of Paul are considered as the earliest sources of information about the emergence of the first Christian community in Jerusalem. Paul's writings, which come roughly from the period A.D. 50-65, have been since the very beginning circulated widely [49].

Also, it is believed that Paul has been frequently called the real founder of Christianity, because his views came to shape and dominate subsequent Christian thinking. His unique philosophy is particularly apparent in his writings collected in the New Testament. He came out with new terms such as "Original Sin," "Redemption," "Logos," etc. In his writings, he states that "*The death of Jesus Christ, then, was the payment or atonement that redeemed humanity, or won for it freedom and eternal life*" (Bible, Romans 5:17-19), and "*For the word* (Logos) *of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God*" (Bible, 1 Corinthians 1:18), and "*But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the Wisdom of God*" (Bible, I Corinthians 1:24).

The creativity and power of these letters are the result of his efforts to improvise responses to the unique and highly volatile situations that marked the sectarian congregations he had help to found [50]. In these writings, which now without doubt are considered his, clearly is shown the way in which he built up the new religion of "Christianity" or a religion developed as a result of the transformation of religious thought from *Nazarenism* to the religion of Gentiles (Christianity).

It is generally agreed that there are three groups of letters: [51] (1) Early letters: I Thessalonians (ca. A.D. 51). This appears to be the earliest letters written by Paul, when he had been worried about the newly founded church in Thessalonica. Thus, he sent Timothy to check on the church in Athens [52]. II Thessalonians (date uncertain). (2) The great letters: (a) Romans (ca. A.D. 55-58). Paul wrote this letter to the Christians in Rome as he was winding up his missionary activity in Asia Minor and Greece [53]; (b) I Corinthians (ca. A.D. 53-54)—he wrote this letter to the Christians in Corinth, when they informed him about problems faced by them; II Corinthians (ca. A.D. 55-56)—Paul wrote this letter, which appears to be a very complex one, to the Christians in Corinth [54]; (c) Galatians (ca. A.D. 55)—some scholars assume that the Galatians letter was written by Paul towards the end of his missionary. He founded the Christian Galatians church when he became ill on one of his journeys through Galatia [55]; (d) Philippians (ca. A.D. 52-54)—Paul wrote this letter while he was in prison, when he was jailed in Rome before his death; [56] (3) "Captivity" letters: (a) Philippians (ca. A.D. 52-54). This letter was also written by Paul while in prison; (b) Philemon (ca. A.D. 52-54). This letter was written when he was in Roman prison before his execution. Paul addressed this letter to Philemon, one of his converts [57]. In addition, some scholars label the following letters: Colossians (ca. A.D. 62-70), Ephesians (date uncertain), I Timothy, II Timothy, and Titus (ca. A.D. 100-110) [58], as post-Pauline letters [59].

His Knowledge about Earthly Jesus

According to some scholars, although Paul had never met or even seen the earthly Jesus, his letters show that he had some knowledge about earthly Jesus' teachings, life, and death [60]. This is made clear in the following sayings of Paul:

- Jesus was born under the law (Bible, Galatians 4:4), a Jew of David's line (Bible, Romans 1:3).
- Jesus had more than one brother (Bible, I Corinthians 9:5), one of whom was named James (Bible, Galatians 2:9-12; Bible, I Corinthians 15-7).
- Jesus had twelve special associates. One of them was Cephas (Bible, Galatians 2:1-14, etc.), who was sometimes called "Peter" (Bible, Galatians 2:7, 8); another one was John (Bible, Galatians 2:9).
- Jesus taught that anyone who preached the gospel should be provided a living from the gospel (Bible, I Corinthians 9:14). He also taught that neither partner in a marriage should seek a divorce (Bible, I Corinthians 7:10-11).
- Jesus spoke about his own death as something beneficial for his followers (Bible, I Corinthians 11:23-25). Therefore, he told his followers that they should break bread and drink wine in his memory. His followers were to regard the loaf as a token of his body and the cup as a token of "*the new covenant*" in his blood.
- Jesus was betrayed (Bible, I Corinthians 11:23).
- Jesus willingly gave himself up to death for the sins of his followers (Bible, I Corinthians 15:3; Bible, Galatians 1:4), and this action shows Jesus' obedience to God's will (Bible, Philippians 2:8).
- Jesus' death was by execution on a cross (Bible, I Corinthians 1:17; 2:5; Bible, Galatians 3:1, etc.), for which "*the rulers of this age*" were responsible (Bible, I Corinthians 2:8).
- The corpse of Jesus was placed in a tomb (Bible, I Corinthians 15:4; Bible, Romans 6:4).

His Death
It is very difficult to give precise information about Paul's death, and even in his letters there is no mention of anything related to this point. However, Acts ends with a brief account of Paul's house arrest in Jerusalem that lasted for two years.
(12) But when Gallio became governor of Achaia, some Jews rose up together against Paul and brought him before the governor for judgment. (13) They accused Paul of "persuading people to worship God in ways that are contrary to our law." (14) But just as Paul started to make his defence, Gallio turned to Paul's accusers and said, "Listen, you Jews, if this were a case involving some wrongdoing or a serious crime, I would have a reason to accept your case. (15) But since it is merely a question of words and names and your Jewish law, take care of it yourselves. I refuse to judge such matters." (16) And he threw them out of the courtroom. (17) The crowd then grabbed Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and beat him right there in the courtroom. But Gallio paid no attention (Bible, Acts 18: 12-17).

After the house arrest, Paul was transferred to Caesarea and to Rome. Having failed his appeal to Caesar, he was executed by Nero in the year 64C.A. [61] According to some sources; most scholars put his death in Rome somewhere in the period of 62 – 64C.A [62].

PAUL'S CONVERSION FROM AN ORTHODOX JEW TO A DEVOUT CHRISTIAN

According to some scholars', there is no evidence to show whether Paul had seen Jesus during his lifetime, as he never claimed to have done so in his letters [63]. Paul's conversion to the new religion "Christianity" took place when he was on his way to Damascus, where he experienced a radical conversion. While he was approaching Damascus, he was engulfed by a beam from the sky, which caused him to fall down on the earth, whereby he heard a voice. [64] The *first account* of Paul's conversion experience appeared in his letters, where he said: *"Haven't I seen Jesus our Lord with my own eyes?"* (Bible, I Corinthians 9:1) and the *second account* presents Paul as a witness of Christ's resurrection: "*Last of all, as though I had been born at the wrong time, I also saw him* [Christ]" (Bible, I Corinthians 15:8). In this sense, it is obvious that the essential message is conveyed to Paul through his conversion that entailed a mystical encounter experienced by other apostles, too. In addition to that, on the *third account*, Paul said:

(1)This boasting will do no good, but I must go on. I will reluctantly tell about visions and revelations from the Lord. (2) I was caught up to the third heaven fourteen years ago. Whether I was in my body or out of my body, I don't know—only God knows. (3) Yes, only God knows whether I was in my body or outside my body. But I do know (4) that I was caught up to paradise and heard things so astounding that they cannot be expressed in words, things no human is allowed to tell. (Bible, II Corinthians 12:1-4)

In another letter, Paul said: "*I received my message from no human source, and no one taught me. Instead, I received it by direct revelation from Jesus Christ*" (Bible, Galatians 1:12). Also, Paul says in his letter that "*... God chose me and called me by his marvelous grace. Then it pleased him (16) to reveal his Son to me*" (Bible, Galatians 1:15-16).

