

The Testimony of St. Paul to Christ Viewed in Some of Its Aspects

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The somewhat indefinite title of this work is in keeping with the somewhat undefined character of its contents. What Dr. Dowling gives us is by no means confined to the data that may be collected from the Pauline epistles concerning the so-called "historical Jesus". It is not St. Paul's testimony to Jesus, but St. Paul's testimony to Christ, that the author reviews, and this choice of name in the title strikingly suits the nature of his book. Not merely the Apostle's knowledge of the Gospel-story is inquired into, but equally much his conception of the exalted Christ, and the transcendent place he ascribes to the Savior generally. And even this scarcely covers what the author has brought together under his title. If the word "Christ" must be broadly understood, so likewise the term "testimony". Evidently Dr. Dowling takes "testimony" in a wider sense than "teaching" or even "preaching", for all the Apostle's life and activity, viewed from an apologetic standpoint as a witness to the supernatural character of Christianity, are considered germane to the subject. In anything else but a lecture-course, such an absence of definite boundaries to the subject would be a serious disadvantage, because inevitably it must sometimes leave the reader at a loss about the precise trend or scope of the discussion. In an extended series of lectures, covering, as in the present case, three years, a certain freedom of movement must be allowed. Certainly a great deal of most useful material has here been collected and made more conveniently accessible in the present one volume, than if it had been distributed over three separate books.

The ground traversed is not much different from that covered by the author's valuable work *The Witness of the Epistles* published in 1892. But the method of treatment and the point of view differ so considerably, that we can hardly speak of repetition. A mere glance at the table of contents of both books will suffice to perceive the difference. *The Witness of the Epistles* deals with our Lord's history in large cross-sections following the chronological order of events, first his life and teaching, then his death and burial, the resurrection, the ascension and the return being discussed. In the present work we have three great divisions. The first of these is devoted to a vindication of the genuineness of all the epistles, which in the N.T. claim Paul as their author, and of the genuineness of the Acts of the Apostles as a writing of Luke. The author here turns to excellent advantage the movement, which has become so perceptible during these latter years, of a return in the consensus of critical opinion towards the old traditional position. With reference to a Thessalonians and Ephesians and even with reference to the Pastoral Epistles, he is able to appeal with much greater confidence to the admissions from the other side than was possible when *The Witness of the Epistles* was published. On the other hand a renewed criticism of the most radical views expressed by the Dutch school and by Steck was called for, since, through the *Encyclopedia Biblica*, these views have been introduced to the English public, and in Germany have begun to be popularized among the laity by such writers as Kalthoff, not to speak of their advocacy by Prof. Smith in this country. Dr. Dowling very skillfully shows how utterly untenable Van Manen's position is, especially in view of the external evidence, which compels him to assert, that clear quotations from a Pauline epistle, do not prove the existence of this epistle at the time of quoting but of some imaginary fragment or fragments out of which later the present epistles were composed. He also brings out how implausible is the same critic's distinction between three Pauls, one the real Paul, a mere missionary-preacher like Peter, without any literary activity or theological importance, the second a symbolic Paul, who figured in the consciousness of a later

generation as the representative of the movement towards a law-free gospel, the patron-hero of the sect called Christians, who had to lend his name to the cause in order that it might seem to have a root in the past; the third Paul the Paul drawn by the writer of Acts, after the strife of the stage to which the second Paul belonged had lost its importance, a Paul made more or less to resemble Peter, as Peter is made to resemble Paul, in order that by these two names the Catholic Church might be shown to have its founders in the apostolic age. To quote Dr. Dowling's own words: "The old Catholic tradition of the Church is wrong, but so is also the Tübingen interpretation of that early church history. There was strife between Peter and Paul, but not between the actual bearers of these names. They lived and worked in company with others as "disciples" and "sons" of Jesus, and no dogmatic differences divided them; only after their departure was Paulinism born and thrown as an apple of discord amongst those who should have lived as brethren." This purely conjectural structure is overthrown by the simple observation, that there was nothing in the first or original Paul, which marked him out for the high distinction which it is affirmed was conferred upon him in the second and third stage of the development. But, while thus exhibiting the absurdity of this hypothesis, Dr. Dowling turns to excellent account Steck's and Van Manen's contention to the effect that the writer or writers of the Pauline Epistles made use of written gospels, in so far as this implies *a fortiori* that they must have been acquainted with much of the gospel-traditions whether written or not. In regard to the Book of Acts the case made out has since the time of publication been greatly strengthened by Harnack's careful inquiry into the style and language of the we-sections as compared with the remainder of the book and his conclusion that the author of both is the same, viz., Luke. Dr. Dowling has here in advance urged the same fact with great cogency and it must be great satisfaction to him as well as to others, who had made the observation before, to find themselves supported by so eminent an authority as Harnack. Let us hope that similar surprises from this quarter may yet be in store for us as to other controverted questions of New Testament criticism.

