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After Fifty Years.

VIII. The Significance of the Apostle Paul.

BY THE REVEREND SYDNEY CAVE, D.D., PRINCIPAL OF NEW COLLEGE, LONDON.

IN his interesting book, *The Apostle Paul and the Modern World*, Dr. Peabody remarked that in the Library of his Theological School in Harvard University there are 'more than two thousand volumes dealing with the life and letters of the Apostle Paul, or more than one for each year since his time, not to speak of the multitudinous commentaries and histories in which the teaching of Paul has a prominent place.' These words were written sixteen years ago. By now that section of the Library must be much increased, for many of the best books on St. Paul have appeared in recent years. Within the limits of one article it will be impossible to mention more than a few of those books on Paul which we ourselves have read. Some of the German literature is described in Schweitzer's *Paul and His Interpreters*, Eng. tr., 1912. A far fuller account is given in Feine's immense and suggestive book, *Der Apostel Paulus*, 1927. On the English literature there is, so far as we know, no book.

The English student of Paul had fifty years ago two good 'lives' of Paul to use: that by Conybeare and Howson, 1877, and that by Farrar, 1879. The first was especially rich in topographical detail; the second was written with an exuberance of style more in favour then than now, but usefully related his letters to his life. Both these books have long since been displaced by more modern books. Instead of Conybeare and Howson's book, the student would to-day turn to Sir William Ramsay's *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen*, 1895, which, in its wealth of learning, is still the best presentation of the outer events of Paul's life; instead of Farrar's book, the modern reader would use such books as David Smith's *The Life and Letters of St. Paul*, 1919; A. H. McNeile's *St. Paul, His Life, Letters and Christian Doctrine*, 1920; C. T. Woods' *Life, Letters and Religion of St. Paul*, 1925; or more popularly written books such as Weinell's, *St. Paul, the Man and His Work*, Eng. tr., 1906; or T. R. Glover's *Paul of Tarsus*, 1925.

Lightfoot's *Commentaries* on Galatians, Philipians, and Colossians were first published respectively in 1865, 1868, and 1875, but fifty years ago they were still of unrivalled authority. The

writer of this article gratefully remembers how it was the study of these commentaries in the Greek Testament class at school which first (though much less than fifty years ago!) made Paul intelligible and so fascinating. In the study of Paul's theology the student was far less fortunate. There was Pfleiderer's *Paulinism*, 1877, and Bernard Weiss's *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, Eng. tr., 1882 and 1883. Pfleiderer rejected, Weiss accepted, what was held to be the Pauline theology; but, although these books thus differed much, they were alike in treating Paul as primarily a systematic theologian. These books were learned and instructive, but they dissected Paul's theology; they did not show it as the living expression of his religion. H. J. Holtzmann's *Lehrbuch der neutestamentlichen Theologie*, 1897, had that same lack. All that learning can provide is given, and yet Paul's theology does not live. As we remember these elaborate reconstructions of Paul's thought, we can sympathize with Deissmann's words: 'I am afraid the people of Iconium, Thessalonica, Corinth would all have been overtaken by the fate of Eutychus of Troas, if they had been obliged to listen to the Christological, hamartiological, and eschatological paragraphs of modern "Paulinism."'

Far more vivid were Sabatier's *The Apostle Paul*, Eng. tr., 1891, and A. B. Bruce's *St. Paul's Conception of Christianity*, 1896. It is possible that Sabatier over-emphasizes the development of Paul's thought in his Christian period, but his book, which is written with admirable lucidity, is still of value. Even more attractive is A. B. Bruce's book. It needs to be supplemented by the discoveries of more recent scholars, but it ought still to be on every preacher's shelves. Equally successful in relating Paul's theology to his religion was Titius's *Der Paulinismus unter dem Gesichtspunkt der Seligkeit*, 1900. A good account of Paul's teaching was given in Steven's *The Theology of the New Testament*, 1901, whilst Dr. Garvie's *Studies in Paul and His Gospel*, 1911, was at once learned and suggestive.

