

THE UNHISTORICITY OF PAUL.

BY A. KAMPMEIER.

AT the close of an article in *The Open Court* of August, 1912 (p. 507), the writer said, "What will be next? Perhaps the evaporation of Paul himself, etc." While I was writing these words this evaporation was already going on without my knowledge in the retort of a German writer, Samuel Lublinski.

Dr. W. Nestle in a review¹ of that author's work² says: "S. Lublinski has rightly seen that the theory of Drews can only be saved if Paul is struck out of history. Therefore Paul = Peter = Jesus = Barnabas, and finally, as it is to be expected, becomes a sun-god. Proof: His imprisonment in Philippi, the symbol for the land of the dead, and his journey to Rome which was from east to west. When will the historian of religion appear, who will declare Columbus a sun-god! It is high time, for he also voyaged from east to west and temporarily also was in prison. And as Paul becomes a sun-god, so Lydia, the purple-seller, becomes Mary-Isis, 'that mythical female being, whom we have already met so often.' Peter is a double of Christ, and his mother-in-law a double of Mary as are also his mother and wife. Not exactly to the taste of everybody!"

By the way, the denial of the historicity of Paul and Peter is nothing new. Bruno Bauer denied it seventy years ago. Only here, figuratively speaking, the sun, or at least the most important part of it, went from west to east. For "to Bauer Christianity is essentially stoicism in a Jewish metamorphosis. Only the skeleton of Christianity came from the east, from Judaism, its spirit from the west."³

¹ *Protestantenblatt*, No. 50, 1913, Berlin.

² *Der urchristliche Erdkreis und sein Mythos*, Vol. I. *Das werdende Dogma vom Leben Jesu*, Vol. II. E. Diederichs, Jena.

³ Herzog and Plitt, *Theol. Realencyklopädie*.

In this denial of the historicity of Paul lies the hidden confession that in spite of his purely dogmatic and polemical writings, because these writings were the earliest of the New Testament and were written only about twenty-five years after the death of Jesus,⁴ and in consequence of the little accidental scraps of historical notices occurring in these writings, Paul is a weighty witness for the historicity of Jesus and of a religious society which had already formed itself about his name before Paul persecuted it. Such scraps are the frequent mention of the crucifixion of Jesus; his killing "by the Jews" as they had done to "their prophets" (1 Thess. ii. 14-15); the last supper with the disciples; the earliest account of different appearances of Jesus after his death; the mention of "the pillars" of the church at Jerusalem, Peter, John and James "the brother of the Lord"; that "of the brothers of the Lord" playing a rôle as missionaries (1 Cor. ix. 5); the influence of Peter even outside of Palestine in Corinth; the collections made in the Gentile churches for the church in Jerusalem which would indicate that this city was the center from which Christianity started; the repeated visits of Paul to Jerusalem; his fifteen days' stay with Peter and James (Gal. i. 18-19) after his conversion; his former persecution of the Palestinian church; his flight from Damascus under King Aretas, a very important scrap for fixing the early existence of a pre-Pauline church in Palestine and on its borders.

In the denial of Paul's historicity lies also the hidden confession that Jesus may have played a more important part than we think in causing the beginning of a new religious society, but of this I will not speak at present. I will only mention one thing. The strong eschatological thought that the end is soon to come, which occurs in the Pauline letters, must also stand in connection with the ideas Jesus uttered on this subject as recorded in the gospels, and which the early pre-Pauline Christian community must have shared.

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The following which I translate from R. Reitzenstein, a philologist but not a theologian, may be of interest to some in connection with my brief discussion: "Does any one hold philologists to be so irreligious and childlike as to impute to them the idea that the first church, or even only Paul, when introducing or interpreting the sacraments, proposed to transfer a piece of Egyptian

⁴The Pauline epistles with the exception of the pastorals are here meant. Even advanced critics now accept Ephesians and 2 Thessalonians as Pauline.

or any other cult over into Judaism simply by a short cut in order to make it more attractive thereby? Or that the disciples or Paul, when they became persuaded of the resurrection and divinity of their master, thought: 'It is the old nature-god Osiris or Attis; let us now combine this religion with our ancestral faith'? A religious personality can not borrow in that way at all; it always creates in an individual way, and a religious conception which conquers the world must in the last sense be new. But we must not deduce from this, that such a religious personality has remained wholly uninfluenced by the surrounding world in language, conception and custom, and that every similarity must be based on accident. Like all intellectual history, religious history too must proceed from personality, and there is always a double explanation to account for it, one coming from the personality itself and one from the surrounding world. But it is more certainly true in religious history than elsewhere, that nothing can be effective which does not find preparation beforehand, and that nothing exerts a vivifying influence which has not become essentially new."

To these words of Reitzenstein I might add the following of interest as being perhaps a corroboration of his view. Hans Böhlig⁵ contends that the Pauline designation of Jesus as "Lord" (Greek: *Kyrios*) is of Syrian-Tarsan origin, and that neither the Jewish writings of those days use it for the Messiah, nor Matthew or Mark as a metaphysical attribute of Christ, but only as a form of polite address, not in the sense of religious veneration; that the writings of Luke (he himself and his style being also of Greek-Syrian culture) first use this word to denote the metaphysical nature of Jesus; that the name *kyrios* was an old designation for the active deity and is to be found thus on coins and monuments of Tarsus, while writers of a fine sense like Dion of Prusa sharply distinguish between *kyrios* and *despotes* though both mean "Lord." But *kyrios* is used only for designating the sphere of the power of a divinity, while *despotes* is used of the power of a human master in distinction from the slave. Thus Paul places in contrast to "the many gods and many lords," "the one God, the father, and the one Lord, Jesus Christ" (1. Cor. viii. 5-6).

⁵ In *Die Geisteskultur von Tarsos im augusteischen Zeitalter* (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1913).