There is another important account of his conversion that is described by Luke in Acts 9:1-19; 22:4-16; 26:9-18. Thus, Paul's religious experience that led to his conversion to Christianity is described in the best form in Acts as follows:

(1)Meanwhile, Saul was uttering threats with every breath and was eager to kill the Lord's followers. So he went to the high priest. (2) He requested letters addressed to the synagogues in Damascus, asking for their cooperation in the arrest of any followers of the Way he found there. He wanted to bring them—both men and women—back to Jerusalem in chains. (3) As he was approaching Damascus on this mission, a light from heaven suddenly shone down around him. (4) He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?" (5) "Who are you, lord?" Saul asked. And the voice replied, "I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting! (6) Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." (7) The men with Saul stood speechless, for they heard the sound of someone's voice but saw no one! (8) Saul picked himself up off the ground, but when he opened his eyes he was blind. So his companions led him by the hand to Damascus. (9) He remained there blind for three days and did not eat or drink. (10) Now there was a believer in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord spoke to him in a vision, calling, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord!" he replied. (11) The Lord said, "Go over to Straight Street, to the house of Judas. When you get there, ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is praying to me right now. (12) I have shown him a vision of a man named Ananias coming in and laying hands on him so he can see again." (12) "But Lord," exclaimed Ananias, "I've heard many people talk about the terrible things this man has done to the believers in Jerusalem! (14) And he is authorised by the leading priests to arrest everyone who calls upon your name." (15) But the Lord said, "Go, for Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel. (16) And I will show him how much he must suffer for my name's sake." (17) So Ananias went and found Saul. He laid his hands on him and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road, has sent me so that you might regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." (18) Instantly something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he got up and was baptised. (19) Afterward he ate some food and regained his strength. (Bible, Acts 9:1-19)

In his conversion can be drawn something that was analogous to a prophetic religious experience of divine majesty, but instead of God (Yahweh), the focus of Paul's experience was Christ himself. Through the appearance of Jesus Christ to Paul, Paul was shown the glorious nature of the Lord whom he had been so zealous to persecute. However, from that time on, Paul gave his allegiance to the new Master. The sudden vision bestowed on him was so dramatic; causing the interruption of power induced hysterical blindness, which incapacitated Paul for three days [65]. The question that arises is that how Paul was able to identify that vision as Jesus Christ when he himself did not meet, live with or see Jesus? This is something beyond understanding.

It is apparent that his conversion to this new religion or call is considered to be the most important event in Paul's life. He himself wrote of this incident in Galatians: "*But even before I was born, God chose me and called me by his marvelous grace. Then it pleased*

him to reveal his Son to me so that I would proclaim the Good News about Jesus to the Gentiles" (Bible, Galatians 1:15-16). Indeed, Paul did not known Jesus during his public ministry, and his zeal for the traditions of his Jewish ancestors led him to be a violent persecutor of the nascent Christian sect, which is a fact that he did not attempt to hide even from his enemies [66]. But, in one dramatic 'encounter' with Jesus, Paul was changed forever from a prosecutor to an active apostle of the Christian faith. [67] It is the Damascus incident that made Paul go through a psychological and spiritual phenomenon [68] that inspired his person to become a promoter of the new religion for the Gentiles called "Christianity," a religion or way of life totally different from the *Nazarenism* of Jesus Christ.

It is of great importance to remark the effects of conversion in Paul, who as a Jew by race and blood, grew up in the complex environment of Tarsus in Asia Minor, which was an important center of Hellenistic culture [69]. His early stage of life had been engaged in the persecution of the first Christians, and then soon after became a devout Christian himself, who preached to the non-Jewish world the word of Christ. Some scholars agree that each of these three contexts – Judaism, Christianity, and the pagan Mediterranean world greatly influenced Paul's life and thought [70]. Later on, he was proclaimed the founder of Christianity, as he carried the message of Christianity, of which he was both interpreter and in some sense an inventor in the Gentile world.

However, the question that arises is that if Paul was very keen in his Jewish origin, why then did he turn from a *Nazarenian* Jew to a devout Christian? Was this done as a result of the mystical religious vision he experienced on his way to Damascus? To answer this question we have to discuss certain issues, which follows in the subsequent paragraphs.

Firstly, as far as the history of Christian religion is concerned, it is a fact that everyone should never forget that the original Christians were all Jews by race, and the Church of the East remained Jewish for centuries [71]. They were the first followers of James, the Lord's brother, who established the Jerusalem Church after the Jesus' death. They were called the Nazarenes, and in all aspects of their faith, they were indistinguishable from the Pharisees, except that they believed in the resurrection of Jesus, and that Jesus was the Promised Messiah. The Nazarenes were themselves very observant of Jewish religious law. They practiced circumcision, did not eat forbidden foods and showed great respect to the Temple. Also, they did not claim themselves as the followers of a new religion, but their religion was Judaism [72]. In other words, the first Christians appeared as a Jewish sect [73].

Secondly, Paul met Christianity as its opponent. His letters and Acts (Luke's narrations about Paul) put this beyond question. At the beginning he wanted to eradicate "*God's church*" (Bible, Galatians 1:13) from the Jewish community because he believed that Christians were bad Jews, betraying their heritage and their God [74]. Also, according to him, Jesus could not be the Messiah, for a hanged man is under a curse from God "*Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree*" (Bible, Galatians 3:13), and the idea of a crucified Messiah is, therefore, blasphemous. It is obvious that Paul did not attack the first Christians for the simple reason of being Christians, but for being bad Jews.

Thirdly, Paul, an orthodox Jew who had been engaged in the persecution of the early followers of Christianity, after the dramatic incident in his road to Damascus, where according to him he saw the vision of Jesus Christ, became a strict follower of the Christian religion. It is observed that Paul saw the Damascus experience as a call, like that of the prophets of old times in order to announce the gospel message about Jesus the risen Son of God to the Gentiles (the non-Jewish nations).

Fourthly, in his unpleasant statement for the Jews, Paul proclaimed that those in Christ had "*died to the law*" and are now "*discharged from the law*," so that they "*might belong to who has been raised from the dead*," and so "*bear fruits for God*". (Bible, Romans 7:4-6); the law was given only for a time, as "*our guardian until Christ came*" (Bible, Galatians 3:24-25), and was in fact "*a covenant*" of "*slavery to the law*" (Bible, Galatians 4:24-25). Obviously, Paul maintained that since Christ had come, those who still wanted to keep *the law of circumcision* [75] must severe themselves from Christ and lose his benefits [76]. It is understood from such passages (of Paul) that the law seemed to be at best unnecessary, and at worst positively harmful by a rejection of Christ for anyone who kept to the law even after Christ had come. This is against the Jewish religion where the Law of Moses (the law of circumcision) is considered very important to them and whoever embraces Judaism has to be circumcised, otherwise he cannot be considered a Jew.