The course of controversy brought into new prominence the origin of Paul's theology and its relation to the teaching of Jesus. Holsten in his

earlier writings and in his elaborate *Das Evangelium des Paulus*, i., 1880, ii., 1898, had sought to give a 'Genetic Presentation of the Christian Worldview of Paul' and to exhibit his theology as the product of his dialectic in its application to his conversion, and Pfeleiderer and Holtzmann had likewise sought to assign Paul's theology to the immanent necessities of his logic. These attempts were seen to be inadequate. As Wrede put it in his *Paul*, 1904 (Eng. tr., 1907), 'the magnificent assurance, confidence and enthusiasm of Paul's faith would be utterly unintelligible if its foundation was a conception which he himself excogitated.' Wrede himself argued that Paul, even while still a Jew, had already a complete 'Christ-Dogmatic.' He believed in 'a celestial being, in a divine Christ, before he believed in Jesus.' Paul's conversion had thus merely this importance: 'that the human life of Jesus, with its culmination in death and resurrection, became a part of the picture' which, as a Jew, he already had of Christ.

Wrede's book appeared in a series of popular booklets, which in Germany sold at a low price and had an immense circulation. For him Paul was primarily a theologian, whose theology was his religion. And this theology he had in substance before he believed in Jesus. His picture of Christ was thus not derived from any impression of the person of Jesus. 'What we prize in the man Jesus, His moral majesty, His purity and piety, meant for his Christology, nothing.' Thus, in Wrede's view, Christ's humanity was to Paul of little significance and was asserted only because his theology demanded that the Christ should suffer and die. As in an earlier book, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien*, 1901, Wrede had sought to show that it was only after the disciples believed Jesus to be risen that they claimed Him as the Messiah, it is clear that, if his interpretation be right, there is no real connexion between the Christ of Paul and the Jesus of the Gospels. In the same series as Wrede's *Paul*, Bousset had written a *Jesus* which makes Him to be not the Lord of men but the gracious hero of the religious life, the first true believer in God the Father. The publication of Bousset's *Jesus* and Wrede's *Paul* thus raised in an acute form the problem of the relation of Paul to Jesus. If Bousset and Wrede were right, Paul was not the interpreter of Jesus but the founder of a new religion.

Wrede's book, for all its brilliance, was soon seen to be inconclusive. The Jewish Apocrypha can easily be studied; thus in English we have Charles's great edition of the *Apocrypha and*

Pseudepigrapha. It became clear that Wrede had unduly assimilated their teaching to that of the Christian conception of Christ. The Messiah of Jewish Apocalypse is far too dim a figure to have aroused the passionate devotion which Paul gave to Jesus Christ. Besides, as Jülicher wrote in his little book *Paulus und Jesus*, 1907, in the same series, 'An apostle of Jesus Christ, who declined to know anything of the earthly life of the Messiah, and who acted thus in order to support his own dogmatic theory, is the product of the modern mania for logical consistency. It is certainly not the Paul of history.'

One extreme leads to another. The attempt to present Paul primarily as a theologian was followed by Deissmann's vivid book, *St. Paul, A Study in Social and Religious History*, Eng. tr., 1912, which sought 'to come back from the paper St. Paul of our Western libraries, Germanized, dogmatized, modernized, to the historic St. Paul, to penetrate through the "Paulinism" of our New Testament theologians to the St. Paul of ancient reality.' St. Paul is best presented as 'essentially a hero of piety, first and foremost. . . . He is far more a man of prayer and witness, a confessor and a prophet, than a learned exegetist and brooding dogmatist.' In our country, especially, where many who prize religion dislike theology, Deissmann's presentation attracted much interest and won great popularity. In this book, as in his earlier book, *Die Neutestamentliche Formel 'in Christo Jesu'*, 1892, Deissmann did good service by emphasizing the significance of Paul's sense of being 'in Christ Jesus.' But his description of Paul's Christianity as a Christ-cult was unfortunate, for it suggested that Paul worshipped Christ as pagans worship their gods, and obscured the distinctiveness of New Testament Christianity, which so finds God in Christ that the worship of Christ is one with the worship of God.

