

either by letter or embassy or both, "to vote him a god." Aelian expressly speaks of it as issued to all the Greeks in general, including, therefore, the Athenians.

That Alexander never struck his own portrait on coins may be easily allowed; but neither this, nor such variety in his cult as can be traced back to his own lifetime, can be held to disprove his own initiative. After-events may sway our judgment overmuch, making us forget the time which a new idea or institution requires to develop itself to the full. Alexander, we know, was only at the beginning of his schemes when he was struck down. It is only after his death that system is introduced into hellenistic king-worship.

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ST. PAUL AND THE MYSTERY-RELIGIONS.

IX. CONCLUSIONS.

IN our former articles we attempted to test at various points the assumption that Christianity was for St. Paul a Mystery-Religion, and that many of his religious conceptions were closely allied to the Mystery-cults of Paganism. It may be well in this closing section of our inquiry to gather up and emphasise the more important conclusions at which we have arrived, supplementing them in one or two directions.

The relation of the Mystery-Religions to Paul's environment requires no discussion. Ample evidence has been adduced to show that throughout the sphere of his missionary operations he would be in touch with many who had been initiated into Pagan Mysteries, and had finally entered the Christian Church. We cannot picture him engrossed

in the cure of souls without recognising that he must have gained a deep insight into the earlier spiritual aspirations of his converts and the manner in which they had sought to satisfy them. Even apart from eager inquirers, a missionary so zealous and daring would often find himself confronted by men and women who still clung to their mystic ritual and all the hopes it had kindled. It was inevitable, therefore, that he should become familiar, at least from the outside, with religious ideas current in these influential cults. Sometimes, as, e.g., in the case of *γνώσις* and *δόξα*, these ideas found remarkably close parallels in the thought of the Old Testament. So he would be impressed by their capacity for holding a genuinely spiritual content, and would use them in circumstances in which their earlier history would tend to make them all the more effective. Certain important terms like *τέλειος*, *πνευματικός*, *σωτηρία*, etc., were in the air. They meant one thing, no doubt, for a Christian, and quite another for a Pagan. Yet their fundamental significance for both had elements of affinity, sufficient to link together the respective usages. The essentially religious meaning, for example, of *πνεῦμα* and *νοῦς* in documents of Hellenistic Mystery-Religion provided a common standing-ground for Paul and many of his readers. What holds of separate terms may occasionally be affirmed regarding groups of ideas. Thus the combination of *συμμορφιζόμενος* with *γνώσειν* in Philippians iii. 10 seems to suggest a background for the Apostle's conception akin to the Mystery-doctrine of transformation by the vision of God. But it has also become clear that we dare not make far-reaching inferences from terminology as to the assimilation by Paul of mystery-ideas. For we were able to show that the central conceptions of the Mystery-Religions belong to a different atmosphere from that in which the Apostle habitually moves. There is no principle determining their relations,

which in any sense corresponds to the Cross of Christ in the realm of Paul's thought and experience.

It is vain, moreover, to endeavour to find points of contact between Paul and the Mystery-cults on the side of ritual. Unquestionably he was too sensitive to the practical demands of the human soul to disparage the simple rites which he found existing in the nascent Church. Indeed, he was aware that the celebration of the Lord's Supper had its origin in the Master's farewell meal with His disciples. He was ready to recognise the high spiritual impulses which were quickened in the solemn surroundings of the Christian sacraments. He knew that these actions, with lowly, believing hearts behind them, became real channels for the Divine grace. But the essential characteristic of his religious attitude was detachment from ceremonial. It is no wonder that interpreters like Heitmüller and Weinel, who attribute a magical view of the sacraments to Paul, are concerned to point out that his sacramentalism is a sort of erratic boulder in his system viewed in its entirety. It would be foolish to postulate for Paul a rigid logic in the concatenation of his thought. But his thinking is in no sense atomistic. And the vital centre of the organism lies in his conception of faith. Independent as are the gracious movements of a God almighty and all-loving, they demand for their effectiveness the receptivity of the human soul. That is one aspect of faith for Paul. And the other is the personal appeal to God of the surrendered life. A heart to welcome, and a will to claim the supreme Divine gifts, and behind both, as their explanation, the emotion of a love created by the unspeakable love of Christ. Every living idea in Paul is irradiated by his faith, whether its form be juristic or theological or sacramental. To assign a position of any importance in the complex of his ideas to an element for which faith does not count, is to ignore the indissoluble con-

nexion between his thought and his religious experience. The centrality of faith, therefore, comes to be a criterion for every attempt at reconstructing Paul's spiritual platform. And here also we discover that there is no corresponding feature in the frame-work of the Mystery-Religions.