Fifthly, although Paul did not originate the idea of incorporating Gentiles into the church without *circumcision* or fulfilment of other requirements of the Jewish law, he was able to *supply a rationale for this practice*, and to develop a strategy for the mission to the Gentiles. In addition, he provided momentum to the mission such as it had never received from any other. Had there been no Paul, the erudite rabbi who once persecuted, but then became a zealous convert, the Christian story would have turned out far differently from the way it did. While Paul cannot be credited with the founding of Christianity, he deserves at least the title of "re-founder" [77].

Paul, on several occasions, informed us about what led him to such a radical change of mind and

became, not the sort of Christian who stayed faithful to the Law, but one whose Gospel was at least relatively Law-free, and one who encountered Christ himself [78]. Therefore, Paul says: "*Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?*" (Bible, I Corinthians 9:1), "*Last of all, as though I had been born at the wrong time, I also saw him. For I am the least of all the apostles. In fact, I'm not even worthy to be called an apostle after the way I persecuted God's church*" (Bible, I Corinthians 15:8-9), and "*...it pleased him to reveal his Son to me so that I would proclaim the Good News about Jesus to the Gentiles*" (Bible, Galatians 1:15-16). In these passages, it is obvious that Paul's call (to the new religion) is not simply to be a follower of Jesus, but to be an apostle to the Gentiles. Furthermore, it is understood that Paul's transformation from a devout Pharisee to a devout apostle of Christ involved fundamental changes in his thinking about Jesus' death, the Law of Moses, and God's promise to Israel. However, the question that arises is whether these changes contributed to Paul's conversion or resulted from it.

The new religion (Christianity) is shown to be the driving force of Paul's missionary career. It is believed that the central myth of the so-called new religion (Christianity) was that of atoning the death of a divine being. Also, the belief in this sacrifice, and a mystical sharing of the death of the deity, formed the only path to salvation. There is evidence that Paul derived this new religion from Hellenistic sources, chiefly by a fusion of concepts taken from Gnosticism and the mysterious religions, particularly from that of Attis [79]. Therefore, as a concluding point, we can say that Paul's mentality and thought were not that of a Pharisee and of a strict Jew by faith in Judaism and the teachings of Jesus himself, but it was just a career of becoming an apostle and a leader of the Gentiles who blindly followed this new religion that was shaped by him.

HIS MISSIONARY ACTIVITY TO THE GENTILES (NON-JEWS)

Paul's conversion to the new religion (Christianity) made a big turn in his life affairs, and according to him, his conversion was for the Gentiles (non-Jews). This is clear enough in his saying: "*But even before I was born, God chose me and called me by his marvelous grace. Then it pleased him to reveal his Son to me so that I would proclaim the Good News about Jesus to the Gentiles. When this happened, I did not rush out to consult with any human being*" (Bible, Galatians 1:15-16). It is claimed that Paul through his mission wanted to make mediocre Jews better, but that ambition met with no response. Then, Paul who could not resist failure, decided to turn to the Gentiles to preach his gospel. In order to make his gospel more attractive to them, he repudiated portions of the Law, and, thereby, transformed Christianity into a sect bitterly opposed to the synagogues [80].

Also, his conversion brings us to a further stage in the characterisation of Paul, beyond his Jewishness. On many occasions, his conversion or apostolic commissioning has been casually discussed, but the language used to describe the transition or turning-point must be chosen with care. Paul stated in his letter to the Galatians, where he described the sequence, as follows: "*I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it...But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles*" (Bible, Galatians 1:13-17). This account is clearly of a call to be an apostle, a commission to preach to the Gentiles [81].

Furthermore, we understand from the content of his letters that he addressed himself as the one who was able to fulfil the expectations of the prophets and perhaps of Jesus himself, and he would bring the Gentiles to worship the God of Israel [82]. This is apparent when he said: "*Through Christ, God has given us the privilege and authority as apostles to tell Gentiles everywhere what God has done for them, so that they will believe and obey him, bringing glory to his name.*" (Bible, Romans 1:5), and "*I am saying all this especially for you Gentiles. God has appointed me as the apostle to the Gentiles. I stress this,...*" (Bible, Romans 11:13).

It is obvious that at the early stage of his Christian Missionary activity, Paul had preached his gospel only to Jews. This is shown in his writing: "*Five different times the Jewish leaders gave me thirty-nine lashes*" (Bible, II Corinthians 11:24). Also, there are two passages in Galatians, which points to an early period of missionary activity among the Jews. In Galatians, Paul said that "*…three years later I went to Jerusalem to get to know Peter, and I stayed with him for fifteen days*" (Bible, Galatians 1:18-24.) This obviously indicates that three years after Paul's conversion, there was no hint of any tension between Paul and the churches of Jerusalem and Judea.

In Galatians, Paul said, "*Dear brothers and sisters, if I were still preaching that you must be circumcised—as some say I do—why am I still being persecuted?*" (Bible, Galatians 5:11). We understand from this passage that Paul acknowledged that he had once preached (his gospel) to Jews, but used his experience of persecution by the Jewish community to prove that he was no longer doing so. In another letter Paul said: "*When I was with the Jews, I lived like a Jew to bring the Jews to Christ. When I was with those who follow the Jewish law, I too lived under that law. Even though I am not subject to the law, I did this so I could bring to Christ those who are under the law*" (Bible, I Corinthians 9:20). It is a very clear indication that Paul began his career as a missionary by preaching to the

Jews, but at a later stage abandoned this practice and embarked on his Gentile mission [83].

Later on, faced with the problem of the Jews' failure to believe in his gospel, Paul turned to the Gentiles, who also did believe in it. In other words, the Jews' failure to believe in the gospel preached by Paul, had led his mission to the Gentiles, and so to the salvation of many Gentiles. This is shown when Paul described Israel: "*...They [Jews] were disobedient, so God made salvation available to the Gentiles.*" (Bible, Romans 11:11) and "*They* [Jews] *stumbled over the great rock in their path.*" (Bible, Romans 9:32).

The Jews' reason for not accepting Paul's preaching is that he had abandoned the Law of Moses (circumcision), Food-laws, the Sabbath and the feast-days, among others. This had made it easier for the Gentiles to accept his new version of gospel and missionary career as well as to complete his apostolic mission to the Gentiles' world. On the other hand, Paul, through his missionary activity, preached his gospel to Galatians and asked them to turn from their natural religion in which they worshipped what he called "*the weak and useless spiritual principles of this world*" [84] and introduced them to the one true God. He believed that the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Messiah or Christ, had broken through the power of sin and death, established the justice of God's kingdom, and inaugurated the final messianic age, which would soon be completed with the triumphed return of Christ in glory. This final age salvation was now available to both Jews and Gentiles if they would believe that through Jesus the Lord and Messiah "*who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age...*" (Bible, Galatians 1:3-4), the salvation that God had promised to the Jews was now available to others who turned from their former idolatry and sin [85].

