

TIMO ESKOLA

Theodicy
and Predestination
in Pauline Soteriology

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe*

100

Mohr Siebeck

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Herausgegeben von
Martin Hengel und Otfried Hofius

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To Martin Hengel and Peter Stuhlmacher

Preface

Ever since 1992, after completing my doctoral dissertation on Pauline Christology, I have had the opportunity to investigate Paul's soteriology and the theology of Second Temple Judaism in my capacity as a New Testament scholar and lecturer at the Theological Institute of Finland (Helsinki). During my research the problem of theodicy constantly recurred in the texts under investigation. This led me to make a closer assessment of Paul's theology of predestination, which also appeared to be one of the areas of his teaching which had received little attention. As my research proceeded, the texts began to lead me towards surprising conclusions. They were rather different from those commonly drawn in the context of the popular "new perspective" on Paul and the question of "Paul and Palestinian Judaism". For this reason the present work suggests some new solutions to the problems concerning the relation of Paul to Second Temple Judaism – as well as the problem of the fundamental structure of Paul's soteriology.

The research was made possible by the research project of the Institute, for which I am truly grateful. I am especially indebted to my colleague, Rev. Eero Junkkaala, General Secretary of the Theological Institute, who has inspired and encouraged me and taught me much of what I know of the history and archaeology of Israel. My thanks also go to the staff of the Institute, our librarians Olavi Komu and Erkki Hanhikorpi, who have been of invaluable assistance in acquiring relevant literature, as well as to our secretary, Mrs. Kirsi Sell, who has taken care of all practical everyday matters.

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This is furthermore a fitting place to thank my lovely wife Tiina and our daughters Eeva and Elisa for their compassion and care during these years of study. Thank you for all this.

Finally, I wish to express my sincere thanks to Professors Martin Hengel and Otfried Hofius of Tübingen for their kind acceptance of my study for publication in this distinguished series, as well as the editorial staff of J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) for their highly professional assistance in preparing the manuscript for publication.

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Unless otherwise indicated, biblical quotations in English are taken from the New Revised Standard Version.

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Abbreviations

1. Periodicals, Series, Reference Works

AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
ALGHJ	Arbeiten zur Literatur und Geschichte des hellenistischen Judentums
AncB	Anchor Bible
ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary
AGSU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Spätjudentums und Urchristentums
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
ANFa	Ante-Nicene Fathers
ASOR	American Schools of Oriental Research
ATD	Altes Testament Deutsch
AThANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
AThD	Acta Theologica Danica
AzTh	Arbeiten zur Theologie
BA	Biblical Archaeologist
BBB	Bonner Biblische Beiträge
BBR	Bulletin for Biblical Research
BDR	Blass/Debrunner/Rehkopf, Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch
BETHL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BEvTh	Beiträge zur Evangelischen Theologie
Bib	Biblica
BK	Biblischer Kommentar
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar. Altes Testament
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
BZ	Biblische Zeitschrift
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CB	Coniectanea Biblica
CB.NT	Coniectanea Biblica. New Testament Series
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CCWJWCW	Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World 200 BC to AD 200
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert (of Jordan)
EETH	Einführung in die evangelische Theologie
EHS.T	Europäische Hochschulschriften. Reihe 23, Theologie
EJ	Encyclopedia Judaica
EJTh	European Journal of Theology
EKK	Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar

EQ	Evangelical Quarterly
EvTh	Evangelische Theologie
EWNT	Exegetisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, ed. H. Balz, G. Schneider
ExpT	Expository Times
FzB	Forschung zur Bibel
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte
GTA	Göttinger Theologische Arbeiten
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HR	History of Religions
HThK	Herders Theologischer Kommentar
HTR	Harvard Theological Review
ICC	International Critical Commentary
Interp.	Interpretation
IVP	InterVarsity Press
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JJS	Journal of Jewish Studies
JR	Journal of Religion
JSJ	Journal for the Study of Judaism
JSNT	Journal for the Study of the New Testament
JSNTS	Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JSOTS	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series
JThS	Journal of Theological Studies
Jud	Judaica
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
KEK	Kritisch-Exegetischer Kommentar
KuD	Kerygma und Dogma
LCC	Library of Christian classics
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
MNTC	Moffatt New Testament commentary
MS	Monograph Series
MSSNTS	Monograph Series. Society for New Testament Studies
NF	Neue Folge
NICNT	New international commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NT	Novum Testamentum (=NovT)
NTA	Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen
NTD	Neues Testament Deutsch