It is this distinctiveness of New Testament Christianity that is to many modern men its offence. If Paul's estimate of Christ be rejected, how is it to be explained or explained away? The attempts to explain Paul's conception of Christ by dialectic or by Jewish Christ-dogmatics had both failed. There remained a third way, which was to prove more significant and which, even in its eventual failure, has thrown much needed light on the nature of Paul's teaching—the attempt to derive Paul's proclamation of Christ from contemporary pagan myths of gods who die and rise again.

In no sphere of knowledge (unless it be in

Psychology !) is it possible to write such pretentious nonsense as in the sphere of the Comparative Study of Religion, and some of the attempts to interpret Paul's Christianity as a mystery-religion merited less attention than they received. Too many writers in assembling supposed proofs of the derivation of Paul's Christianity from pagan mystery-cults not only translated pagan ideas into Christian words but derived their evidence from many centuries and many lands. Clever amateurs like Drews and Smith in Germany and J. M. Robertson in England were thus able to reach the absurd conclusion that Jesus never lived. Even scholars like Brückner and Heitmüller showed a similar disregard of topography and chronology, and their books well deserved Schweitzer's scornful condemnation.

In England the theory won influence through Dr. Kirsopp Lake's brilliant book *The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul*, 1911. 'Baptism,' he wrote, 'is for St. Paul and his readers universally and unquestionably accepted as a "mystery" or sacrament which works *ex opere operato*,' whilst he described the Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist as 'much more nearly primitive than the Protestant.' This statement naturally pleased those who, holding the 'Catholic' view of the sacraments, desired to give to St. Paul's words a Catholic meaning. But the words which follow ought also to be quoted. 'The Catholic advocate in winning his case has proved still more: the type of doctrine which he defends is not only primitive, but pre-Christian.' And 'pre-Christian' in this context means pagan.

Dr. Lake's statement was the more impressive in that he did not assemble the evidence on which it claimed to be based. The evidence for cults and practices of the mystery-cults in Paul's age and place is singularly meagre, whilst to speak of the mythic gods of these cults as gods 'who died and rose again' is to give an unduly Christian form to pagan notions connected with these gods. The literature on this subject is immense. There is no better introduction to it than to read the three successive editions of the book which did seek to present the evidence, Reitzenstein's *Die Hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen*. The first edition of 1910 was a very short book, but claimed to provide much evidence; the second edition of 1920 is a longer book, but the evidence adduced is less. The third edition of 1927 was a still bigger book, but in it the supposed evidence has become very slight. To give but one illustration: he reluctantly admits that the evidence he had adduced of parallels in

the mystery-cults to the Lord's Supper was irrelevant, and that it cannot be compared 'with non-Christian counterparts.'

Reitzenstein had not an attractive style, and not unnaturally many scholars who had read the first edition of his book left the later editions of it unread. In English there is an admirable discussion of the evidence in H. A. A. Kennedy's *St. Paul and the Mystery Religions*, 1913, whilst Machen's *The Origin of St. Paul's Religion*, 1921, was not only a very vigorous but a very learned attack on the attempt to explain away Paul's Christianity by reference to the mystery-cults.

The controversy brought into new prominence not only the relation of the so-called 'theology of Paul' and 'the religion of Jesus,' but also the relation of Paul's teaching to that of the Church of his age. It became clear that Paul in his essential gospel was not an innovator; that if there was a transformation from discipleship of Jesus to the proclamation of Him as the Risen Lord, this transformation must have taken place before Paul's conversion. That is the thesis of the most important book written from the standpoint of the *religionsgeschichtliche* school, Bousset's *Kyrios Christos*, 1913, which attributes the ascription to Jesus of Lordship to the Gentile converts at Antioch. Bousset's book was severely criticised by Wernle in articles published in 1915 in the *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*. Bousset made a pained reply to Wernle's attack in his *Jesus der Herr*, 1916, but the second edition of his *Kyrios Christos*, 1921, was written with greater caution. Bousset's great book is still untranslated. Its position is reflected, though with greater restraint and discrimination, in W. Morgan's *The Religion and Theology of Paul*, 1917.