In the second division of the book, after a lecture on the conversion of St. Paul, the several Pauline epistles are taken up, and the testimony of each in turn, as to the facts of Jesus' life and his teaching is heard. In the introductory lecture the distinction between a vision technically so-called and an appearance of Christ is lucidly discussed over against Schmiedel a.o. An excellent point is also made against those, who like von Dobschütz, would represent the resurrection-appearances to which Paul refers in 1 Cor. 15:5-8, as an indefinitely continued series, from the *εσχρατον* in vs. 8 which clearly marks the list as in the Apostle's view definitely closed. In looking for quotations and reminiscences of sayings of Jesus in the epistles, Dr. Dowling is duly cautious lest by overeagerness in the pursuit and overcredulousness in discovery he should blunt the edge of his argument. With great candor he frequently, where others have found a dependence, makes the admission that the resemblance may be due to commonly current forms of speech. The argument is not made to rest so much on the number of the incontestable cases of dependence, but rather on their hortatory, incidental character, which compels us to believe, that Paul, had other occasions required it, could have introduced much more of similar historical material. No candid reader of this part of Dr. Dowling's book will be able to deny that the current conception, as if Paul had no interest in the earthly life of Jesus, is a gross error. It is true, here also the author is not the first to point out, that it becomes utterly impossible to form a concrete view of the Apostle's missionary activity without assuming that the facts of the life and ministry of Jesus as well as his death and resurrection, must have played a considerable role in his message and teaching.

In the third section of the work the several missionary journeys of the Apostle are reviewed and their apologetic witness is vividly brought before the reader. Four lectures on St. Paul and Personal Devotion, St. Paul and Social Life, St. Paul and Missionary Work, and on Recent Literature complete this series. In the three first of these last-mentioned four, the tone and spirit of the discussion are characterized by great warmth of religious feeling, such as in the earlier lectures occasionally reveals itself, but here becomes pervasive and makes the perusal of the pages edifying as well as instructive.

Throughout the book Dr. Dowling strongly emphasizes the unique value of the Pauline testimony to the facts and teaching of the Gospels on account of its chronological nearness to the events. It is the testimony of one who was, if not an eye-witness, yet a contemporary of the Lord. For any serious transformation of the facts there scarcely was time between the history and St. Paul's account of it, which, it must not be forgotten, as an oral missionary-account, antedates the written references in the epistles. Even if in the Gospels we did not have the early and direct testimony, which the Church has always believed and still believes it has in them, the word of Paul would go far to supply the deficiency. And this is especially important in regard to the supernatural element in the Gospel-history. Paul bears witness to this not merely in his recital of the facts, but equally much in his own consciousness of being able to do miracles as a servant of Christ, a consciousness which undoubtedly presupposes his acquaintance by tradition with the miraculous element in the ministry of Jesus. And the same chronological nearness of the Apostle to the Lord is of the utmost value in estimating the significance of the transcendent place Paul gives to the Savior in his own teaching Christologically and soteriologically. Here again there is no sufficient interval to account for the genesis of the Pauline gospel by any myth-forming process, a fact, which in his day even the philosopher Schopenhauer recognized. The only way in which those who are opposed to supernaturalism in every form can attempt to meet this difficulty would be either to postulate, after the example of Brückner, a much more advanced pre-Christian Jewish Christology, than has hitherto been accepted, or to follow our countryman William Benjamin Smith in his hypothesis of a "pre-Christian Jesus", although the latter writer would hardly deem this peculiar exploitation of his views necessary, since he himself with Van Manen places the Pauline epistles in the second century. We, for our part, believe that nothing but the recognition of a substantial supernaturalism in the life of Jesus, followed by a substantial supernaturalism in the shaping of Paul's teaching, will solve the problem, and Dr. Dowling has done well to remind us once more of this fact.

We have found very little in the good-sized volume to which exception can be taken. On p. 502 it is argued from the Apostle's statement that Andronicus and Junias were before him "in Christ", that the peculiar conception expressed by the phrase *ἐν Χριστῷ* must antedate the Apostle's conversion. This seems to us an undue pressing of the words. Paul could so refer to his conversion, even though the peculiar mode of referring to it, was the product of a later doctrinal development. It is quite possible, or even probable, that the phrase is older, but Rom. 16:7 scarcely proves it. We also feel somewhat hesitant about the author's interpretation of "holy" in Luke 1:35 as "sinless." This is used in arguing that Paul must have known of the Virgin-birth, because the sinlessness of Jesus preached by Paul was thus affirmed in "the Pauline Gospel, the Gospel of St. Luke" (p. 314). But the verb used in connection with "holy", viz., "shall be called", seems to point rather to an official Messianic than to an ethical qualification. We confess to not liking the phrase "consecrated imperialism", in connection with the propaganda of Christianity, well-meant and carefully qualified though it may be on the author's part. On p. 354 Jerusalem is a misprint for Damascus, on p. 409 Rome for

Jerusalem.