

APOLLOS, THE DISCIPLES AT EPHESUS AND DR. W. B. SMITH'S THEORY.

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IN Acts xviii. 24 we read about the Alexandrian Apollos "teaching the things concerning Jesus but knowing only of the baptism of John." In the next chapter we likewise find that when Paul came to Ephesus, he found "certain disciples" who were baptized only according to the baptism of John. These disciples were Christians, as in Acts the word "disciple" without any further definition always refers to believers in Jesus. Thus Ananias in Damascus, who baptized Paul is called "a certain disciple." These passages about Apollos and the Ephesian disciples seem to me to reveal a very weak point in the theory of Dr. Smith.

Why?

1. Because Dr. Smith, as far as I know, assumes the historicity of the Baptist and has not denied the authenticity of the Josephus passage concerning him as does Drews.

2. But the preaching of John and Jesus is essentially the same, preaching repentance, for the kingdom of God and the judgment is drawing near. Jesus is a disciple of John, baptized by him and always speaks with the highest respect of him.

3. The preaching of John and Jesus is not "an organized crusade of Greek-Jewish monotheism against the prevalent polytheism" which Dr. Smith (*Open Court*, XXIV, p. 633) says was the object of "Protochristianity." The Preaching of John and Jesus has nothing to do with such a purpose. Furthermore it is directed entirely to Jews alone. The preaching of Jewish monotheism among Gentiles entirely took care of itself as is well known, by means of the institution of proselytism which obliged the proselyte to reject idolatry without taking upon himself the ceremonial Jewish law.

4. The preaching and work of John became known beyond Palestine, as Apollos of Alexandria and the disciples of Ephesus testify. The conclusion "that the Christian movement did not proceed originally from Jerusalem or even from Palestine as from a unique focus, but simultaneously from many geographically independent foci" which Dr. Smith draws from the passages in Acts about Apollos, the disciples at Ephesus and Ananias of Damascus, has not the least foundation in those passages. If the work of John had exerted an influence beyond Palestine among the Jews, is there any doubt that the work of Jesus, his successor, should have done likewise even before the great missionary travels of Paul and his companions? And if the defeat of Herod by his father-in-law Aretas, as Josephus tells us, was looked upon by many Jews, most likely also beyond Palestine, as a divine retribution for the execution of John, the execution of Jesus by Pilate in company with the Jerusalem hierarchy was probably likewise not looked upon with indifference by many Jews of the dispersion. We must not think that these had no interest in the happenings of Palestine. They were bound to it with strong ties of racial and religious interest. Occasionally even foreign Jews, as the case of a countryman of Apollos shows (comp. Josephus, *Ant.* XX, 8. 6; *Wars*, II, 13 and Acts xxi. 38) headed insurrections in Palestine. Is it not probable that the last act of a zealot, such as Jesus displayed in the cleansing of the temple by which he showed himself to be, like the Essenes, an enemy of the Hananitic hierarchy which turned the temple-hill into a poultry and cattle market for its own benefit, became known among the Jews beyond Palestine? The death of Jesus very likely stood in connection with this act. According to Mark xi the hierarchs of Jerusalem sought the destruction of Jesus after that act, and when they asked Jesus upon what authority he did it, he offered the counter question whether the baptism of John was from heaven or of men, thus making them face the fact that John was held a divine prophet by many of the people and placing himself to the last in accord with the teachings of the Baptist. Should this connection of Jesus with John to the last not have become known and discussed beyond Palestine among many Jews?

Let us also not forget that the Hellenistic Jews had their synagogues in Jerusalem. Acts vi. 9 speaks of the synagogues of the Libertines¹, the Cyreneans, the Alexandrians, those of Cilicia and

¹ Very probably Jewish freedmen (Sueton., *Tiber.* 36), brought as prisoners of war, particularly under Pompey, to Rome, and afterwards emancipated. Comp. Latin *libertus*.

Asia² in Jerusalem. That of the Alexandrians is also mentioned in the Talmud (*Megill.* f. 73. 4). According to Acts Stephen discusses the person of Jesus with these synagogues. Stephen is represented as being a Hellenistic Jew. Whether we attach much credence to the story of Stephen as told in Acts or not, is it likely that the preaching and work and death of Jesus was not taken notice of in these synagogues, and that through them the knowledge about Jesus was not spread to the different parts of the Roman empire even before the later work of Paul?

If some one might interpose that there was nothing extraordinary in the teachings of Jesus to speak about among the Jews outside of Palestine, let us not forget that although Jesus was a good Jew and had the narrow horizon of his race, nevertheless like his forerunner John he had very much to say against the self-righteousness of his race, against the external observance of the law, and especially very much against the rabbinical traditions which hedged in the Mosaic law and the prophets and which choked just the best things that they contained. Perhaps in these things he taught no more that was new than all the best prophets had done before him, but was this nothing worth talking about among the Jews inside and outside of Palestine? Let us not minimize the work of Jesus among his people. Let us also not imagine that the Jews never felt the oppressiveness of the law and especially the many traditions which had gradually become attached to the law. Now it was an old belief among the Jews that in the times of the Messiah the law would be done away with. There is a peculiar saying even in the Talmud that in the times of the Messiah even swine's flesh would be allowed.³ Besides it is an interesting fact that in many Messianic movements among the Jews till up to that of Sabbathais Zwi (1641-1677) of Smyrna, leaders who played the rôle of a Messiah inveighed especially against the rabbinical law. We here find the connecting point between the more conservative Jewish Christians and the more radical men like Paul. There was therefore much to talk about anyway among the Jews inside and outside Palestine concerning Jesus.