Nevertheless, it is wholly justifiable to speak of the Mysticism of Paul. How is the term, in his case, to be interpreted? To many natures everything that savours of mystical experience is not only alien but offensive. They regard it as a purely pathological condition, the result of auto-suggestion. Or they view it as an unethical dissociation of personality from the salutary claims of normal life, with the aim of absorption in an impersonal Absolute. It is unquestionable that mystics have often laid stress on more or less morbid self-mortification as the pathway to their goal, and that the *via negativa*, so dear to many of them, has resulted in a conception of God which really obliterates all that we mean by character. But it is equally certain that in numerous instances those who have yearned for and professed to attain real contact with the Divine have exercised a moral power achieving astonishing results in the sphere of practical life. Mysticism, in effect, is a term which covers a manifold area of experience. It is extremely difficult, for example, in the history of Christianity, to distinguish it from those conditions of overpowering faith, involving profound emotion, which belong to the soul that has "counted all things as loss" for Christ. Indeed, Pfeleiderer can scarcely be said to exaggerate when he asserts that "the mystical element in Paulinism depends immediately and exclusively on Paul's notion of faith."¹ Let us examine this mystical element.

The phenomena associated with Mysticism, and appearing in every age and in all manner of environments, seem

¹ *Paulinism* (E. Trans.), vol. i., p. 199.

usually to presuppose a special type of temperament. In our second article we referred to the case of the prophet Ezekiel as a nature peculiarly sensitive to ecstatic or trance conditions, in which he received the Divine message. Yet it is plain that his "peculiar psycho-physical constitution" in no way detracted from the vigour of his ethical teaching. We have hints that the temperament of Paul was of a similar kind in the allusions he makes again and again to revelations (*ἀποκαλύψεις*) and visions (*ὄπτασιαι*) which came to him, and especially in the remarkable description of an ecstatic experience which appears in 2 Corinthians xii. 1 ff. But no reader of the Epistles could ever form the impression that these occurrences, associated with special psycho-physical conditions, constitute for the Apostle a predominant feature of his religious life. We have ample evidence as to the attitude he assumes towards abnormal workings of the Divine Spirit. In his famous discussion of spiritual *χαρίσματα* in 1 Corinthians xii.-xiv., he makes no secret of his desire to curb all manifestations of intense spiritual emotion which are not calculated to edify the Christian community. And while he admits that such phenomena may spring from a real contact with Divine influence, he gives them no place in his impressive enumeration of the fruits of the Spirit. The distinguishing characteristic of these is their ethical quality. That is in full accord with one of Paul's most splendid achievements in the life of the Early Church, the transformation of the conception of the Spirit as a fitful energy, accompanied by extraordinary manifestations, into that of an abiding, inspiring power which controls conduct in the interest of love. His own ecstatic experiences must have been regulated by the same cautions. For this would be certainly possible. The testimony of the great Christian mystics warns us against confounding ecstasy with hysteria. They recognise, indeed, that there is often

a justification for such comparison, and declare that ecstasies must be tested. The test consists "not in its outward sign, but in its inward grace, its after-value."¹ This after-value is due to the high conviction that the soul has been carried into the world of Eternal Reality. All the evidence suggests that for Paul these experiences were not depressing but life-enhancing.

But in touching these more or less abnormal conditions, we are dealing only with the circumference of Paul's religious history. Its centre lies elsewhere. Weinel aptly remarks that the simultaneous origin of what he calls Paul's "Spirit- and Christ-mysticism" can only be explained from his experience on the Damascus road.² This was for the Apostle a real contact with the risen Lord, the Lord as life-giving Spirit. There and then he came to be "in Christ" (2 Cor. v. 17). There and then Christ came to be "in him" (Gal. i. 16). We pointed out in a former article that this language transcends all spatial categories. But while the ultimate fact which it endeavours to express eludes analysis, Paul himself supplies the material for estimating, up to a certain point, the process by which the ineffable relationship is realised. It is not established by any magical method. It is the Divine answer to faith. And the nature of the faith is not left obscure. In the most classical passage on union with Christ to be found in his Epistles, Paul illuminates the matter by a single flash. For he describes the faith which is the nexus in this fellowship as "faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20). Here, obviously, the intellectual element in faith is not emphasised; not even that which is involved in Paul's attitude towards the resurrection. This is a faith which has behind it the force of an all-subduing love. The emotion is the

¹ E. Underhill, *Mysticism*, p. 431.