XIV

Abbreviations

NTS	New Testament Studies
NT.S	Novum Testamentum. Supplements
OTL	Old Testament library
PVTG	Pseudepigrapha veteris testamenti Graece
RB	Revue biblique
RGG	Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart
RQ	Revue de Qumran
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBL.DS	SBL Dissertation Series
SBLMS	SBL Monograph Series
SBL.SBS	SBL Sources for Biblical Study
SBL.SP	SBL Seminar Papers
SBM	Stuttgarter Biblische Monographien
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SESJ	Suomen eksegeettisen seuran julkaisuja
SEÅ	Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
SJT	Scottish Journal of Theology
SMBen.BE	Serie monografica di 'Benedictina'. Sezione biblico-ecumenica
SNT	Schriften des Neuen Testaments
SNTS	Society for New Testament Studies
SSN	Studia semitica Neerlandica
StTDJ	Studies on the texts of the desert of Judah
StTh	Studia theologica (Lund)
StUNT	Studien zur Umwelt der Neuen Testaments
SUTS	Suomalainen Uuden testamentin selitys
SVT	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
SVTP	Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha
TAik	Teologinen Aikakauskirja
TANZ	Texte und Arbeiten zum neutestamentlichen Zeitalter
TBLNT	Theologisches Begriffslexikon zum Neuen Testament
TEH	Theologische Existenz heute
THAT	Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament
ThBeitr	Theologische Beiträge
ThLZ	Theologische Literaturzeitung
ThR	Theologische Rundschau
ThSt	Theological Studies
ThW	Theologische Wissenschaft
ThWAT	Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament
ThWNT	Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament
ThZ	Theologische Zeitschrift
TRE	Theologische Realenzyklopädie
TPI	Trinity Press International
TS	Theological studies

TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum
TToday	Theology Today (=ThTo)
TyndB	Tyndale Bulletin
USF	University of South Florida
UTB	Uni-Taschenbücher
VT	Vetus Testamentum
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WTJ	Westminster theological journal
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAW	Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
ZNW	Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
ZThK	Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche

2. *Technical and Other Abbreviations*

AV	Authorized Version
cf.	confer
col.	columna
ed(s).	editor(s)
ET	English Translation
f	fragment
FS	Festschrift (Studies in Honour of, etc.)
H	Hebrew text of Sirach
KJV	King James Version
LXX	Septuagint
m	Mishnah tractate
MS(S)	manuscript(s)
MT	Masoretic text
n	footnote
n.d.	no date
NEB	New English Bible
NIV	New International Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NT	New Testament
o.c.	opus citatum
OT	Old Testament
RSV	Revised Standard Version
v(v)	verse(s)
vol.	volume

Introduction

Paul's theology is a real challenge to scholars. His uniqueness is evident even from the fact that scholars have been completely unable to reach a consensus concerning the nature of his teaching or the structure of his soteriology. The direction of interpretation has changed over and over again. One scholar considers Paul a mystic and another sees him as a rationalistic Christian Pharisee. As regards soteriology, there has been a lengthy battle between those who define his soteriology as participationist eschatology and those who emphasize a juridical theology of justification. In such a situation it is more than interesting to make an attempt at finding a new approach and a new way of interpretation.