Perhaps there were other things to speak about, not to mention the eschatological sayings of Jesus. A kind of atoning value may have been attached to the death of Jesus, not in the sense of the later developed atonement theory of Paul which made Jesus the

² "Asia" denotes the Roman province of that name, i. e., the western coast region of Asia Minor.

³ Rabbi J. Stern, *Lichtstrahlen aus dem Talmud*, p. 76.

saviour of all mankind, but in the sense in which we find it expressed in several places in the apocryphal Maccabean books, that the death of a martyr who died for the Jewish religion had an atoning value for the whole people to ward off God's wrath, a further connecting link between Judaistic and Pauline Christianity. So the person of Jesus may have played a greater rôle outside of Palestine among many Jews where Paul had not yet come than we think.

Of course there was no need to see in Jesus a man of divine sonship in the physical sense of the word, as later Christian theology developed it. In fact the Judaistic Christians never looked upon Jesus in that way. He was of course a "son of the spirit" and had become such at the time of his baptism by John. We cannot very well assume that Jesus was entirely a negligible quantity among many Jews outside of Palestine.

Let us also not forget that the Acts from its more Pauline standpoint tells us that Apollos was more thoroughly instructed in the way of the Lord by Aquila and Priscilla, the companions of Paul, i. e., of course in the Pauline view about Christ. The Acts represent Apollos clearly as having a knowledge of Jesus beforehand, only he was not fully orthodox yet in the Pauline sense. And so it was likewise with the Ephesian disciples, who had only been baptized according to the baptism of John, but who had a knowledge of Jesus just like Apollos.

The knowledge then of the historical Jesus in connection with the knowledge of the historical John had traveled beyond Palestine among the Jews. This appears to be an established fact.

If Jesus and John are not separable, why the necessity, according to Dr. Smith's theory, of letting the one, John, remain a Jewish human preacher, who historically existed, and denying the existence of the other, Jesus, and declaring him a deity, whom Apollos preached, while he was also at the same time a disciple of John? I cannot understand this break in the mind of Apollos and therefore in this matter there appears to be a very weak point in the theory of Dr. Smith.

He has consolidated his theory otherwise by spiritualizing, allegorizing and symbolizing all terms which seem to place Jesus in purely human relations, so that it is futile to argue with him on such matters as Jesus being the firstborn son of Mary, having brothers and sisters in the commonly understood way, but in what way will he bring John in connection with his assumed Jesus-deity? The baptism of Jesus had already become a knotty problem after Jesus had been deified in early Christian theology, but if the Jesus-deity

was deity from the start without any human substratum, how could it be baptized by John at all?

I cannot make myself at home in the theory of Dr. Smith. Why this barbarous term for advancing the cause of monotheism around the Mediterranean, the *Jesus-Nasarya* god? And why should the Christian movement, if it had a purely intellectual purpose for advancing monotheism against polytheism, be invested with such secrecy, when all along for centuries past the tendency in the Greco-Roman world had been towards monotheism, which was then strengthened by Judaism and its Septuagint? But the latter advanced the cause of monotheism against polytheism and idolatry without coining a new term for the monotheistic God. And even if Christianity and Judaism had never come into existence, polytheism and idolatry would have become extinct of themselves and probably without the ugly intolerant feature attached to Judaistic and early Christian zeal which like the monotheistic Zoroastrianism declared all other gods evil demons. In making Christianity a purely intellectual movement for advancing monotheism I think we lose sight of its unquestionably main purpose, that of offering a means of redemption from sin and evil. Of course the pagan gods are stamped as demons standing behind sin and evil; they are a deceptive illusion created by Satan, the prince of this world, and naturally Christianity offered also redemption from these demons. But did not the deified Galilean exorcist who expelled unclean spirits by "the finger of God" suffice for this? Was there need to coin a new name for God in this respect?

The origin of Dr. Smith's theory I can only attribute to the desire to solve all the problems of original Christianity with one stroke. But by solving these problems from one fixed standpoint alone I fear many things in the origin of Christianity will be historically perverted, and to this also belongs the connection between the Baptist and Jesus. If we apply the method so extensively used in *Ecce Deus*, i. e., of spiritualizing, allegorizing and symbolizing everything manifestly historical in the New Testament in favor of the *Jesus-Nasarya* deity, we will lose all historical footing and not come any nearer to the solving of early Christian problems. The mistakes of liberal theology in making Jesus the perfect, ideal, unique pattern of man, which does not fit in with many things related in the Synoptics of him, should not drive us to the opposite extreme of denying his existence entirely and placing in his stead an assumed Jesus-deity, nor of minimizing the significance which,

with all his racial, intellectual and moral deficiencies, he surely had for the origin of early Christianity.

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Although the following has directly nothing to do with my present discussion, I here take occasion to add a few words of comment regarding the arguments which Dr. Smith draws from docetism under "Ignatius versus the Historicists" for the unhistoricity of Jesus.

Among the Shiitic Mohammedans according to J. Friedländer (*Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, XXIII, p. 296 ff. and XXIV, 1 ff.) there exists a doctrine that their master Ali was not really murdered but only his phantom. He himself has ascended to heaven from where he will return. But Ali was really murdered in 661 at Kufa. Here we have a counterpart to Christian docetism. Nothing can be drawn from it against the historicity of Jesus and his death.