

Het eeuwige leven bij Paulus
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This is a dissertation offered for the degree of Doctor of Theology in the University of Groningen in the Netherlands. It is a dissertation of more than average value and importance, both because of the live subject it deals with and because of the wide reading and mature judgment which it reveals on almost every page. Its purpose is to compare Paul's eschatological teaching with the corresponding beliefs of the Greco-Roman pagan world of his time. Eschatology is taken not with restriction to the collective historical developments at the end but as including the individual destiny after death. It is true this does not quite reproduce the Pauline point of view, since the Apostle's eschatological interest centers on the conclusion of the world-drama and passes lightly over the problems of the intermediate state. Strictly speaking the title "eternal life" applies in Paul's language to the final state only, so that it can hardly cover the discussion of what falls before the parousia. Inasmuch, however, as to the pagan mind the center of interest lay in the state after death, and a comparison is aimed at, the slight deflection from the Pauline angle of vision involved may be readily pardoned.

The subject is dealt with in three chapters. In the first "the Pauline data" are set forth by means of an exegetical summary of the chief eschatological contexts. In the second chapter the belief or disbelief in immortality, and the views in regard to the future state prevailing among the Apostle's contemporaries are examined. The third chapter, containing the backbone of the book, institutes a detailed comparison between the facts brought to light in chapters one and two.

Of these three divisions the first is the least satisfactory. The exegetical and biblico-theological discussion of the material ought to have been more searching and comprehensive. The author does little more than summarize what the commentaries offer. Unfortunately in regard to the great eschatological passages such as 1 Thess. 4 and 2 Cor. 5 no consensus has been reached among the exegetes and a perusal of the commentaries is apt to leave the student more bewildered than instructed. The author does not pause to help him out; yet we think his help being that of a specialist on a concrete subject, might have been valuable. We should like to learn e.g. what was the precise cause of the perplexity of the Thessalonians when some from among them had died. It had to do with the relation of these to the parousia, but how? Was it ignorance or unbelief of the resurrection? Or was it the chiliastic consideration that the dead, while sure to be raised, might not be in time to share in the provisional Messianic kingdom? There is a real difficulty here, but it is neither clearly stated, nor seriously attacked. The Chiliastic exegesis as advocated by Schmiedel, is passed by in silence. At a later point (p. 136) the "not-sorrowing even as do the rest who have no hope" is explained of merely the mode and excess in demonstrativeness of pagan mourning. This seems to reject by implication the view as though the Thessalonians could have mourned from the same motive as the pagans did i.e. because they had no hope. A possible exegesis, but not beyond need of argument to establish it. It is not sufficient to appeal to the words "who have no hope" as implying that the Thessalonians had hope. The question precisely is whether this means in the mouth of Paul: "I know, ye have reason to hope" or "you know you have hope"? But granting that they were familiar with the idea of the resurrection and believed in the doctrine taught them by Paul, the problem becomes a very pressing one, how in the presence of such faith can their excessive pagan-like grief be accounted for? The author himself acknowledges that the Thessalonians were not

troubled about the intermediate state of their dead as such. The trouble related to their presence at the parousia, And he also observes, though he finds it strange, that Paul does not comfort his readers with the uninterrupted communion between Christ and their “sleeping ones,” but with the certainty of the resurrection We confess that this seems to us to drive straight into the arms of the chiliastic exegesis. That seems to offer the only possibility of understanding the coexistence in the same minds of belief in the resurrection and perplexity about the dead. Or if that is impossible, as perhaps it is, and as certainly the author seems to think, since it is neither mentioned nor considered, ought it not to make us pause, before we reject the only other clearly conceivable alternative, and assert that ignorance or unbelief of the resurrection in people taught by Paul is *a priori* excluded?