² *Biblische Theologie d. N. T.*, p. 287.

response to the redeeming love of the Cross, which is the most tremendous moral power with which Paul has ever come in contact.

Thus we can discern that the Mysticism of the Apostle has an inherently ethical quality. This might have been deduced from his conception of the Spirit, as we have briefly exhibited it. And that conception, of course, can never be dissociated from his experience of intimate communion with Christ, as appears from such crucial passages as Romans viii. 9, 10. But we have preferred to keep on the main track of his thought, a track which leads through the hard realities of an earthly life. For Paul relates his supreme experience of fellowship, that which is far more precious to him than abnormal raptures (although he valued these), to the common existence which is his daily lot: "that which I now live in the flesh" (Gal. ii. 20). It is possible to go further in our analysis on the basis of the material presented in the Epistles. We have already emphasised the nature of the content of that supreme experience which lies at the heart of Paul's mysticism.¹ He himself calls it, "being crucified with Christ." It occupies the central place in his exposition of the meaning of the Lord's Supper. There he describes it as "communion with the body and blood of the Lord" (1 Cor. x. 16). And we saw in our last article that, in the light of the explicit statement in 1 Corinthians xi. 26, the phrase could only mean communion with the Lord as crucified. The central implication of the conception is identification with the relation towards sin of the crucified Redeemer and all that that involves, with its correlative of sharing in the victorious life of Christ as risen. Here is a type of mysticism which stands by itself. It has little in common with the notion of absorption in the Deity which links together mystical aspirations in every age and every clime. If there

¹ See Article 6.

is any possession which Paul holds dear, it is that of his individuality. His eager speculations on the "spiritual organism" are sufficient proof. And as regards the Divine factor in the fellowship, he has too keen a sense of the historical personality of the Lord to lose himself in the sea of absolute Being. These are never the categories with which he works. Indeed, we can vividly realise the limits which he sets for his mystical thought and feeling, when we reflect on his attitude towards deification.

We have pointed out the prevalence of this doctrine as the goal of mystical aspiration in Hellenistic religion. Dean Inge clearly shows ¹ that, in the Eastern part of Christendom in the early centuries, owing to the fluid nature of the concept *θεός*, the notion of deification (*θεοποίησις*) was widely current in a somewhat vague sense, often scarcely distinguishable from immortality.² But rash inferences were sure to be drawn, such as that of Methodius that "every believer must, through participation in Christ, be born as a Christ."³ On the lines of such a development the conception of personality was bound to become nebulous, as, e.g., in Eckhart's utterance: "If I am to know God directly, I must become completely He, and He I: so that this He and this I become and are one I."⁴ Paul is careful to avoid language or thought of this type. When he approaches it, as, e.g., in Galatians ii. 20, he expressly guards against possible misunderstanding. Perhaps the reverence born of his unwavering monotheism was a determining factor for his position. In any case, he never permits his aspirations to carry him further than the Divine *εἰκὼν* into which believers are being transformed (e.g., 2 Cor. iii. 18). And it is easy to exagger-

¹ *Christian Mysticism*, p. 356 ff.

² Cf. Rohde, *Psyche*, II. p. 2: "He who among the Greeks says 'immortal,' says 'God.'"

³ Qu. by Inge, *op. cit.*, p. 359.

⁴ See E. Underhill, *Mysticism*, p. 502.

ate the significance of the language he employs in that connexion. We observed in our fifth article how difficult it was to grasp the precise nature of Paul's conception of the "transformation" (*μεταμορφοῦσθαι*). The only assertion which could be made with confidence was that we must guard against identifying it with the magical transmutation of essence central for the Mystery-Religions, as Paul's idea of the *πνεῦμα*, the chief factor in the transformation, is essentially moral.