He made many missionary journeys in order to spread the just founded religion of Christianity, and went to places such as Asia Minor, Macedonia, Greece, etc. Although he faced a lot of problems during his missionary activity, he never stopped preaching Christianity to the Gentiles. From the above information, we conclude that Paul's missionary activity, even though it was a failure to the Jews, was very successful among the Gentiles. The Gentiles made it very easy for Paul to fulfil his apostolic career and to lay down the foundation of the so-called Pauline Christianity where the Christian theology and thought have their roots.

PAUL'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY AND THOUGHT

It is a fact that in the very centre of the Pauline Christian theology and thought stand two things: *first*, the death and resurrection of Christ, the cross and the offence contained therein for every thinking mind; and *second*, the position now occupied by the Law, whose fulfilment was for the Jew the guarantee of his fellowship with God. Although many problems were raised, Paul was able to solve them by means of the Gospel. The atoning death of Christ was the proof of the gracious, loving will of God, Who desires to draw to Himself the sinner on whom judgment has been passed, not by way of the Law but by way of His pardoning and life-giving grace. [86]

Paul's contribution to the foundation of Christian theology and thought is shown in his teachings where the central point was the figure of Jesus Christ, who had risen in glory, and who headed a new community and guided it through his spirit. He, who according to Paul, was the Son of God and the Lord of Creation, who sat on the right hand of the Father [87]. In all, Paul through the image of the risen Christ has come up with the following doctrines:

Original Sin

In regard to the doctrine of original sin as contained in the Old Testament and illuminated by the unique revelation of Christ in the New Testament, there continues to reign in the denominations of the West, especially since the development of scholastic presuppositions, a great confusion, which in the last few centuries seems to have gained much ground in the theological problematic of the Orthodox East. However, it was Paul, who created the doctrine of original sin in the belief that *each individual bears his share of responsibility in the first human guilt*. He formulated it in his polemic against the Platonist Apollos, who denied that human flesh could participate in the eternal beatitude of the kingdom [88].

Paul's incisive passage in Romans "*Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned*" (Bible, Romans 5: 12-14), is the source of the whole church tradition of original sin. He could be arguing that Adam sinned and incurred death as a punishment, passing both the sin and death on to his descendants, either as some sort of genetic inheritance or contagious disease, in the case of sin, or as a punishment in the case of death. By Adam's sin we are dead, not by some infection or transmission, but arising from Adam's role as Everyman [89].

It is understood from the Biblical point of view that the term "sin" designates a particular kind of relationship between the creature and the Creator, which cannot be inherited; it can only be established or destroyed, affirmed or denied. Thus, sin is a relational reality [90].

In another passage, Paul stated: "*We shall stand under the Fall of first man; that is why we are in the mess we are in*!" (Bible, Romans 5:12-13). Here, it is understood that Paul did not say or imply that we sinned because Adam sinned. Also, he did not say that we would die because Adam sinned. What he said was that Sin (alienation from God) entered the stage of history in the first man's rebellion: "*sin entered the world through one man*" [91]. So, the result of separation is disintegration and death. Therefore, God sent His only son to be crucified in order to save humanity from the original sin that resulted from Adam's rebellion.

The Pauline doctrine of Original Sin is expressed through Paul's understanding of *the fallen state of creation, including the powers of Satan, death and corruption*; *the justice of God and law*, and *anthropology and the destiny of man and creation*. If we grasp the meaning behind these three dimensions ascribed by Paul in his letters, we are able to understand the meaning of original sin. In all, we may conclude that Paul considered sin as an avoidable transgression, and therefore, punishable. It (Sin) is a power external to humanity, which enslaves the entire creation. Also, Sin is intended by God in order to lead up negatively to salvation through his grace in Christ [92].

Incarnation

In Christianity, the event of incarnation is understood as a revelation of the mystery of God, of the Trinitarian Communion, that is of the being and working of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The incarnation reveals the face of God in His profound truth and, at the same time, from the true face of God, we grasp the profound significance of the incarnation [93]: "*God's love for us was revealed when God sent into the world his only Son so that we could have life through him*" [94]. It is observed that incarnation provides a mode of knowing and experiencing, absorbed at a point in human history, to inform us about the eternal divine nature and omniscience. The eternal God is thus "equipped," through the incarnation, in His saving enterprise [95]. Thus, the human person of Jesus of Nazareth is united to the second person of the Triune (the eternal God) in such a way that there is some kind of ontological (essence) bond between two centres of consciousness [96].

In the letter addressed to the Philippians, Paul was probably quoting an early Christian hymn where he described the sacrifice of Jesus from the latter's perspective, so one willingly chose to pursue a course that led to death on behalf of others. The hymn presupposes that God's redemptive agent did not come into being when Jesus was born, but like wisdom in the Jewish tradition, had a prior existence in association with God: "*Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to.*" (Bible, Philippians 2:6) That prior existence was willingly given up; however, in order to meet the basic need of the human race for reconciliation to God: "*He gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being*" (Bible, Philippians 2:7). This voluntary identification with the human race is how Paul understands the incarnation [97], what John calls: "*the Word became human* [flesh]" (Bible, John 1:14).

From the study of Paul's understanding of incarnation, we arrive at the conclusion that the notion of incarnation stands between two other notions, which are pre-incarnation and post-incarnation. This fact is understood as follows:

Titles	*Pre-incarnation*	*Incarnation*	*Post-incarnation*
Essence	God	God / Man	God / Man
Form	Deity	Human	God / Man
Status	Equality with God	Rightness-slave	Supper-exalted
Name	God the Son	Jesus the Christ	Lord

Crucifixion

It is a historical fact that the punishment of crucifixion was a well-known phenomenon in the Roman World, and examples of it were familiar to those who lived around the Mediterranean. It was particularly favoured as a punishment for slaves and provided a repulsive public display of human agony, but some historians have challenged this event. However, for the Jews, this manner of death represented a divine curse on the individual so executed. This curse would be compounded if the victim was left unburied, as a further public example and deterrent [98].

In his statement "*the message of the cross*" (Bible, I Corinthians 1:18), Paul constantly reminded his readers that the risen Christ is none other than the crucified one, whose wounds could not be removed by exegetical surgery. The crucifixion is not only the past, datable, verifiable fact in the church's memory, but also an ever-present reality to guide and determine the church's life [99].

When Paul went to Corinthians to preach his gospel he neither fears them nor trembles in their face. In the context of I Corinthians (2:1-2), [100] it is shown that the crucifixion of Christ, which exercises its saving and condemning power [101], causes Paul to fear and tremble rather than his experience of God's power in the Crucified. The motif emphasizes how striking Paul's encounter with the Crucified was and the effect the crucifixion had on him. Thus, Paul's personality had

been radically determined by the content of his preaching [102].

Paul argued that human beings are saved by the original sin (that was committed by Adam) through the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The main purpose of the coming of Jesus in this world was just to save humanity from the original sin. Therefore, the cross is considered as a saving symbol for Christianity. Paul stated:

(23) For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. (24) Yet God, with undeserved kindness, declares that we are righteous. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. (25) For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past," (Bible, Romans 3:23-25).