Somewhat similar strictures might be made in regard to the exegetical resumé given of the passage 2 Cor. 5:1ff. The difference is that here Dr. Ubbink succeeds in giving a fairly lucid version of the import of the passage, which he himself characterizes as a *crux interpretum*. As a matter of fact the explanation is too lucid to be readily accepted: it gets rid of the *crux* too easily. It is obtained at the cost of identifying the *ενδυσασθαι* of vs. 2 with the *επειδυσασθαι* of verses 2 and 4. The main warrant for doing this would seem to be the comparison with 1 Cor. 15:53, where the *ενδυσασθαι* “putting on” is used as equally applicable to the raised and to those found living at the parousia. The observation is correct, but it does not prove that in the situation of 2 Cor. 5 likewise the two terms can have been used interchangeably. In 1 Cor. 15 the subject of the sentence is the body, “this corruptible and this mortal.” When the investment with the new body is described with the old body as the subject, the figure is naturally that of a simple “putting on.” On the other hand, where it is conceived as in 2 Cor. 5, with reference to the pneumatic person, and the desire is expressed that no laying aside of the old body may be necessary, the figure as naturally assumes the form of “putting on over.” A difference between the two terms is clearly implied in the contrast between *εκδυσασθαι* (correlate of *ενδυσασθαι*) and *επειδυσασθαι* in vs. 4, which latter is illustrated by the further figure of “the mortal being swallowed up by the life.” It is in this difference between the simple and the double compound verb that the *crux* of the passage lies, and also the key to the main import of it. Paul’s instinctive preference for survival till the parousia expressed in the former half of the pericope rests on it. As an equivocal term equally applicable to both parts of the alternative, the word *ενδυσασθαι* was ill-suited to express this preference clearly. We do not know what authority the author has for making the *επι* in this verb “intensive.” The comparison with *γυγνωσκειν* and *επιγυγνωσκειν* is not convincing, because *γυγνωσκειν* denotes an action with which intensity is easily associated, which is by no means the case with *ενδυσασθαι*. One does not intensively put on a garment.

These are, however, considered within the structure of the book as a whole, minor matters. The second and third chapters are far more essential and on the whole eminently satisfactory. The former gives a careful survey of the pagan state of mind in regard to personal immortality in the age of Paul. It is a most interesting picture the author draws for us of the mentality of the ancient world in regard to this greatest of all problems. First the sepulchral inscriptions, then the literary documents and in the third place the mystery-cults are reviewed. The impression created by this survey, even before the comparison with the Pauline doctrine is formally drawn, is that of extreme dissimilarity and oppositeness. Not only were the opinions hopelessly divergent, they were also in their majority dismally pessimistic and to no small extent of a down-right skeptical tenor. In the sepulchral inscriptions even the hopes of the Eleusinian and other mysteries find but an infrequent and weak echo. Only in connection with the Egyptian cult a more positive and assertive hopefulness

expresses itself in the desire that Osiris may give his confessors to drink of “the cool water” of life. Chronologically considered the inscriptions of the earlier period reflect a more hopeful outlook than the later ones. From the Third Century B.C. onwards doubt and uncertainty rapidly increased, and especially during the time of the empire the prevailing note became one of skepticism. Hence such epitaphs as: “I was not, I came into being, I was, I am not, such is life, if one shall say differently he lies,” the last clause introducing a queer note of dogmatic emphasis into the otherwise skeptical utterance. Another inscription to the same effect closes, more in keeping with itself, with the words “I do not care.” The grave is viewed as *aeterna domus*. Tears are not encouraged, for what could they profit? Fate is inexorable. The only defense that the pagan mortal of Paul’s day had to oppose to the hopelessness of death was the consideration that *fama nescit obire*. So far as the individual is concerned this was the poorest of all conceivable weapons, since death itself prevents the possessor of fame from having either knowledge or enjoyment of it.