§ 1 Theodicy and Predestination in New Testament Exegesis

1.1. Occasion and purpose of the study

At the key point of the first chapter of Romans Paul introduces the heart of his message concerning the election and salvation which God has prepared for human beings. The gospel is the power of God, because in the gospel the righteousness of God is disclosed to this world, and it alone can bring salvation to those who believe (Rom. 1:16-17). Paul's description of the gospel is good predestinarian language. It contains all the elements needed: a criterion for eschatological salvation and a criterion for eternal damnation.

The aspect of predestination has not aroused great interest among scholars, however. Paul's soteriology has been studied from quite another perspective and with different premises. Thus there is room for a fresh start, especially as the texts themselves bring out the dynamics of predestinarian theology. This is true throughout Paul's letters, and especially as concerns Romans. In the history of New Testament scholarship this theme is not unknown, however.¹ For example, during the time of the Reformation it was considered one of the

¹ For some modern treatments of the subject see e.g. B. Mayer, *Unter Gottes Heilsratschluss. Prädestinationsaussagen bei Paulus*; and G. Röhser, *Prädestination und Verstockung. Untersuchungen zur frühjüdischen, paulinischen und johanneischen Theologie*. Questions concerning the Protestant tradition of interpretation have been discussed, for example, in P.K. Jewett, *Election and Predestination*.

most important features of Pauline (!) theology, and it greatly influenced the formulation of Protestant soteriology.

Due to the Protestant tradition this subject is also rather loaded with dogmatic presuppositions and hermeneutical premises. Ever since Calvin, and actually even since Augustine earlier, the idea of double predestination has had considerable influence on the interpretation of this theme in general, and the interpretation of Paul's letters in particular. The basic belief was that God has foreordained and elected some individuals to salvation, and left some unelected or even foreordained them to damnation.

Such a teaching can be found in the writings of Calvin:²

"We call predestination God's eternal decree, by which he compacted with himself what he willed to become of each man. For all are not created in equal condition; rather, eternal life is foreordained for some, eternal damnation for others. Therefore, as any man has been created to one or the other of these ends, we speak of him as predestined to life or to death."

Since this kind of teaching was based on the interpretation of certain passages in the letters of Paul, and especially Romans, Calvin's views have remained influential in Pauline studies and in commentaries on Romans. No study of the subject can be made without an analysis of and comment on this tradition.

An exegetical analysis of Paul's theology of predestination must not be dependent on dogmatics, however. We must concentrate on the texts themselves and further analyze Paul's tradition-historical background in Judaism. This leads us to undertake an investigation of the theology of predestination in Second Temple Jewish literature. This is the proper religious and theological context of Paul's teaching. Through the analysis we are able to pay attention to the problems and tensions between Paul and his Jewish contemporaries.

As the study concerns the theological dynamics of Jewish teaching during the Second Temple period, we are led to investigate the problem of theodicy. This is the context in which the theology of predestination was formulated in the time of Paul himself.

Such a context leads us to the primary task of this study. *In this work we shall investigate the relation between Jewish predestinarian theology and Paul's soteriology.* As the former originated in the context of the problem of theodicy, we must assess the relevance of this question in the theology of Paul, too.

There are several points of contact between Jewish predestinarian theology and the letters of Paul. Both write about the coming judgment of God. The election of God is a key subject as regards the anticipation of the end. And apocalyptic

² Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.21.5. See also McGrath, *Theology*, 451f.

eschatology naturally focusses its proclamation on the message of eternal salvation.

The investigation of Jewish theology can naturally be no more than a survey, because the emphasis is on the analysis of Paul's teaching. The purpose of chapter 3 is to penetrate to the question, how general and common the problem of theodicy was in the Second Temple period. This investigation also leads us to present criticism of the theory of covenantal nomism elaborated by E.P. Sanders, which is a leading paradigm in the study of this subject.

As regards the theology of Paul, we shall investigate especially the question how predestinarian themes occur in his soteriology (part II). This also comprises analyses of Pauline anthropology and the occurrence of the problem of theodicy itself. On the basis of these foundational subjects we can then in part III assess how Paul's predestinarian theology affected his conceptions of the status of the law and the nature of justification. In the last part (IV) of the book we shall assess and outline the overall picture of Paul's soteriology and discuss the value of the results in relation to other main interpretations of Paul's soteriology.

