

Preface

COMPREHENSIVE studies of Paul have become rare indeed. The interest which, from the time of the first world war, the "History of Religion" school took in this fateful figure has been in the meantime transferred to other questions and problems, so that even in my student days I felt that despite Deissmann and Schweitzer there was here a disquieting gap. In consequence I began to plan the writing of this book on Paul, considered against the background of the history of the Jewish religion. The first draft of it was prepared twenty years ago. Then came my derivative investigations on the Ebionites, which prevented me from finally drafting my study on Paul, and my manuscript about him was perforce set aside. When I returned to the figure of this great opponent of the Judaists, I realized the necessity of rewriting the entire work, although I went back to my first draft and took over the arrangement of it almost without modification.

I find it an advantage to approach the study of Pauline theology as an impartial historian of religion, and as one who also wishes to do justice to the Judaism whence Paul sprang. Many matters are more clearly seen (especially in regard to the genesis of ideas) if one is not hindered by confessional allegiances from thinking through, to the end, dangerous trains of thought. Critics are not for the most part aware of the inner censorship under which their thoughts really stand. It must also be remembered, however, that the "History of Religion" approach with its emphasis on externals has its disadvantages as well, because it cannot enter fully into the inner faith of the apostle, since that rests on personal assent to the Christian religion. In this respect the Christian theologian is "engaged" in quite a different way, and is able to interpret the apostle's articulation of his faith on the basis of that Christian profession which he holds in common with him. The unbeliever, and the scholar who holds a different belief, remain dependent on sheer critical understanding. And to understand so great a man as the apostle Paul and the movements of his mind is a very considerable undertaking.

How far the present author has succeeded in doing so is a matter for the reader of this book to decide, and he on his part is asked, in

PREFACE

the interests of truth, to overlook much that might be offensive and shocking to him. He is also asked to bear in mind that the historian of religion who tries to understand the apostle in the light of the special concerns of Jewish religious history will inevitably see misunderstandings where the Christian theologian sees evidence of divine guidance, even that by which Saul became Paul, and, according to the Christian faith, was really transformed into a new creation—a new man in Christ. These two views can never be adjusted to each other.

I would like to express here my thanks to my colleague W. G. Kümmel of Marburg, who undertook the labour of reading through my manuscript before it went to press, and who advised me on a number of special points, although he of course sees many things in a different light and assesses them differently from myself. I am also grateful to Dr. E. L. Ehrlich (Basle) for certain references. Dr. H. Pölcher once again has given me his kind assistance in the reading of proofs.

HANS JOACHIM SCHOEPS

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