Also, Paul says: "*Jesus gave his life for our sins, just as God our Father planned*" (Bible, Galatians 1:4), and "*...Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners*" (Bible, Romans 5:6).

In Paul's argument, the crucifixion has achieved two major purposes within a single, highly symbolic, action [103]. To send to death his own son in a particular bloody way shows how much God hates sin. Also, it shows that he is prepared to throw the full weight of his anger against sin and pass a punitive judgment upon it. In the past, it might have seemed that God disregarded sin; but God's justice is not thereby called into question. He had delayed his hand out of mercy, wishing to give sinners every opportunity for penitence. The other major purpose is concerned with the present rather than the past. More accurately, it anticipates God's decisions in the Last Judgment.

Redemption

Another image employed by Paul to describe an effect of the Christ-event is "*redemption*," where he acknowledged that Christ's passion, death, etc., were a ransom to set sinners free from bondage and enslavement. [104] However, the word "*redemption*" is a metaphor from the slave market, and responds to the need for liberation from bondage rather than the need for deliverance from guilt and estrangement. Pauline literature uses three words for this: ἐξηγόρασεν (exēgorasen - redeemed) in Bible, Galatians 3:13 and 4:5; λυτρώσηται (lutrōsētai – he might redeem) in Bible, Titus 2:14; and ἀπολυτρώσεως (apolutrōseōs - redemption) in Bible, Romans 3:24; 8:23; Bible, I Corinthians 1:30; etc. All three words basically denote transfer from one ownership to another, but in the case of the second and third, transfer from slavery to freedom [105].

Paul had used this term in his letters, addressing Christ as: "*our redemption*" (Bible, I Corinthians 1:30), and "*Through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus*" (Bible, Romans 3:24), human beings are freed from and justified. Though this has been achieved by Christ, there is still a future, eschatological aspect, for Christians "*await the redemption of the body*" (Bible, Romans 8:23).

In his letter addressed to Ephesians "*In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace*" (Bible, Ephesians 1:7). Paul made it clear enough that Jesus' blood was the price of "redemption". When Paul spoke of Christians as having been "*bought for a price*" (Bible, I Corinthians 6:20; 7:23), he was stressing Christ's onerous burden for humanity. He never specified to whom the price was paid (whether to God or the devil, as later commentators have often theorised). [106] The freedom brought by Christ's death is not only freedom from punishment but freedom from those "powers" (sin and death) and, thereby, freedom not only from the guilt of sin but above all from sin as a power, i.e., freedom from the compulsion to sin [107].

It is understood from the above information and analysis that Paul through his monastically argument maintained that Jesus Christ died on the cross in order to redeem humanity from the guilt of sin, i.e., the punishment concentrated by sinning, also to release them from the powers of the ages: Law, Sin, and Death.

Atonement

Paul has been the main source for theologies of vicarious atonement, and it is indisputable that he drew to some extent on sacrificial imagery. In the famous passage in Romans Paul spoke of ἱλαστήριον (ilastērion - expiatory sacrifice or atonement), which translates as Hebrew *kapporeh*. [108] Thus, Paul said: "*For God presented Jesus as the expiatory sacrifice* [ilastērion] *for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood*" (Bible, Romans 3:25). It is understood from his saying that the heart of Paul's atonement theology is not expiation but participation. It is a theology of transfer from one Lordship to another. By sharing in Christ's death, one dies to the power of Sin, with the result that one belongs to God. [109]

In Galatians Paul spoke of Christ who "*gave himself for our sins*" (Bible, Galatians 1:4) and who "*became a curse for us*" (Bible, Galatians 3:13). Christ was "*delivered up for our trespasses*" (Bible, Romans 4:25). In Ephesians, we read that Christ "*loved us, and gave himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an odour of a sweet smell*" (Bible, Ephesians 5:2).

It is summed up from Paul's tradition that the atonement theology is understood that by sharing in Christ's death, one dies to the power of sin or to the old

aeon, with the result that one belongs to God. The transfer is from one lordship to another, and takes place by one's participation in Christ's death.

Reconciliation

As far as reconciliation is concerned, Christians believe that humanity needs reconciliation because it is in a state of hostility towards God. Living under and for anything other than God is to be out of true relationship with Him, and this must be put right if there is to be peace with Him [110]. However, reconciliation is a critical theological term in the New Testament, and indicates a change in personal relationships between human beings, and especially between humans and God [111]. The question that arises is how Paul elaborated this term in his letters [112].

Paul's letters indicated that Christ's death on the cross made reconciliation possible, and conceivable. This means that God takes this death as a payment for sin and so is willing to reconcile. Paul's ministry of reconciliation is rooted in the New Covenant perception of reality, a perception which shaped the way he related to the Corinthians and every believer in the churches that he or others have founded throughout the Empire [113]. The New Covenant was mentioned by Paul in I Corinthians: "*He has made us competent as ministries of a new covenant – not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the spirit gives life*" (Bible, I Corinthians 3:6). This passage shows how Paul is thinking of his call to the ministry of God, and, no innate capabilities would qualify anyone for ministry. It is God's call that qualifies, for with His call He provides ennoblement [114]. Here, the New Covenant is the realm of the Spirit, whereas the Old Covenant is the realm of the letter. The Spirit vitalizes; the letter kills [115].

He says that "*if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come*" (Bible, II Corinthians 5:17). It is understood by "*the old has gone*" in the sense that its power over us is broken. And, the message in the phrase "*the new has come*" is that the new dynamic life in Christ promises us a transforming freedom – the freedom to become [116] new in the sense of reconciliation with God through Christ's death on the cross. Then he mentioned that "*All this is from God, Who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation*" (Bible, II Corinthians 5:18). This passage affirms the objective work of Christ in accomplishing reconciliation. Paul's ministry of reconciliation is directed towards believers [117], not unbelievers. And, the goal of this ministry is to effect that change in perception and attitude towards God, which will enable Christians to truly become new [118].

It is a fact that reconciliation precedes any efforts on man's part, and "reconciliation" does not mean a subjective process within man but an objective factual situation brought about by God. All man can do is to "*receive*" the reconciliation (Bible, Romans 5:11) and, therefore, at the same time God sets up the reconciliation, He also sets up the "*ministry*" or the "*message*" of reconciliation. Men are invited henceforth on their side to accomplish the subjective alternation in themselves: "*be reconciled to God*" (Bible, II Corinthians 5:20), that is the invitation to faith [119].

As a concluding point, it is obvious that Paul strongly believed and maintained very keenly the fact that Jesus' death is *reconciliation*, in the sense that it displays the grace of God and constitutes proof that God truly does forgive rather than count the sins against us.

Resurrection

For the early Christians, Christ's resurrection, which seemed preposterous to pagan writers, offered humanity the hope of redemption from the sin that marred their existence and the possibility of victory over death. However, there is no clear evidence that Jesus intended to set up a continuing church, or to establish a new religion outside Judaism. Jesus was just a Prophet who came to inaugurate the imminent consummation of God's kingdom on earth. But, his role as a Prophet of God was changed by his followers to that of the divine Son of God, when they expected his Second Coming [120].