1.2. How to define predestination: on methodology

The word "predestination" refers to some kind of decree, but this does not yet help us to define the concept itself. When we pay attention to the meaning of the word we immediately encounter a great number of questions. What has been decreed and how did it happen? Is the decree unconditional or not? What is the goal of the one who has been predestined? What is the relation of man's will to the decree of God?

In academic scholarship there have been several attempts to provide a definition and all of them have both advantages and faults.

1. Definition according to the terminology. One could naturally investigate predestinarian theology by analysing the words which denote divine foreordination. In Greek the most important of these words is *προορίζω*, which occurs in several interesting contexts, for example in Romans 8. The same semantic field contains words such as *πρόθεσις* (< *προτίθημι*). It has a meaning which concerns God's plan and Paul uses it when speaking of God's election (Rom. 9:11). Words denoting election belong to the same group. This concerns, for example, the word *ἐκλογή*.³

The investigation of such words is not only possible but necessary. This is an essential element of the study, even though we are dealing with quite a

³ A definition based on relevant terminology is typical of dictionary articles. For an example, see Dinkler, *RGG* 5 (1986) 481-483. He does not over-simplify this approach, however, but also takes the tradition history into account.

simple point of departure. One of the problems in this line of study is, however, that we have few occurrences of relevant words in the New Testament. Thus it is not easy to construct a consistent interpretation merely on that basis.

The semantic aspect has its dangers, too, and we must beware of one-sidedness here. The use of Latin carries a danger, since the word *praedestino* has a somewhat deterministic teleological meaning. The verb *destino* relates to ordination and decreeing, and *destinatum* denotes a goal. It is quite natural that predestination is easily interpreted as a deterministic decreeing of a person's destiny.

In the analysis of Second Temple Jewish theology and Paul's teaching we cannot assume beforehand that the concept of predestination must be deterministic. Quite on the contrary, we must investigate the texts as they are and attempt to define the concept of predestination according to the available evidence. In this work we need to take seriously the demands of both modern semantics and contextual theological analysis.

2. *A classical problem of Romans 9-11.* As regards the theology of Paul, the problem of predestination has often been analysed by concentrating on the special section of Romans, i.e. chapters 9-11. This section has sometimes been considered an excursus on the problem of divine election. Thus the answer to the dilemma concerning Paul's theology of predestination has been sought in an analysis of these chapters.⁴

The advantage of this approach is that there is a clearly defined section which is easily subjected to investigation. One cannot neglect this section in any analysis of the problem of predestination. There is a danger, however, as regards the usefulness of this approach. If the section is separated from its context in Romans, it can lead to a one-sided conclusion once again. This is what has happened during the history of research. These chapters have been separated from the other parts of the letter, and they have been considered an independent essay on the subject of divine hardening. Such a treatment should not be welcomed in modern research.

3. *The dogmatic approach: the question of double predestination.* In the Protestant tradition we have had a strong tendency to use the concept of double predestination in the study of Paul's theology. This is primarily due to the influence of Calvinist theology, to which we referred above. In this tradition salvation has been prepared only for the elect, and others will be left unsaved.

⁴ For example, Röhser has studied the theme of predestination by concentrating on these chapters. This is why the problem arising from Romans is for him primarily the problem concerning divine hardening. Röhser, *Prädestination*, 1ff. This question is naturally part of the question concerning the status of Israel in God's plan of salvation, but as regards the theology of predestination in general it is merely a part of the whole subject.

This kind of conception is completely deterministic. The fate of the individual has been foreordained even before he or she was born. During his or her lifetime he or she cannot really alter his or her fate, even though the gospel must be proclaimed to the elect.⁵

It is naturally tempting to make use of a clear concept of predestination in the interpretation of a difficult issue. We must resist this temptation, however, and attempt to find an unprejudiced approach instead. The danger of anachronistic interpretation is too great in the dogmatic assessment. On the contrary, we must attempt to find the basic dynamics of Second Temple Jewish theology and compare them with the teaching of Paul. Jewish theologians were convinced that God would sentence sinners to eternal damnation. This is common knowledge. But the conditions and nature of this kind of predestination are not evidently clear.