The *religionsgeschichtliche* interpretation of Paul's thought for long seemed to some a grave menace to Christian faith and to others a welcome means of reducing the scope and content of the Christian message. Among scholars there is now a very general scepticism in regard to its conclusions, but its popular influence is very great. But this interpretation, which was designed to explain away Paul's Christianity, has led to two immense advances in Pauline scholarship. It has brought about a reinvestigation of the culture and religion of Paul's age and in that way has led to a fresh knowledge of the thought-forms of his time, so that we are now able to interpret his words as those of a man of the first century. In German a very useful book is Paul Wendland's *Die Hellenistisch-Römische Kultur in ihrer Beziehungen zu Judentum und Christentum*,

1912, which forms part of Lietzmann's invaluable *Handbuch zum Neuen Testament*, the latter part of which contains commentaries rich in reference to Græco-Oriental literature. Among English books may be mentioned Halliday's *The Pagan Background of Early Christianity*, 1925, and also Dr. Angus's *The Mystery Religions and Christianity*, published also in 1925, a book the value of which would be much greater if only more dates had been given. How rich is the material available for the modern scholar can be seen from a study of the footnotes and appendices given in W. L. Knox's *St. Paul and the Church of the Gentiles*, published this year, or, better still, from a study of the Pauline terms in Gerhard Kittel's great *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*.

The controversy has not only led to a greater knowledge of the Græco-Orientalism of Paul's environment, it has also brought new knowledge of the meaning of many of the terms he uses, so that his theology can now be studied in the light of the first instead of the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries. One of the most illuminating accounts of Paul's thought written from this newer standpoint is to be found in Johannes Weiss's *Urchristentum*, published posthumously in 1917, an English translation of which, *The History of Primitive Christianity*, was issued in 1937. Weinel's *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments*³, 1921, written from the 'Liberal' standpoint, and the rich and instructive book of Feine, a 'Positive' scholar, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*³, 1919, alike show how much the study of the thought-forms of Paul's age has done to illuminate the content of Paul's thought. We know now that Paul thought of Sin and Wrath and Law not abstractedly but concretely, as half-personal antagonists from whose tyranny Christ has set men free. The new insight into Paul's conception of salvation is to be studied in C. Anderson Scott's great book, *Christianity according to St. Paul*, 1927. A not dissimilar standpoint is adopted in the present writer's book, the manuscript of which was nearly complete when Dr. Anderson Scott's was published, *The Gospel according to St. Paul: A Reinterpretation in the Light of the Religion of his Age and Modern Missionary Experience*, 1928. The contribution which missionary experience has to make to the study of St. Paul is explored also in two German books: Warneck, *Paulus im Lichte der heutigen Heidenmission*³, 1922, and Oepke, *Die Missionspredigt des Apostels Paulus*, 1920.

No reference has so far been made to the problem of the authenticity of St. Paul's Epistles, for that

is now of less moment for the understanding of the significance of St. Paul. At the beginning of the period many scholars spoke as if the 'Four Chief Epistles' could alone be claimed with certainty to have been written by St. Paul. Van Manen's statement in the *Encyclopædia Biblica* that none of these Epistles 'are by Paul,' 'they are all without distinction pseudepigrapha,' is to-day generally rejected. P. N. Harrison's *The Problem of the Pastoral Epistles*, 1921, has, in the opinion of very many scholars, shown that these Epistles are not as they stand St. Paul's, but that Titus and 2 Timothy embody short authentic letters. 2 Thessalonians and Ephesians are held by some scholars not to be by Paul, but, since Colossians is generally regarded as Paul's, the question does not vitally affect our interpretation of Paul's teaching. Nor has reference been made to one of the most influential of modern expositions of a Pauline Epistle, Barth's *Romans*, for that book is more important for our understanding of Barth than for our understanding of St. Paul.

