

Dr. Schweitzer on the Interpretation of St. Paul.

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ON page 363 of *Von Reimarus zu Wrede* (Quest 365), Schweitzer wrote: 'In seeking clues to the eschatology of Jesus, scholars have passed over the eschatology which lies nearest to it, that of Paul.' It has been known for some time past that Schweitzer was himself labouring to supply this omission, and the first part of the work addressed to this end has now appeared, under the title *Geschichte der Paulinischen Forschung*. It is to be completed by *Die Mystik des Apostels Paulus*, which will contain the detailed exposition of the author's own views, but the present work combines so much criticism with the history that the main lines of his thesis are already visible.

It may be briefly stated thus: Paul belongs wholly and solely to primitive eschatological Christianity; with the Hellenization of Christianity he has nothing whatever to do. That process begins, not with him, but after him. According to Schweitzer's presentation of the history of Pauline study, the attribution to Paul of a Hellenizing influence has been its evil genius from first to last. It led F. C. Baur to import an unreal party strife into the very beginnings of Christianity; it led the 'ultra-Tübingen' critics to transfer even the main Epistles to the second century, in order to provide the lapse of time which they rightly saw was necessary for this (assumed) development. It has led astray recent theology after the will-o'-the-wisp of influence from the Greek Mystery-religions.

That any clear evidence of Greek influence—whether through Jewish Hellenism or direct from Greek sources—has been given, any convincing parallel adduced, is roundly denied; and the difficulties of the theory are thus summarized:

'The theory finds itself obliged to assume an unreconciled dualism between Jewish and Greek elements in Paul, and to assert that he never allowed the two systems of thought to mingle, while on the other hand he never became conscious of their disparity; it has to attribute to him a capacity for combining contradictions which allows him to maintain alongside of one another a spiritualistic doctrine of immortality and a crudely materialistic notion of resurrection, without becom-

ing aware of their incompatibility; it is logically forced to the conclusion that he set aside the Jewish eschatology, with its conceptions of judgment and condemnation, in favour of a doctrine of universal blessedness, whereas there is in the Epistles not a single hint pointing in this direction; it is forced, in order to make his statements "Platonic," so to spiritualize them that the natural sense of the words disappears; it must ignore the proved fact that the doctrine of the Spirit, understood in its full compass . . . is most naturally explained as a mere extension of the primitive Christian view; it must meet the objection—which it never can do—that the original apostles never discovered anything of a foreign, Greek character in Paul's views; it must, when confronted with the history of dogma, bend itself with what grace it may to the admission that Paulinism exerted no influence upon the formation of early Greek theology, and cannot therefore have been felt, by the men who had to do with the making of it, to represent a first stage in the Hellenization of Christianity' (p. 66 f.).

Of particularly timely interest are the passages in which he deals with the theory, popularized by the Comparative Study of Religions, that the Pauline teaching on the Sacraments was derived from the Greek Mystery-cults. He emphasizes the paucity of our actual knowledge of these Mysteries, and sternly demands proof in place of facile assertion. In a striking passage he points out how slovenly is the procedure by which even scholars like Dieterich have imported into Paul's statements about baptism in Romans 6 the conception of Rebirth, whereas Paul's conception is that of a Death and Resurrection. This is a more widely different conception than perhaps at first sight appears, since death and resurrection belong to eschatology, and are here thought of by Paul as an anticipatory fulfilment of things to come, whereas 'Rebirth implies an un-eschatological system of thought in which the individual reckons more or less confidently on a normal duration of life' (169 f.).

Again, in seeking analogies for the Lord's Supper, the students of the Science of Religion

have first made an illegitimate inference within their own domain. They have assumed without proof that the mystery-celebrations contained the idea of eating the flesh of the god in order to draw supernatural strength from it. That conception is no doubt proved for certain primitive Nature religions, but it is assumed without proof that it came to the surface again, raised to a higher power, in the Mysteries (153 f.). The parallel in 1 Co 10 is of course not with the Mysteries, but with the regular sacrificial feasts. With this illegitimate inference is further conjoined the false assumption that Paul taught an eating and drinking of the body and blood of the Lord. That is to interpret Paul by the aid of a misunderstanding of John (155).

In general, there has been great looseness of thought as to the conditions under which Paul could have come in contact with these Mysteries. 'So much, however, is certain that Paul cannot have known the Mystery religions in the form in which we know them, because, in this developed state, they did not at that time exist' (150).

For a connected and reasoned statement of Schweitzer's views we must wait for his second volume, but the following points may be gathered from the *obiter dicta* thrown off in the process of exposition and criticism: First, as to the proper method of approaching the study of Pauline theology. 'The most natural method of investigation would have been to begin with the Eschatology, as the most universal element in early Christianity, and then to try to find a path leading from that point to the central doctrines of the new life in union with Christ in His death and resurrection' (42).

As regards the sources of Paul's thought, neither the Old Testament nor the teaching of Jesus are direct sources for Paul, in the sense of supplying the determining factors of his thought (33, 35). His sources were the contemporary Jewish Apocalyptic theology (as represented especially by the Apocalypse of Ezra) and the eschatological theology of the primitive Christian community—which is not simply the teaching of Jesus, because there has entered into it the new and powerful factor of the death and resurrection of Jesus (34). So far from Greek influence being necessary to account for Paul's attitude towards the Law and the Gentiles, 'it was simply by thinking out the primitive Christian doctrine to its logical con-

clusion that Paul arrived at his universalism and theory of freedom from the Law' (65 f.).