4. *Predestination as an election of grace.* There is furthermore a tradition beginning from Augustine where predestination is defined as an *electio gratiae*, God's divine decree of salvation. As regards a dogmatic analysis this is actually not clearly a separate approach from that of the concept of double predestination. Here the emphasis is on grace, however.

It is good to note that predestination can also be evaluated as a question of how God has prepared salvation for human beings. In our investigation of the subject we are here interested in God's election and the realization of that election in this world.⁶ This is not a denial of the critical remark as to whether this conception as such is not similar to the concept of double predestination. If the elect are predestined to salvation, others must be predestined to damnation.

This approach has its advantages, too. One must not forget the aspect of election when the descriptions of judgment seem to be prevalent. It seems to be clear, however, that when the overall picture of Paul's theology of predestination is outlined, it must comprise all possible aspects of the question. Too narrow a description results in a distorted picture and does not resolve the problems of Pauline soteriology.

⁵ The concept of double predestination occurs, for example, in the monographs of Schweitzer, *Mystik*, 102-104; and Sanders, *Paul*, 446f. The greatest problem in this tradition of interpretation is that after a scholar has accepted this approach he no longer questions the premises of the theology of predestination – even though the texts themselves point to a different conception.

⁶ This is the primary aspect on which Mayer concentrated in his monograph, Mayer, *Heilsratschluss*. He concentrated on Pauline passages where God's act of election is perceptible. This approach is good as regards the Christological texts of Paul. Mayer has presented an interesting analysis of them, even though his interpretation of Paul's soteriology in its entirety is rather narrow.

1.3. Predestination in the context of the problem of theodicy

There are some important conclusions which we can draw from previous attempts at defining the concept of predestination. Firstly, we must note that we should beware of an anachronistic approach in the analysis of Second Temple Jewish theology and the teaching of Paul. The contextual analysis itself should bring forth those features which form the basic structure of each concept of predestination.

It is clear that predestination must mean the decreeing of a person's eternal destiny or fate in one way or another. Predestinarian theology treats above all the question of how God sentences sinners to damnation or how he elects the righteous to salvation. This is why the term predestination belongs in the context where terms such as sin, judgment, grace and salvation occur. At this stage we do not need to define the concept more accurately. It is not good to restrict the analysis and lay out too many conditions in advance. An explanation of Paul's theology of predestination must be based on the texts themselves. In the analysis we must be cautious about the dogmatic premises because they can easily lead the explanation away from the intentions of the material studied.

In the analysis we must take the section Rom. 9-11 into account, but the analysis cannot centre solely on this. In the assessment of the theology of predestination we must consider Paul's teaching in its entirety. As regards the other subjects mentioned above, namely the idea of divine hardening and God's election, they must be regarded as important aspects of this study. They too, however, must be assessed in the context of the overall picture which is drawn by contextual tradition-historical analysis and theological construction.

In Jewish theology the problem of theodicy dictates the framework for the theology of predestination. The theme of predestination occurs in texts where the despotic power of ungodly rulers and the sinfulness of Israel are criticized. This point of departure directs the investigation of the subject of predestination. It also brings to the fore two methodological details. We must pay attention to the conception of sin and the respective anthropology of each writer. This helps us to define how they think God will solve the problem of Israel or the problem of the whole of humankind.

The problem of theodicy is actually the problem of sin. For this reason the same problem reaches a climax in the questions concerning the will and omnipotence of God. If sin prevails the omnipotence of God is called into question. If ungodly despots rule, the faithfulness of God is called into question. Thus it is the history of Israel itself which generates the basic problems which demand the solutions given in the theology of predestination.