According to the New Testament, the resurrection theology is central to the faith: "*If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, and your faith is in vain*" (Bible, I Corinthians 15:14). Paul's resurrection tradition [121] lists a number of eyewitnesses to the appearances of the resurrected Christ. However, this tradition does not claim that the witnesses saw the resurrection itself, that is, the emergence of Jesus from the tomb or his resuscitation, but rather that they saw the resurrected Christ. Paul's tradition places the initiative for the appearances not with those to whom the risen Christ appeared, but with the Resurrected One himself. Also, it is made clear from the tradition that he who was raised and appeared to his followers and Paul was the same Jesus who died and was buried [122].

For Paul, Jesus' resurrection was a fact, witnessed personally, "*Last of all, as though I had been born at the wrong time, I also saw him*" (Bible, I Corinthians 15:8). Therefore, he claimed that Jesus' appearance to him was of the same nature as the appearance to Peter, the twelfth apostle, and so on (Bible, Acts 9:1-9), but how could that be a physical appearance? In the chapter I of Corinthians, he described the resurrected body as a spiritual, not a physical body and said that flesh and blood (the physical body) could not inherit the kingdom of God (see Bible, I Corinthians 15:50).

Furthermore, he argued that the resurrection of both, Christ and the believers, is absolutely basic Christian truth. He also makes it very clear that "resurrection" is dramatically different from the miracles of the past by which the dead were restored to earthly life. Paul, who after living a Christian life in his own strength, discovered the life of faith: [123] "*If the Spirit of Him Who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He Who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, who lives in you*" (Bible, Romans 8:11). Therefore, we are able to conclude that through the raising of Jesus, the Christian is to be raised, as Paul said: "*For as all died in Adam so all will be made alive in Christ*" (Bible, I Corinthians 15:22).

Salvation

The doctrine of salvation was discussed by Paul throughout his letters. The most notorious construal of salvation among the Fathers is that of the deification or divinisation (*theosis* or *theopoiesis*) of humankind. It is in the insistence that the Son of God became what he was in order to make us see and identify the broad outlines of this distinctive patristic soteriological vision [124].

It is true that in Paul, the Cross is often set in tandem with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Also, it is observed that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are the primary reverence point in Paul's thought. Therefore, to Paul, believers relate to the death and resurrection of Christ as a formative event in their past. However, the main point for Paul's discourse of salvation is the Cross [125].

Paul argued in his letter that Christians and those who believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ "*are being saved*" (Bible, I Corinthians 1:18) by the cross. However, the doctrine of salvation appeared in his letter sent to Ephesians: "*By grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not of your own doing, but it is a gift of God – not because of deeds, lest anyone begin to boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good deeds, which God prepared in advance that we might walk in them*" (Bible, Ephesians 2:8-10).

It can be understood from the sayings of Paul that Jesus Christ is the decisive fact of salvation, the beginning of the actual process of liberation from sensuousness. God gives righteousness to the sinner, whom He forgives for Jesus' sake. Therefore, the salvation of those who believe in the Cross and the Resurrection of Christ, is not based on their own works, but in the Divine Will.

CONCLUSION

This paper has arrived at the conclusion that the transition of *Nazarenism* to Christianity was done by Paul after the Damascus event, and it was he who constructed Christianity as a new religion for the Gentiles, which developed away from both normal Judaism and the *Nazarene* variety of Judaism, as it was preached by Jesus and practiced by his disciples. The religious mentality and thought of Paul were not that of a Pharisee and of a strict Jew by faith in Judaism and the teachings of Jesus himself; rather, they were presented in a new dimension or paradigm shift of a universal nature, where Gentile-Christianity was established and preached by him to the Gentile world, i.e., to the Greek and Roman pagans. The main cause that had led Paul to the development of this new religion was, according to the contents of his letters, the Damascus incident in which he claimed that Jesus Christ revealed himself to him. Thus, his theology was developed with connection to this event where the central point was the figure of Jesus Christ, as manufactured by Paul, who had risen in glory, and who headed a new community and guided it through his spirit. From the time of Paul up to the contemporary time, Christian doctrines and thoughts have gone through many changes and alterations. Even the Sacred Books, i.e., the Gospels on which Christianity is established and rooted as well as obtains its religious authenticity have been subjected to change, alteration and distortion. The Christian theological doctrines that were set by Paul and which later on were endorsed by the Council of Niece (325 A.C.), to some extent have remained almost the same, except for some religious differences and attitudes found among the Christian intellectuals and clergies towards their understanding of these doctrines.

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30. *Holy Bible.* New Living Translation. Copyright ©1996, 2004, 2007. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. http://nlt.scripturetext.com

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[1] Nazareth was the hometown of Jesus where he spent most of his lifetime on earth. He was called the Nazarene or one from Nazareth when he went out from his hometown to meet John the Baptist in Galilee to be baptized, as it is stated in Mark 1:9 that Jesus "came from Nazareth to Galilee." Nazareth is located in a valley enclosed by hills on all sides except the south, and it was not a major town. Richard L. Niswonger, New Testament History (USA – Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 128-129. Although, the hometown of Jesus, Nazareth, is situated in a basin of hills, yet Jesus was able to communicate to world easily. Jesus lived in a world, which was peopled not only with peasants but with religious leaders and scholars, traders, travelers, and Roman soldiers. Not far from Nazareth the major trade routes connected the sea cost with the interior of Syria and the vast trans-Jordan country. Greek culture had spread throughout Palestine, especially in the cities, and impressive Greek temples and Roman theatres were conspicuous in many large cities. Obert C. Tanner, Lewis M. Rogers, & Sterling M. McMurrin, Towards Understanding the New Testament (USA – Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), 13.

[2] "Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me. If you had really known me, you would know who my Father is. From now on, you do know him and have seen him!" (John 14:6-7). Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright ©1996, 2004, 2007. http://nlt.scripturetext.com/john/14-6.htm. and Holy Bible, New American Standard Bible Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation, La Habra, Calif. All rights reserved. http://nasb.scripturetext.com. Hereinafter referred to as the Bible.

[3] The "way" here denotes that Divine Commandments of God revealed to Jesus were reflected in his day-to-day activities, and therefore, his disciples have to follow his way. See John M. Schofield, On a Lonely Island without the Heretic Paul (Florida: The Cresset Press, Inc., 1992), Chapter 7, 70.

[4] Ibid., Chapter 8, 92.

[5] Ibid., Chapter 7, 69.

[6] See David L. Barr, New Testament Story: An Introduction (USA: Wadsworth Thomson Learning, 3rd ed., 2002), 26-29.

[7] E. Glenn Hinson, The Early Church: Origins to the Dawn of the Middle Ages (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 41.

[8] "Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food." (Bible, Acts 6:1)

[9] See Ibid.

[10] Daniel Boyarin, A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity (Berkley - Los Angeles - London: University of California Press, 1994), Chapter 3, 57.