As for the Sacraments, the sacramental idea is derived from 'the notion of marking out, or 'sealing,' which plays so large a part in Apocalyptic thought' (189). But we are to note that Paul's own view of redemption is independent of the Sacraments, and might be worked out apart from them. It is rather as if he found them already established, and adapted the form of his own teaching to them (167 ff.).

Among the problems which await, and demand, solution, the author notes the following: 'What was the outline of the events of the End, and what answers were given by the (eschatological) expectation to the elementary questions which could not be avoided? Are there two resurrections, or only one; one judgment, or two? Who are to rise again at the Parousia? Does a judgment take place then? On whom is it held? On what ground is it based? Wherein do reward and punishment consist? What happens to the men of the surviving generation who are not destined to the Messianic kingdom? What is the relation between judgment and election? What is the fate of believers who are elect and baptized, but have fallen from grace by unworthy conduct? Can they lose their final salvation, or are they only excluded from the Messianic kingdom? Does Paul admit a general resurrection? If so, when does it take place? Is it accompanied by a judgment, or do only the elect rise again? Where does the judgment take place at which the elect judge the angels? Only when Pauline eschatology gives an answer to all the "idle" questions of this kind which can be asked, is it really understood and explained' (187). And the Pauline mysticism, doctrine of redemption and attitude to the Sacraments have to be explained on the basis of this eschatology.

That will be the task of the coming work *die Mythik des Apostels Paulus*.

The style of the book is 'older,' less 'intense,' than that of *Von Reimarus*. There is not the same constant coruscation nor quite the same lavishness of metaphor. But for that very reason the metaphors used are all the more effective. Of a theory which, in Schweitzer's opinion, maintains itself by blinking difficulties and dispensing with references, he writes: 'In view of the existing relation of its assets to its liabilities, it

would have no alternative but to declare itself bankrupt—had it not astutely refrained from keeping any accounts!’ (67) Of the early Tübingen school, and the Dutch radicals, who are led by the common hypothesis of Hellenization to results in other respects opposed: ‘The two wrestlers are chained together; whichever of them throws the other into the water, must drown along with him’ (107). In another case Dr. Schweitzer’s musical studies supply him with a fine image—which embodies moreover a welcome admission. Freely recognizing that familiarity with the Greek language counted for something in the moulding of Paul’s thought, he writes: ‘He

found at his disposal a tone-system in which the modulations necessary to the development of his theme stood ready to his hand’ (171).

And here, to conclude with, is an illuminating comparison with more than a touch of poetry. Pointing out that it is not fair to judge the possibilities of the contemporary Jewish theology from the later Rabbinism—any more than it would be to judge the Reformation from the seventeenth-century Lutheran scholasticism—he says: ‘The picture which the Epigoni draw for us shows only a sun-scorched plain. But this yellow, withered grass was green and fresh once. What did the meadows look like then?’ (38).

In the Study.

Virginibus Puerisque.

In his chatty book of Reminiscences, to which he has given the title of *Some Pages of my Life*, Bishop Boyd Carpenter tells this story; ‘Once Mr. Bucke’s subject was St. Paul’s statement, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.” The heads of his sermon were threaded on the line of “How St. Paul preached the Gospel”’: he preached it freely; he preached it fully; and so on. When he came to the second head, and wished to describe how St. Paul preached fully, he put in contrast the short sermons which some people desired. “I met a young curate,” said Mr. Bucke—“I met a young curate the other day, who told me that he thought five minutes were long enough for any sermon. *I have no doubt his congregation thought so too.*”

Five minutes is considered long enough for a children’s sermon, and the question is, Do the children think so too, and do they think so always? There are preachers to children who preach twice five minutes and sometimes more, and the children listen throughout. One of these preachers is the Rev. J. Thomson, M.A., of Carmyllie. Mr. Thomson has won fame as a preacher to children, and recently he published a volume of his sermons, calling it *The Six Gates* (Allenson; 2s. 6d.). Here is an average sermon. Is it too long?

Our Mother the Worm.

‘I have said . . . to the worm, Thou art my mother.’—JOB 17¹⁴.

I am sure you will say this is a strange text, and cannot teach us much that will be helpful, but I trust you will be agreeably disappointed, for these words are full of great meanings. We know what they meant on the lips of Job. He was in the depths of despair because of all that he had suffered in body and in mind, and he felt so low and dispirited that he thought he might actually claim relationship with the worms. A worm stood, in his eyes, for all that was despised and worthless and mean, and he had been so afflicted by the hand of God, that he could utter these words of utter humiliation—‘I have said to the worm, Thou art my mother.’ Can we imagine a man lower than this, more abject in his feeling of degradation? We know Job did not mean these words to be understood literally; it was only what we call a figure of speech, to express as clearly as possible how miserable he felt. But what would you say if I were to insist that his words are true in a very real sense, and that you and I, as well as Job, can say to this despised little creature, ‘Thou art my mother’? In one sense we owe our life to our mother; she gave us birth; and in another sense we owe it to the worm we speak of with so much contempt. What I am to try to do now is to show you how true it is that, if it were not