This is methodically a proper context for the assessment of predestinarian

theology. This definition also outlines the purpose of the investigation as regards the other traditions of interpretation referred to above. There is an evident relation between the problem of theodicy and the theology of predestination, both in Jewish theology and in Paul's soteriology. The aim of this study is to find an answer to the question concerning the basic dynamics of this relation.

§ 2 *Different 'History-of-Religions' Approaches
and the Context of Paul's Soteriology*

The long history of the study of Pauline soteriology is full of significant changes. This is why no proper discussion with earlier research is possible without a thorough overview of that history. One cannot bypass old studies since the views and explanations which were conceived at the beginning of the century have had a surprisingly strong influence, "Wirkungsgeschichte", for a long time. Only when we know these theories can we properly understand modern scholarship and discern its details.

2.1. The traditional 'history-of-religions' approach (W. Bousset, A. Deissmann)

In early Protestant Pauline studies there was a tension between the traditional, systematic approach and that of the emerging study of the history of religions. For a long time the study of Paul's theology had concentrated mostly on his "dogmatics". The analysis of Paul's theology was interested only in details of dogma. Great emphasis was naturally laid on the subject of justification, which at the Reformation had become the centre of theology. According to the prevailing method, theology was believed to be solved when the right "centre" was found.

This traditional view was popular in Germany until the end of the nineteenth century, as is shown in A. Schweitzer's history of Pauline studies. A change in scholarship took place when the school of 'history of religions' presented its own theories about the genealogy of Paul's thinking. New ideas were introduced, especially by R. Reitzenstein in his study of Paul's letters.¹

This new school of the history of religions soon became a rival for the dogmatic tradition. Paul's theology was approached from quite a new direction. Paul was no longer regarded as a systematic theologian, "the first Christian dogmatist", but as a religious thinker and even a meditative mystic. The object of study was Paul's "religion". According to W. Bousset, Paul was the founder of a cultic religion, and H. Weinel, in turn, regarded him as a religious mystic.²

The ideas of the 'history-of-religions' school were built on the foundation laid by F.C. Baur. He had introduced a pattern for the history of the early

¹ See the ET of Schweitzer, *Paul and His Interpreters*. A presentation of Reitzenstein e.g. in Kümmel, *History*, 268-269.

² See Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 104ff. This description of Bousset and Weinel is presented by Beker, who emphasizes that the history-of-religions approach was a reaction against earlier dogmatic study. Beker, *Paul*, 13.

Church. According to Baur, Paul was an opponent of Peter and formed an antithesis to an alleged conservative Palestinian Jewish Christianity.³ According to the history-of-religions school, Paul belonged in the sphere of Hellenistic thinking. This is why his theology and “mysticism” was explained in the context of Hellenistic philosophy and Hellenistic religions.⁴

For Bousset the Hellenistic mystery religions were a key to Paul’s soteriology. In this phase of study the idea of divine election was not considered an important feature in soteriology. According to Bousset, salvation meant merely a mystical union with a divine heavenly being. He thought that the soteriology of Paul, as well as the soteriology of Hellenistic Christian theology in general, was based on a Hellenistic cult of the *kyrios*. The proclamation of Jesus as a heavenly Lord was thus of Greek origin.⁵ And further, when baptism and the Holy Communion were explained against a similar background, the whole outlook of Christianity was that of a mystery religion.⁶

A. Deissmann was also familiar with the interpretation of the history-of-religions school, but he shifted the emphasis from pagan Hellenism to Hellenistic Judaism. He disagreed with his predecessors and did not attempt to explain the structure of Paul’s theology according to Hellenistic mystery religions. He rejected Bousset’s conception and focused on Hellenistic Jewish theology, instead. In this sense he protected the link between Paul and early Jewish Christianity.⁷ The core of Paul’s theology, however, was again found in a concept of mystical relationship with Christ (“being in Christ”) – a feature that is rather easy to understand against Deissmann’s background in the scholarship of the history-of-religions school. In this way he supported and strengthened the idea of the “spiritual” nature of Paul’s soteriology. According to Deissmann, the Hellenistic element in Paul’s thinking can be detected in his way of describing faith as “being in Christ” and Christ himself as “Spirit”.⁸

³ This is also evident in Baur’s concept of Christology, see Baur, *Paulus*, 620ff. The ideas of Baur are presented in general by Kümmel, *History*, 127ff.