The results are not very much different when gathered from the philosophical religious and poetical literature. The same phenomena recur: no unity of conviction, a tangle of ideas bristling not only with contrasts but with contradictions, unanimity only where the point of skepticism and negation is reached. From Homer’s “Do not comfort me with death” to Catullus’ “*Nox est Perpetua una dormienda*,” there is a continuity of this negative, at its best resigned, attitude. At the other extreme, where belief in a better state existed, suicide was sometimes resorted to as a means of more quickly attaining unto it. But suicide from a purely despondent motive was also systematically practiced. The negative state of mind seems to have been stronger in Rome than in Greece and Asia Minor, a difference explained from the deeper moral decadence of the West. The older Stoics at least taught a temporary persistence of the soul until the next world-conflagration but even this was extended by part of the school to the wise only. The Epicurean position is strikingly defined by the saying of the Master: “Death has nothing to do with us; so long as man is there death is not; when death is there man is not.” Only the middle and later Stoa and the neo-Pythagoreans returned to the teaching of Plato, although even here Panaetius managed to combine with Platonism the denial of every kind of immortality. Seneca is in turn a skeptic and a believer. Death is *aut finis aut transitus*. Epictetus is most emphatic in his absolute negation. And, whatever view may be taken of the destiny of the soul, all join together in the dualistic depreciation of the body, which finds such characteristic expression in the epigram $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha = \sigma\eta\mu\alpha$. The body has no future and no hope of any kind. As to the state of the soul after death—where one is contemplated it is noteworthy that both Greeks and Romans appear better acquainted with hell than with heaven. The descriptions of the torments of the wicked are clearer and more detailed than those of the conditions in Elysium. Fear was evidently a more active factor than hope in shaping eschatological belief. The Orphic pictures of Tartarus from the time of Paul are quite Dantesque in their elaborateness and vividness. What there is of concrete delineation of the state of blessedness is more or less sensually colored.

A distinct view of the future state was developed in connection with the astrological belief which gained wider currency about the beginning of our era, but had points of contact in earlier Hellenic belief about the metamorphosis of heroes into brilliant constellations, the so-called “*Katasterism*.” This was Oriental in its origin, based on the view that earthly life is under the inexorable *régime* of planetary fate, the *Heimarmene*. Here we meet with the idea of the celestial journey. It occurs in two forms, the one conceiving of the journey through space to the higher regions as unobstructed, the other representing the same as delayed through a sojourn in the intermediate stations, each planet

requiring back of the spirit what it had communicated to it of its own substance in the original earthward descent of the latter. The highest goal is deification. The goal, however, was not open to all, but only to the intellectual, the cultivated, the elite of mankind. The public at large were left to themselves. It was this exclusivism that drove the non-aristocratic in such large numbers into the mystery cults where no class-distinctions were recognized.

In discussing the mysteries the author confines himself for the purpose of comparison to the Eleusinian, the Dionysian-Orphic and the Osiris-Serapis cults. Heedful of the warnings of Cumont and others, he hesitates to follow Reitzenstein and Bousset, and declares the question how much of the Second Century belief and practice already existed in Paul's time unripe for and perhaps incapable of decision. To Bousset's contention that it is not a question of dependence on any single cult but of general atmosphere, he quite properly replies that this general atmosphere is largely the hypothetical product of carrying back the later data into the Pauline period on the principle that they cannot suddenly have sprung into being, but must have an older history. The question, however, persists, whether in this older stage they were already able to impregnate the atmosphere in such a pervasive sense that an influence on Paul becomes plausible. The syncretistic form of these cults Paul certainly did not know and could not have been affected by. To be sure, there was long before Paul's time a chronic mysticism in the Eastern provinces. But its exact physiognomy is still undetermined and perhaps indeterminable. The thesis that before Paul's time already the vegetation-god of the mythical cults had developed into a divine redeemer and savior, who dies and rises again for the benefit of his worshippers is incapable of proof. All mythical inducements notwithstanding, the mentality of the Greeks remained predominantly auto-soteric. It should be noted, however, that, while not favoring the hypothesis of a material influence of the mystery-religions in Paul, the author does not deny that certain technical terms might have been borrowed from this source and filled by the Apostle with a new content. But even in that case it remains possible that the borrowing was from the fund of the common language and not direct from the mysteries.