At the end of his *Saint Paul*, published not fifty but seventy years ago, Renan wrote: 'After having been, owing to orthodox Protestantism, for three hundred years the supreme Christian doctor, Paul sees in our days his reign coming to an end. . . . The writings of Paul have been a peril and a stumbling block, the cause of the principal defects of Christian theology; Paul is the father of the subtle Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, the sombre Calvinist, the peevish Jansenist, and of the cruel theology which damns and predestines to damnation.' History has disproved Renan's prophecy. The reign of Paul is not 'coming to an end.' Never has his significance been more clearly realized by Christian scholars. The researches of the last fifty years have shown that Paul was not, as Renan thought, the perverter of the Christian gospel but its great exponent. We have learned at last to understand his words in the setting of his age and to know how grave is the misunderstanding of those who identify Paul's teaching with the harsher doctrines of later theologians. But the works of Christian scholars are less read than those of literary men like Mr. Bernard Shaw and Mr. H. G. Wells, and they, with less excuse than had Renan, still perpetuate this misunderstanding of Paul's teaching.

To the student of the New Testament, St. Paul's meaning is intelligible to-day as it was not fifty years ago. But much has to be done before his significance is made clear to those as yet unfamiliar with the results of recent Pauline scholarship. This missionary of the first century pressed into the

service of the gospel the conceptions of the Jews and Gentiles whom he addressed, and these conceptions have to be studied before his teaching can be understood. Modern translations like that of Dr. Moffatt's can do much to enable those who know no Greek to understand Paul's words, whilst commentaries like Dr. Dodd's *Romans*, 1932, have shown that by interpreting Paul as a man of the first century his teaching becomes all the more relevant for our age.

The study of St. Paul in the last fifty years has been marked by many aberrations. But from the controversies to which these have led has emerged a new understanding of the significance of the Apostle who not only laboured more than all the rest in extending the knowledge of his Saviour, but more adequately explored the content of the Christian gospel. That is the significance of St. Paul, and it is a significance that can be more clearly seen than was possible fifty years ago.

St. Paul's Conception of Christ.

BY THE REVEREND G. J. INGLIS, M.A., WARDEN OF STEPHENSON HALL, UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD.

THE Christian conception of Christ is a great theological structure, to which Christians of all generations have contributed. The faithful in every age are called to formulate their own distinctive convictions about their Lord, within the framework of the Christian tradition, in order that they may present Him effectively to the world in which they live. This task is especially urgent at the present time, when the moral and spiritual supremacy of Jesus is being flatly rejected in favour of some form of racial or humanitarian materialism; and there is no better preparation for it than a careful study of those Christian thinkers, such as Paul, who speak to us from the past in language which is strictly relevant to the living issues of to-day.

Paul worked out his conception of Christ against a background of Jewish thought, and he takes for granted the existence and the nature of God as they were apprehended by the Judaism of his time. For him there is only one God, supreme and transcendent; but this God is also the Creator of the world and of mankind, and His power is active in human life. This power, however, is always exercised in accordance with His character, and His character is one of perfect goodness. His distinctive attribute is His complete and absolute holiness or righteousness, and He expects a similar righteousness from His worshippers. If they serve Him by doing His will, they may hope that their faith will be vindicated in the future, when the kingdom or rule of God will become effective in the hearts and minds of all mankind throughout the

world. These principles were the basis of Paul's theology, and he adhered to them both before and after his conversion to the service of Christ.

This conversion was the decisive event in Paul's religious experience, and it exercised a profound influence on every aspect of his thought. The story is told at length in Acts, and its significance for Paul himself is elucidated by a number of allusions in his Epistles. On his journey to Damascus to spur on the persecution of the 'Nazarenes,' he beheld the risen Jesus, who spoke to him and called him to His service.¹ As a result of this experience, Paul accepted Jesus as the Messiah, and responded to the call to serve Him by becoming an ardent apostle of the faith which he had formerly persecuted. Paul had no doubt at all that this change was planned and carried out by God, in accordance with His purpose of redemption for mankind as a whole. He tells the Galatians that 'It was the good pleasure of God, who separated me, even from my mother's womb, and called me through his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles.'² To Paul himself his conversion was primarily an act of power wrought by God. It was not something which he did, but something which was done to him, and done by God. He was converted to the service of Christ, not only without his own co-operation, but in direct contravention of his own will and desires at the time. Yet it was not an application of irresistible force, but a strong appeal which, in the circum-

¹ Ac 9¹⁻¹⁸ 22³⁻²¹ 26²⁻²².

² Gal 1¹⁵⁻¹⁶.