

PAUL AND JESUS

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Paul and Jesus by Johannes Weiss

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THE subject before us is by no means new, though its religious interest is ever fresh and has been revived recently and vigorously by the publication of Wrede's "Paulus."* In opposition to this book a series of publications have appeared within the last few years; of these I need mention for consideration only the works of Kölbinger, Kaftan, and Jülicher.† In all of these we may trace more or less clearly the profound emotion which must have been aroused in every sensitive reader by Wrede's radical and uncompromising statements. Whether we are inclined or not to accept his fundamental ideas, the effect produced by his mode of exposition can only be described as staggering. We must, at any rate, submit to this impression, and attempt at least conditionally to adopt Wrede's standpoint, if we wish to appreciate the serious nature of the problem. In order to

* *Religionsgeschichtliche Volksbücher*, I, 5, 6. Tübingen, 1905.

† P. Kölbinger, "The Spiritual Influence of the Man Jesus upon Paul." Göttingen, 1906. J. Kaftan, "Jesus and Paul": a friendly polemic directed against the volumes by D. Bousset and D. Wrede in the *Religionsgeschichtliche Volksbücher*. Tübingen, 1906. A. Jülicher, "Paul and Jesus," *Religionsgeschichtliche Volksbücher*, I, 14. Tübingen, 1907.

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attain this mental attitude in the interest of the arguments we shall propose, we must now recall some of his main principles.

Wrede's object is to overthrow the view predominant in modern theology, that Paul loyally and consistently expounded and developed the theology of Jesus.

"Unless these two figures are to be deprived of all historical reality, it is obvious that the title 'Jesus' disciple' is hardly applicable to Paul, if it is intended to express his historical relationship to Jesus. He is essentially, in comparison with Jesus, *a new phenomenon, as new as is possible, in view of the wide standpoint common to both.* He is far more widely removed from Jesus than Jesus Himself is removed from the noblest forms of Jewish piety. Nor is any advantage gained by the assertion that Paul's teaching could not exactly coincide with that of Jesus, seeing that he could look back upon the life and personality of Jesus. We need not further labour the point that *the picture of Jesus' life and work did not determine the character of the Pauline theology.* . . . Undoubtedly Paul regarded himself as a disciple and apostle of Jesus, and was proud of the fact: he was not himself conscious that he was an innovator. But in view of the facts, his personal opinion is no proof that he merely continued Jesus' work and 'understood' Jesus; indeed, it was not the historical Jesus Whose disciple and servant he professed

WREDE'S THEORY

to be, but Another (namely, the heavenly Christ)."

Wrede compares the teaching of Paul and Christ as follows: "The teaching of Jesus is directed entirely to the individual personality. Man is to submit his soul to God and to God's will wholly and without reserve. Hence his preaching is for the most part imperative in character, if not in form.

"The central point for Paul is a divine and supernatural action manifested as a historical fact, or a complex of divine actions which open to mankind a salvation prepared for man. He who believes these divine acts—the incarnation, death, and resurrection of a divine being—can obtain salvation.

"This view is the essential point of Paul's religion, and is the solid framework without which his belief would collapse incontinently; was it a continuation or a further development of Jesus' gospel? Where, in this theory, can we find the 'gospel' which Paul is said to have 'understood.' The point which was everything to Paul was nothing to Jesus."

1. The three publications above mentioned proceed upon individual lines in their attempts to confute Wrede: they are, however, akin, in so far as they attempt to weaken his arguments by representing them as one-sided and exaggerated. They are particularly concerned to show that the preaching of Jesus and that of His apostle were

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far more closely related and have much more in common than Wrede will admit ; while naturally recognising that a considerable difference exists, they assert that unanimity upon the central point is paramount. These efforts to secure a compromise have emphasised many valuable points, but I am inclined to doubt their power to efface the wide and deep impression made by Wrede's treatise. The idea probably persists in many quarters, that while Wrede has been defeated upon matters of detail, his main position remains unshaken. This failure is partly due to the fact that the wide range and the serious nature of Wrede's fundamental idea have been inadequately appreciated : if that idea is not always clearly stated in his argument, its presence may be invariably felt.

It must be admitted that upon one point at least Paul's faith differed fundamentally from the religion of Jesus : to Paul Jesus is an object not only of belief, but also of *religious veneration*. A man who asks for " grace and peace," not only " from God our Father," but also " from our Lord Jesus Christ," must regard Christ as co-equal with God : however carefully the formulæ distinguishing His unique nature from that of God may be worded, the practical faith of Paul and his congregations expects no less from Christ than from God—guidance, help, and blessing. Their prayers as well as their praises are offered

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to Him. As compared with the preaching of Jesus, this practice is a complete innovation. I cannot understand how Kaftan can assert that there is a direct line of connection between the gospel proclaimed by Jesus and the early Christian teaching. Granted that Jesus was conscious of His mission as the Messiah, and I should be the last to dispute the fact, granted that He was firmly convinced of His resurrection and elevation to Messianic supremacy, which again I do not deny, the only conclusion to be drawn is that the same ideas are to be found in the preaching of Jesus and of Paul. But can it truly be said that Jesus expected to become the object of divine *reverence* and prayer and of formal worship, even in respect of His future Messianic position? Did He feel that He was not merely the leader of men to salvation, but Himself a part of that salvation? Did He feel that He was not so much the head and the guide of His followers as the future sharer of the throne of God with no less divine a claim to honour and adoration? Is the Christology of Paul a direct continuation of Christ's "consciousness of His Messianic mission"? Here there appears to my mind a discrepancy which no theological device can bridge. I observe in particular a change of front which implies a decisive divergence. In the synoptic Gospels, and to some extent in St. John, I observe the countenance of Jesus ever uplifted to the Father,