In the third chapter the various aspects of Paul's eschatological teaching are compared with the pagan beliefs with a view to testing the likelihood of dependence. The beginning consists of an excellent discussion of the Pauline conception of God with its pronounced redemptive features. Against the Stoic humanitarian doctrine that all men are children of God Paul places the soteric sonship of believers. Paul had a profound conviction of sin, paganism had not. This makes all the difference in the complexion of eschatological ideas. Those of Paul are God-centered, profoundly religious, cultivated for the sake of God and with a thirst after God; those of the Greco-Roman world lack this character entirely. The extreme individualism of the one and the collectivism of the other has its root in the same difference. Paul sums up the future in "the Kingdom of God." And, most of all, the eschatology of Paul has a historical, dramatic, redemptive background, an element which was utterly lacking in the Greek belief.

As to the anthropological structure of the eschatology Paul expected a restoration *in integrum* of the entire man, soul and body; the Greek mind attached value to the soul only. The section in which this is set forth brings an interesting discussion of the contrast ψυχικός vs. πνευματικός. The author rejects Reitzenstein's and Bousset's derivation of the term ψυχικός from the idea that from the mystes through the entrance of the pneuma the soul is expelled, so that actually the man has ceased to exist as man and has become a god = πνευμα. In rejecting this, he offers a highly ingenious and, so

far as we are aware, original explanation of his own. It consists in this that Paul in the two contexts where ψυχικός occurs as equivalent to σαρκικός and as opposed to πνευματικός (1 Cor. 3 and 15), uses ψυχικός with semi-ironic reference to the unwarranted value placed upon the soul as such by the Greek mind. The “psychic” man would then practically amount to “that natural, sinful being to which as ψυχή you Greeks ascribe such an exalted nature.” This explanation identifies σαρκικός in its ethical connotation with ψυχικός. Notwithstanding its striking novelty and its apparent suitability to the context of 1 Cor. 3, we hesitate to adopt it. Into 1 Cor. 15 it certainly will not fit, for here Paul derives the “psychic” nature of the first man from creation which gives the term the dignity of marking a great historic contrast designed by God, so that ironical reflection upon the Hellenic overestimate of the psyche is out of place. Paul, as we take it, here purposely avoids the equation ψυχικός = σαρκικός and that because σαρκικός is too suggestive of sin, whilst the antithesis here is purely that between creation and eschatology. The first man was χοικός not σαρκικός (as to his body). If in 1 Cor. 3 ψυχικός and σαρκικός are actually used interchangeably this is due to the elasticity of σαρκικός which can denote both the natural condition of man as such and his sinful natural condition but with a stronger association of the latter. Hence in a context where the emphasis rested on the incapability of the natural man to receive the pneumatic things of God and on the immaturity of the readers, which but little differentiated them from natural men, there was no need of carefully distinguishing ψυχικός and σαρκικός, since the “natural” when asserting itself as such against God and the “spiritual” actually passes over into the “fleshly.” The new explanation might also give rise to the question whether the mere άνθρωποι which takes the place of ψυχικοί and σαρκικοί in 1 Cor. 3, perhaps likewise contains an ironical allusion to the Hellenic pride in humanity as such. We dare say the author would not go so far as this. In passing we may remark that the contrast “men” and “pneumatic” is not nearly so strange in Scriptural idiom as it appears to us. The opposition of part of a genus to the whole because the part is possessed of a differentiating peculiarity, is found in such passages as Ps. 73:5, “they are not in trouble as men”; Jer. 32:20, “both in Israel and among men.” These, as lying nearer home, may be substituted for Zielinski’s illustration from the contrast between *proletarius* and *assiduus* in Roman legal terminology (the former denoting one who has nothing but children; the latter one who has landed property, but may have children also).