[11] Martin Hengel, Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period, translated by John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1974), 255-261, cited in Daniel Boyarin, A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity, Chapter 3, 57.

[12] Ibid.

[13] See Barr, New Testament Story: An Introduction, 44.

[14] See Ibid. 44.

[15] See Ibid., 44.

[16] See Ibid., 45-47.

[17] E. Earle Ellis, Pauline Theology: Ministry and Society (UK: The Paternoster Press, 1989), 1-2.

[18] Ibid., 3.

[19] Hinson, The Early Church: Origins to the Dawn of the Middle Ages, 15.

[20] See W.D. Davies, Invitation to the New Testament: A Guide to its Main Witnesses (New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Company, INC., 1969), 26.

[21] Paul, after his conversion, is seen as the leader of the latter group. When Paul introduced Christianity to the Gentile world, the nature of the religion of Nazarenism was changed from exclusive nature to inclusive one. Therefore, Gentile Christianity propagated by Paul had a universal dimension compared to Nazaren version of Christianity, which was limited to the Jewish people, only. See Troels Engberg-Pederson, "Introduction: Paul beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divine," in Paul beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divine, edited by Troels Engberg-Pederson (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 18-19. (pp. 1-28)

[22] Pheme Perkins, Reading the New Testament: An Introduction (New York: Paulist Press, 2nd ed., 1988), 78-80.

[23] David Horrell, An Introduction to the Study of Paul (London and New York: Continuum, Wellington House, 2000), Chapter 2, 10-11.

[24] Schofield, On a Lonely Island without the Heretic Paul, Chapter 8, 92.

[25] This view is cited by J.C. Beker in his book The Triumph of God: The Essence of Paul's Thought

(Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 62, taken from Horrell, An Introduction to the Study of Paul, 10.

26 According to Schofield, the founders of religion (as a way of life) --- and with Judaism and the Nazorenes of Christianity, we must consider the **Prophets as founders** --- are the ones that put the meat on the bones produced by Abraham and Moses. They received their inspiration directly from God. Their religion was not a calling by which they made their living or received any material benefits. Instead of a calling, they were called. True they did not all get the exact same message; nevertheless, they were similar. God never sent contradictory messages. Paul is the only leader of the religion about Jesus who claimed any Divine inspiration and he may have been misunderstood. Schofield, On a Lonely Island without the Heretic Paul, Chapter X, 107.

27 A well-known scholar, who holds this view, is Hyam Maccoby, The Mythmaker: Paul and the Invention of Christianity (U.K.: George Weidenfeld & Nicolson Ltd., 1986).

28 Among those who approve this view are M. Hengel and A.M. Schwemer, who have described this in their book Paul between Damascus and Antioch (London: SCM, 1997), 309.

29 See Tanner, & et. al, Towards Understanding the New Testament, 281.

30 Acts (c.a. A.D. 95) have been identified as a continuation of Luke's Gospel: "In my first book I told you,...". (Bible, Acts 1:1) Here, "my first book" means the gospel of Luke. The events mentioned in Acts do not extend beyond Paul's imprisonment at Jerusalem and subsequent removal to Rome for trial (c.a. A.D. 57-60). Perkins, Reading the New Testament: An Introduction, 4.

31 Victor Paul Furnish, Jesus According to Paul (U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 1.

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35 The Encyclopedia of Religion (New York: Macmillan Publishing company, vol. 1, 1986), 212.

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37 Furnish, Jesus According to Paul, 5.

38 The New Encyclopedia Britannica (United States: Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 15th ed., vol. 25, 1998), 463.

39 Furnish, Jesus According to Paul, 4.

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41 Phillip J. Cunningham, Exploring Scripture: How the Bible came to be (New York & Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1992), 98.

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45 See Patrick V. Reid, Readings in Western Religious Thought: The Ancient World (New York: Paulist Press, vol. 1, 1987), 286.

46 J. A. Ziesler, Pauline Christianity (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 3.

47 Manfred T. Brauch, Hard Sayings of Paul (Illinois: Intervarsity Press Dowers Grove, 1989), 10-11.

48 **I Peter** (ca. A.D. 90). This letter was written in the name of Peter from Christians at Rome to those in rural churches of Asia Minor. **II Peter** (ca. A.D. 110). This letter appears to be the latest one in the New Testament. See Perkins, Reading the New Testament: An Introduction, 7-8.

49 See Brauch, Hard Sayings of Paul, 10.

50 The Encyclopedia of Religion, vol. 11, 215.

51 See Ziesler, Pauline Christianity, 7.

52 See Perkins, Reading the New Testament: An Introduction, 6.

53 See Ibid. 4.

54 See Ibid., 4.

55 See Ibid., 5.

56 See Ibid., 5-6.

57 See Ibid., 7.

58 See Ibid., 5-6.

59 See Hinson, The Early Church: Origins to the Dawn of the Middle Ages, 48.

60 Furnish, Jesus According to Paul, Chapter 2, 19-20.

61 David Crystal, The Cambridge Encyclopedia (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 4th ed., 2000), 837.

62 E.P. Sanders, Paul: Past Masters (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 8.

63 See Davies, Invitation to the New Testament: A Guide to its Main Witnesses, 260. See also Perkins, Reading the New Testament: An Introduction, 137.

64 See Irving M. Zeitlin, Jesus and the Judaism of his time (UK and USA: Polity Print in association with Basil Blackwell, 1988), 171-174. See 'Irfan 'Abdul Hamid Fattah, Al-Nasraniyyah: Nash'atuha at-Tarikhiyyah wa Usul 'Aqaiduha ('Uman: Dar 'Amar, 1st ed., 2000), 47.

65 Ninian Smart, The Religious Experience (N.J.: Prentice–Hall Inc, 5th ed., 1996), 256.

66 "(13) You know what I was like when I followed the Jewish religion—how I violently persecuted God's church. I did my best to destroy it. (14) I was far ahead of my fellow Jews in my zeal for the traditions of my ancestors." (Bible, Galatians 1:13-14).

67 See Patrick V. Reid, Readings in Western Religious Thought: The Ancient World, 286.

68 The psychological phenomenon that was experienced by the person of Paul can be related with the mystical experience of the spiritual condition of a mystic (Sufi). The psychological condition lived or

experienced by a Sufi can be viewed as a religious experience where he will be able to see the image of a Prophet, Angel, or Saint and then, his condition will be transformed from the world of images to that of unconsciousness where he is not able to express himself about his real condition. For more information see al-Ghazali, al-Munqiz min al-Dalalah wa al-Mufsih bi al-Ahwal, Tahqiq: Samih Daghim (Bayrut: Dar al-Fikr al-Lubnani, 1993), 83.

[69] Furnish, Jesus According to Paul, 5.

[70] John T. Fitzgerald, "Paul and Paradigm Shifts: Reconciliation and Its Linkage Group," in Paul beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divine, edited by Troels Engberg-Pederson, (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 241 (pp. 241-262)

[71] John M. Schofield, On a Lonely Island without the Heretic Paul (Sarasota, Florida: The Cresset Press, Inc., 1992), 97.