⁴ See Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 75ff. For critical assessments of Baur’s scheme, see e.g. Vielhauer, *EvTh* 25 (1965) 24–72, and Balz, *Methodische Probleme*, 23–24.

⁵ Berger has detected the backgrounds of this kind of hermeneutics which concentrates on the idea of a cultic hero. According to his analysis, Bousset has been linked to German Idealism through Fichte and Carlyle. In this Idealism history was seen as a playground of great personalities, “heroes”, who gave form to the great intentions and “ideas” of the transcendent. When this kind of Idealism was connected with the theory of the history of religions it produced the conception of a cultic hero. Berger, *Exegese und Philosophie*, 90–93.

⁶ Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 57, 99. See the analysis of Colpe, *Die religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, 194–195. A critique of Bousset’s influence is given in an article by Hurtado, bearing a similar title, *TS* 40 (1979) 306–317.

⁷ Deissmann, *Paulus*, 100, 101.

⁸ Deissmann, *Paulus*, 107ff. The origins of an interpretation of participatory soteriology

Deissmann, too, was one of those scholars who desired to get rid of the dogmatic “Paulinismus” of German scholarship.⁹ He proposed to replace it with history in the manner of Bousset and other predecessors. Furthermore, Deissmann is important for his assessment of the nature of Paul’s thinking. For Deissmann, Paul was in fact not a real theologian. He was more a man of prayer than a thinker and learned exegete.¹⁰

Dogmatic Pauline scholarship was thus replaced by a history-of-religions paradigm, where Paul was regarded as a mystic concentrating on subjective experience. He was distanced from both systematic thinking and Second Temple Jewish theology. As far as the latter was concerned there were two interpretations, though. The earlier history-of-religions school was interested in the mystery religions of the Hellenistic world. Later the emphasis was on Jewish theology, and apocalyptic literature in particular.

A tension between the dogmatic approach and the history-of-religions scholarship seems to be somewhat over-emphasized. Traditional “Paulinismus” belonged in a sense to the pre-critical period and after the birth of historico-critical study it is only natural to consider its views rather time-bound. It is, however, justified to search for a systematic structure in any writer’s presentation.

Not only dogmatic studies but also nearly all the human sciences are based on such a “common-sense” presupposition. The denial of this starting-point would result in a kind of post-modern eclecticism, according to which it is even theoretically impossible to obtain factual knowledge from cultural objects.¹¹ Furthermore, one should not forget the linguistic level of study.

can thus be detected in the history-of-religions school. I would not make precise claims about the innovator of the interpretation, though, since – as it seems – several scholars presented it simultaneously at the beginning of the century.

⁹ Deissmann, *Paulus*, 2.

¹⁰ “Mit seinem Besten gehört Paulus nicht in die Theologie, sondern in die Religion.” Deissmann, *Paulus*, 4. For the analysis see Beker, *Paul*, 15.

¹¹ In the area of Pauline studies there has been an ongoing debate over the question whether in Paul’s theology it is possible to discern a doctrinal core which would explain his thinking. For the discussion see Beker, *Paul*, 13f. Räisänen has rightly criticized previous efforts at searching for this kind of doctrinal centre in the footsteps of J.P. Gabler, i.e. trying to separate “timeless” dogma from time-bound material. Räisänen, *Beyond*, 3ff. At the same time, however, he unfortunately serves as an example for a view which abandons the task of making a systematic analysis in theological hermeneutics. In the footsteps of W. Wrede (New Testament theology does not differ from a history of religion) – and Deissmann in principle – he treats Paul as an incoherent writer. Räisänen, *Beyond*, 16, 105, 126; Räisänen, *Law*, 201

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