The further sections of the third chapter deal in succession with the relation between eternal life and the present life, communion with Christ (the gift of the Spirit), the sacraments and eternal life, death, the intermediate state, the day of the Lord, the final state. We can only briefly touch upon a few points of interest. Dr. Ubbink rejects the theory of Charles, Teichmann and others who trace a clearly marked development in Paul’s eschatological teaching. The main substance, he holds, must have been fixed at the conversion so that, whatever influence from his milieu existed, would have to be placed earlier than this. To the conversion itself he attaches great weight, although not explicitly deriving from it the equation Christ = Pneuma, as many seem inclined to do. We do not believe that such a psychological explanation really can accomplish what it is expected to do. None of the accounts of Paul’s conversion so much as refers to the pneuma. What appeared to Paul was the glorified Christ. But this appearance as such would not carry with it the idea that the source of the glory lay in the pneuma. To import this on the basis that light = pneuma seems precarious. Of course, the case would become different, if we could assume that the close association between the eschatological-messianic life and the pneuma was antecedently given, but against this 2 Cor. 5:16 enters a protest. Paul distinctly characterizes his pre-Christian Messianic conception as sarkic and not pneumatic. That the author does not overkeenly feel the problem of accounting for Paul’s peculiarly

colored pneuma-concept both in its Christological and eschatological application, is due to his somewhat overeasiness of assimilation of the earliest Christian teaching on the pneuma to the Pauline doctrine. Over against the gulf which such writers as Gunkel and Bousset would fix between the two this is not difficult to understand. Pre-Pauline Christianity certainly must have had communion with the risen Christ and the Spirit must have played a role in this. It cannot have been a religion about the Christ, as Bousset would have it, but must have been one in fellowship with the Christ. But to affirm without more evidence that this was identical (we mean, of course, in concept not as to real exercise) with the Pauline “mystical union” through the Spirit, so that it expressed or could have expressed itself in the same terms is farther than we feel warranted to go. We do not mean to deny the possibility of the pre-Pauline existence of such teaching; what we wish to say is that no proof to that effect is forthcoming from the Book of Acts.

There are some other points over against which we have placed an interrogation mark. On p. 145 the author queries whether from Paul’s point of view it is still accurate to speak of *ἀναστασις* because this term can only relate to the body and the body is of a totally different substance, with the suggestion added that Paul for this reason consciously favored *ἐγείρειν* and *ἐγερθῆναι*. Or, on p. 146, the statement, that Paul does not systematize, is no apocalypticus, but a preacher of the Gospel. Again “the final judgment relates in the last analysis to this, whether man has been willing to let himself be endowed with the new life” (p. 150). Also the account (on p. 152) of the idea of a present judgment as causing the last judgment with Paul to lose its dramatic impressive character seems considerably overstated. The author further thinks it probable that Paul conceives of the final state of the wicked as a torment of the soul, implying that the punishment comes not *ab extra*, but is internal (p. 155). Is it quite true that Paul never works with the factor of “the terror of hell”? (*ibid.*).

In conclusion we may call attention to the two instructive excursuses on *δοξα* and the *σῶμα πνευματικόν* towards the close of the book. As to the former it is contended that “splendor” is not the constant nor characteristic element in Paul’s view of the *δοξα*. *Δοξα* and *τιμή* are not clearly separated. In 2 Cor. 3:18, and 4:16 *δοξα* is associated with and consists in *γῶσις*. The combination of light and *δοξα* with the future life needs no concrete accounting for, being the common property of all nations and religions. As to the *σῶμα πνευματικόν*, the view that this idea represents a compromise between the Jewish resurrection-hope and the Hellenic immortality belief is rejected. In Judaism there are already traces of an approach towards spiritualization of the resurrection-body and that even in Ap. Baruch usually quoted in proof of the materialness of the resurrection body as the ordinary Jewish view. Jesus also rejected the grosser Jewish expectation.

Enough has been said to convince the reader that in this by no means ordinary dissertation he will find a wealth of instruction on the complicated subject of the Pauline eschatology. Dr. Ubbink is a well-informed and, on the whole, safe guide. The notes appended to the text are copious and omit very little of importance in their references to the literature.