Lecture 7: The Parting of the Ways between Judaism and Christianity.

Reading Assignment:

Morton Scott Enslin (1897-1980); Harvard College, B.A., 1919. Professor of New Testament Literature at Crozer Seminary (formerly outside of Philadelphia), whose most famous graduate was Martin Luther King Jr. Author of many books on the New Testament and early Christianity.

Several stages in the emergence of “Christianity”:

Jesus movement during the lifetime of Jesus (30s CE):

- Our sources for the sayings and doings of Jesus are mainly the four canonical gospels in our NT (Mt Mk Lk Jn) which were written 40-70 years after Jesus’ lifetime
- Every positive historical statement about Jesus is disputed by at least some modern historians
- Enslin:
  - Jesus was an eschatological prophet, announcing that the end of the world was at hand and demanding repentance (= John the Baptist)
  - Jesus was a “reformer” from within, like the prophets of old
  - Jesus did not, and had no intention to, found a new religion or a new “church”
  - Jesus did not depart from Jewish practice or society

Jesus movement becomes a sect or party of Judaism after Jesus’ death

- Described in the book of Acts (date and historicity much debated) and the letters of Paul (50s CE).
- This was an age of parties and sects in Judaism: Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, the Qumran sect (= the Dead Sea Scrolls), and others
- Enslin:
  - The Jesus group in Judaea continues the basic themes of “the Jesus movement.”
  - Outside the land of Israel (in the Diaspora) the incorporation of large numbers of gentiles (non-Jews) and the decision that they need not observe all the commandments of the Torah (Paul) inevitably will create a non-Jewish society and a non-Jewish religion.
  - Gentile Christianity is the wave of the Christian future, and this Christianity is responsible for the gospel stories of Jesus’ supernatural birth and miracles; calling Jesus “Lord” (kyrios); and seeing Jesus’ death as atonement for sin.
Modern scholars would emphasize much more than Enslin did the variety and diversity of earliest Christianity and of Judaism.

- Enslin also uses the mother-daughter metaphor and most modern scholars would no longer do so.

**By parting of the ways** we mean that Jews and Christians came to occupy separate social space, with separate institutions, political structures, and social networks.

- Not a theological judgment
- A process, not an event, which unfolds differently in different places and times
- The name “Christian” was first used in Antioch (an important city in northern Syria) in the early 40s CE according to Acts 11:26; the word “Christianity” first attested in Ignatius (ca. 120 CE)
- Justin Martyr takes the separation for granted (ca. 160 CE); never uses the words “Christianity” or “Judaism” (don’t know why) but regularly uses “Christians” (e.g. Dialogue 63.5, “we are all called Christians”) and “Jews”

Social separation aided/abetted by distinctive Christian theological tenets and ritual practices:

- Theology: Divinization of Jesus: Jesus as Messiah (Christ); Jesus as atonement; Jesus as God, Son of God and Logos; Jesus as God and Man;
- Ritual: baptism and communion; principled acceptance of some laws of the Torah and rejection of others.

Developments in Judaism and Jewish Society:

- Destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 CE
- Another failed rebellion of Judaea against the Romans 132-135 CE (Bar Kokhva or Bar Kokhba or Bar Kosba rebellion)
- Emergence of rabbinic Judaism, the Judaism of “the oral Torah,” the Mishnah (ca. 200 CE), Midrash, etc.
- Disappearance of organized or named Jewish sects
- The second century CE witnesses the birth of both “Judaism” and “Christianity”