[72] See Maccoby, The Mythmaker: Paul and the Invention of Christianity, 16.

[73] Vivian Green, A New History of Christianity (United Kingdom: Sutton Publishing Limited, 1996), 6.

[74] Ziesler, Pauline Christianity, 25.

[75] "(2) Listen! I, Paul, tell you this: If you are counting on **circumcision** to make you right with God, then Christ will be of no benefit to you. (3) I'll say it again. If you are trying to find favor with God by being circumcised, you must obey every regulation in the whole **law** of Moses. (4) For if you are trying to make yourselves right with God by keeping the law, you have been cut off from Christ! You have fallen away from God's grace. (5) But we who live by the Spirit eagerly wait to receive by faith the righteousness God has promised to us. (6) For when we place our faith in Christ Jesus, there is no benefit in being circumcised or being uncircumcised. What is important is faith expressing itself in love." (Bible, Galatians 5:2-6)

[76] Colin E. Gunton, The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 92.

[77] Hinson, The Early Church: Origins to the Dawn of the Middle Ages, 48.

[78] See Ziesler, Pauline Christianity, 26.

[79] Hyam Maccoby, The Mythmaker: Paul and the Invention of Christianity, 16.

[80] See Murphy-O'Connor, Paul: A Critical Life, 80.

[81] See John Court & Kathleen Court, The New Testament World (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 87-88.

[82] See Sanders, Paul: Past Masters, 1-2.

[83] [83] See Francis Watson, Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 29-30.

[84] "(8) Before you Gentiles knew God, you were slaves to so-called gods that do not even exist. (9) So now that you know God (or should I say, now that God knows you), why do you want to go back again and become slaves once more to the weak and useless spiritual principles of this world? (10) You are trying to earn favor with God by observing certain days or months or seasons or years. (11) I fear for you. Perhaps all my hard work with you was for nothing." (Bible, Galatians 4:8-11)

[85] See Reid, Readings in Western Religious Thought: The Ancient World, 287.

[34] Carl Clemen, Religions of the World their Nature and their History, translated by REV. A.K. D. ALLAS (Delhi: Manas Publications, 1988), 347-348.

[87] "Now he [Christ Jesus] is exalted to the place of highest honor in heaven, at God's right hand. And the Father, as he had promised, gave him the Holy Spirit to pour out upon us,..." (Bible, Acts 2:33)

[35] Joseph Campbell, The Mystic Vision: Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968), 138-139.

[36] See Ziesler, Pauline Christianity, 55.

[37] Brauch, Hard Sayings of Paul, 28-29.

[91] "(12) When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned... (17) For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many... (18) Adam's one sin brings condemnation for everyone…" (Bible, Romans 5:12; 17-18).

[38] Sanders, E.P., Paul: Past Masters, p. 43.

[93] See The Mystery of the Incarnation, accessed December 12, 2010. http//www.gmg2000.it/en/s_past_s2.html

[94] "(4)The Word gave life to everything that was created and his life brought light to everyone... (9)The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world…(17) God's unfailing love and faithfulness came through Jesus Christ" (Bible, John 1:4; 9; 17)

[95] See Vernon White, Atonement and Incarnation: an Essay in Universalism and Particularity (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 77.

[96] See Ibid., 75.

[97] See Howard Clark Kee, Understanding the New Testament (USA: Prentice Hall, Inc. 5th ed., 1993), 296-297.

[98] Court, The New Testament World, 108.

[99] Charles B. Cousar, A Theology of the Cross: the Death of Jesus in Pauline Letters (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1990), 4.

[100] "(1) When I first came to you, dear brothers and sisters, I didn't use lofty words and impressive wisdom to tell you God's secret plan. (2) For I decided that while I was with you I would forget everything except Jesus Christ, the one who was crucified" (Bible, I Corinthians 2:1-2)

[101] "(18) The message of the cross is foolish to those who are headed for destruction! But we who are being saved know it is the very power of God" (Bible, I Corinthians 1:18).

[102] James Yeong-Sik Pak, Paul as Missionary: A Comparative Study of Missionary Discourse in Paul's Epistle and Selected Contemporary Jewish Texts (Germany: Peter Lang, 1991), 101.

[103] See Court, The New Testament World, 116.

[104] Fitzmyer, Paul and His Theology: A Brief Sketch, 66.

[105] See Ziesler, Pauline Christianity, 86.

[106] See Fitzmyer, Joseph A., Paul and His Theology: A Brief Sketch, pp. 66-67.

[107] Bultmann, Rudolf, Theology of the New Testament, translated by Grobel, Kendrick (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, vol. 1, 1951), p. 297.

[108] Gorringe, Timothy, God's Just Vengeance: Crime, Violence and the Rhetoric of Salvation, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 71.

[109] See Ibid., p. 74.

[110] See Ziesler, Pauline Christianity, 85.

[111] Lawrence O. Richards, The Victor Bible Background Commentary: New Testament (USA: Victor Books/SP Publications, Inc, 1994), 419.

[112] Paul has stated in his letters that he fixed his eyes "not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." (Bible, II Corinthians 4:18). It is obvious that Paul looks beyond mere sensory phenomena, realizing that everything he can touch and see and feel is passing and, in an ultimate sense, unreal. Also, he is concerned with the eternal, with a reality that is beyond the power of our senses to discover. It is that reality, which he has discovered in Christ, on which he has fixed his gaze, and which determines his course. It is observed that this is a basic principle of the New Covenant ministry, one that Paul develops in his important exposition on the nature of his "ministry of reconciliation" (Bible, II Corinthians 5: 11-21). See Richards, The Victor Bible Background Commentary: New Testament, 417.

[113] Richards, The Victor Bible Background Commentary: New Testament, 422.

[114] Ibid., 410.

[115] Ibid., 411.

[116] Ibid., 419.

[117] This means the new believers among the Gentiles who adhere themselves to the religion re-founded and promoted by Paul as well as believe that Christ's death on the cross leads to the accomplishing reconciliation in the sense that God's grace is great and God forgives rather than counts sin against human beings.

[118] Richards, The Victor Bible Background Commentary: New Testament, 419.

[119] Rudolf, Theology of the New Testament, 286-287.

[62] Vivian Green, A New History of Christianity (United Kingdom: Sutton Publishing Limited, 1996), 5.

[121] "(3) I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. (4) He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. (5) He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve. (6) After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. (7) Then he was seen by James and later by all the apostles. (8) Last of all, as though I had been born at the wrong time, I also saw him" (Bible, I Corinthians 15:3-8).

[122] See Robert A. Spivey & D. Moody Smith, ANATOMY of the New Testament: A Guide to Its Structure and Meaning (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 4th ed., 1989), 237.

[123] See Richards, The Victor Bible Background Commentary: New Testament, 405-406; and Cunningham, Exploring Scripture: How the Bible came to be, 130.

[124] Gunton, The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine, 197.

[125] See John T. Carroll & Joel B. Green, The Death of Jesus in Early Christianity (USA: Hendricknon Publishers, Inc., 1995), 115.