A wholly arbitrary emphasis has been laid by Schweitzer on the eschatological implicates of Paul's conception of union with Christ. He rightly contrasts that conception with the notion of the Mystery-Religions, that the living man, by means of gnosis and the vision of God, receives the Divine essence into his being. But he rushes to the other extreme in holding that Paul attributes the experience of transformation to what he calls "a world-process." "As soon as the individual by means of faith and baptism enters into this new cosmic event (*Geschehen*), he is immediately renewed and receives Spirit, ecstasy, gnosis, and all that accompanies them." ¹ We get some light upon the meaning of this extraordinary condition in connexion with Paul's statement as to "dying with Christ." Schweitzer criticises Reitzenstein for holding, as every unbiassed exegete of Paulinism must hold, that the Apostle thinks here of a deliberate identification of himself with the death of Christ, which involves the breaking off of relations with sin and the crucifying of the natural man. Instead, we are told that Paul has by no means in view an act which is carried out by the believer. His conception rather is that "at the moment when the individual receives baptism, the process of the dying and rising again of Christ, without the believer's co-operation, without any exercise of will on his part, with-

¹ *Geschichte d. Paulin. Forschung*, p. 175.

out any reflection of his, starts working in him like machinery which is set in motion by pressing a spring." ¹ This grotesque misconception of Paul's religious standpoint is an arresting instance of the results of "consistent eschatology," and warns us against approaching the Epistles with a ready-made framework into which their thought has to be forced. Let us admit without hesitation that Paul keeps his eyes fixed on the glorious consummation of the future. But let us no less carefully recognise that for that realm he has no clear-cut scheme of things. Such utterances as Philippians i. 23 : "having the desire to depart and to be with Christ," remind us that his eschatological forecasts were as flexible as our own. And it is only by ignoring many of the cardinal elements in his outlook that we can find the clue to his mysticism in those magical and mechanical processes which Schweitzer associates with the transference from the present to the coming Aeon. How far the Apostle is removed from the notion of a salvation which works automatically, appears from such statements as Philippians iii. 11 : "if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained, or am already perfect : but I press on if so be that I may lay hold on that for which also I was laid hold on by Christ Jesus" ; and 1 Corinthians ix. 27 : "I beat my body black and blue, and bring it into bondage, lest by any means, after having preached to others, I myself should be rejected." It would take a bold interpreter to assert in the light of these and many similar passages that in Paul's view there was no co-operation of the believer, no exercise of will on his part in the matter of participating in the benefits of Christ's death and resurrection, but only an external, supernatural machinery set a-going by the rite of baptism.

The central ideas of Pauline eschatology are essentially

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 176.

religious. Take, for our purpose, those which are most intimately linked to his experience of mystical union with Christ, namely, life and salvation. In Romans vi. 4-6 Paul deliberately interprets the "newness of life," which has been reached by communion with Christ, realised with peculiar impressiveness in the solemnity of baptism, as the norm for daily living (*ἵνα . . . ἐν καινότητι ζωῆς περιπατήσωμεν*), and explains it as "no longer serving sin." Again, in Romans viii. 6, he describes "the mind of the flesh" (i.e. the earthly nature as insensible to God) as death, while "the mind of the Spirit is life and peace." Without question the terms "death" and "life" have direct eschatological bearings. But their content is in no sense exclusively eschatological. Paul invariably regards "life" as a present possession of the believer. He would not, however, affirm that originally he possessed a natural life, but that when he surrendered himself to Christ he received a spiritual. The new life is a renewal of the old from its very foundations. It embraces the physical (to use our distinctions) as well as the ethical and religious. Its only contrast lies in death. Death for the Apostle means the ruin of the whole personality. Life in Christ is something larger than existence and means the triumphant continuance of personality beyond the barriers of earth and time, in conformity with the nature of the glorified Lord, who is the image of the invisible God. The same considerations apply to Paul's conception of salvation, which is really "life" regarded from a special point of view. It is needless to cite passages which disclose the eschatological colour of *σωτηρία*. The fact that it occurs most frequently in the phrase *εἰς σωτηρίαν*, where it is a goal to be reached, is sufficient evidence. But Paul has too keen an interest in the demands of daily life to defer the reality of salvation to a future crisis. Like eager Christians of every period he delights to think of that consummation

in which the hampering conditions of material existence shall be surmounted. It is absurd to estimate as a pessimistic aberration his passionate cry : " Who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? " Has any yearning been more constantly echoed throughout the ages ? But no one was ever more conscious of the reality of salvation as an existing fact of experience. " God was pleased," he declares, " through the foolishness of the thing preached to save them that believe " (1 Cor. 1. 21) : " There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus " (Rom. viii. 1).

Our investigation has reached its limit. If it has accomplished anything, it has simply demonstrated afresh that in St. Paul we are confronted, not with one of those natures which is content to be the medium of the spiritual forces of its environment, but with a personality which has been shaped once for all in the throes of a tremendous crisis, and henceforward transforms every influence to which it is sensitive with the freedom born of a triumphant faith.

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