

DID ST. PAUL COMPOSE ROMANS III:24f.?

Romans iii:25 has long been considered an outstanding text within the Pauline corpus;¹ one of the few places where he grapples with the "how" of Christ's passion. It was long thought to be a truism beyond challenge that this was a crucial text at the very heart of Pauline theology. Such immunity to challenge has in recent decades ceased to be the case.

As long ago as 1936 R. Bultmann² proposed as a possibility that Rom.iii:24f. was a non-Pauline fragment. By the time he wrote his Theologie des Neuen Testaments,³ the possibility had become a near certainty. Bultmann's reasons for considering that Rom.iii:24f. stemmed, for the most part, from the Urgemeinde are based mainly on the occurrence of a large number of hapax legomena in the pericope.

He notices that hilasterion occurs only here with Paul; that haima, outside of Rom.v:9, is found with Paul only in traditional sentences (1 Cor.x:16; xi:25,27), Paul rather preferring stauros; and finally, that the idea of the divine dikaionē requiring expiation for sins committed formerly is completely foreign to Paul. Except for the genuine Pauline additions - doxan tē autou chariti and dia pisteōs - Rom.iii:24f. is in Bultmann's opinion "evidently a traditional statement."⁴

It is Ernst Käsemann,⁵ however, who takes up this hint from Bultmann and develops it into the cogent hypothesis that it recognizably is. He begins by pointing out that v.24 of the logion is discontinuous; dikaionomenoi is unexpected and hardly smooth. The antithesis with v.23 properly demands a corres-

¹E.g. Wolfgang Schrage ("Römer 3:21-26 und die Bedeutung des Todes Jesu Christi bei Paulus", in Das Kreuz Jesu, ed. P. Rieger [Göttingen, 1969], p.65) notes: "Rom.3:21-26 ist nun freilich kein peripherer Text, sondern ein Abschnitt, den man nicht zu Unrecht das Herzstück des Römerbriefs genannt hat." A. Deismann (ZNW [1903], pp.208f.) speaks of the text as the "Zentrum der Frömmigkeit des Apostels."

²In an article, "Neueste Paulusforschung", TR 8[1936], p.12.

³Theologie des Neuen Testaments (Tübingen, 1948), pp.47f.

⁴Theology (E.T. London, 1952), p.46.

⁵E. Käsemann, "Zum Verständnis von Römer 3:24-26", ZNW 43 [1950-51], pp.150-154. Reprinted in Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen I (Göttingen, 1960), pp.96f.

ponding pantes in v.24. In addition to the hapax that Bultmann noticed, Käsemann advances pareisis, progegonota hamartēmata, protithesthai (in the sense of manifestation), dikaiosunē (as a divine attribute in v.25), apolutrōsis (as signifying an already accomplished redemption it is found only in set formula [1 Cor.i:30] or liturgical text [Col.i:14]). Further, Käsemann notes the overlaid style of vv.24f. with its genitival constructions and prepositional connections similar to the hymnic-liturgical tradition of the Near-East.

To this rather overwhelming list Käsemann adds his major argument - the exegetical difficulties. Despite the formal parallel between v.25b and v.26a, Käsemann observes, the usual exegesis finds a contrast. Käsemann cites Zahn as an example. In the latter's exegesis dikaiosunē in v.26a is no longer the divine attribute as in v.25b but the eschatological salvation-event. In v.25b the language is of the past and its guilt with a mere overlooking of sin, but in v.26a the argument concerns the present time and actual mercy. On this understanding dia tēn pareisin begins a parenthesis and pros tēn endeixin takes up again the argument from eis endeixin.

This exegesis is far from incontestable, asserts Käsemann. The idea of the past as a period characterized by pareisis and anochē is at odds with Rom.i:18 which emphasizes that the past was a time of God's wrath. The explanations that it refers to individuals but not nations (Jülicher), or that the past alternated between times of grace and wrath (Zahn) only point up the difficulties, but in Käsemann's opinion, do not solve them. Likewise, Käsemann rejects the more radical solution of Lietzmann, who takes pareisis to mean nothing other than forgiveness.

What causes exegetes to fall into these insoluble difficulties, according to Käsemann, is the formal parallel between v.25b and v.26a and yet at the same time the actual digression of thought which confronts one in these texts. Käsemann believes that Bultmann's thesis solves this problem. With v.25b we have a non-Pauline fragment deriving from a Jewish-Christian Sitz im Leben, while with v.26a we have Paul's citation of and corrective comments on the fragment. The insoluble problem of the antithetical alliance between vv.25b and 26a is now understandable, the disagreement arises out of the differing Sitz im Leben of the texts. The tension between the two verses is basic, for one is a quotation with which Paul does not wholly agree, and the other represents his own corrective comments on it.

Käsemann's exegesis of these two verses highlights the differences between their thought-worlds. The Jewish-Christian formula moves within the conception of God's covenant faithfulness. The hopes of Jewish piety culminated in the event of

Jesus' death. The passion separates two epochs; namely, the earlier time of guilt and the present time of forgiveness and justification. Justification refers not only to the covenant relationship but also to the renewal of the covenant manward, which human sin had broken. On the basis of a new means of expiation, God has reinstituted his covenant. The formula thus revolves around the motif of covenant-renewal, and the emphasis clearly falls upon the moment when expiation was accomplished.

Paul's corrections in v.26, according to Käsemann, give a different meaning to dikaïosunē, for to Paul God's righteousness is not primarily - or at all - restitution of the covenant. Paul distinguishes the present (en tō nun kairō) more sharply from the past than v.25 did. The opposite to the present time is no longer the salvation-history of Israel from Moses, but the world of the fall from Adam; a world which is under God's wrath, and hence Paul's universalism. Justification is not primarily for Paul a putting an end to the former transgressions, but the justificatio impii. Paul's universalism means that he thinks not of the covenant people but of individuals, and so he associates with the Sola Gratia of the Jewish-Christian fragment his own Sola Fide, even forcing his dia pisteōs disturbingly into the context of the formula (v.25).⁶

This daring thesis has now been widely accepted in Germany.⁷

⁶"... höchst gewaltsam und störend und ebenso charakteristisch für den paulinischen Kontext mit dia pisteōs in v.25 hineingepresst wird". Ibid., p.154.

⁷E.g. G. Bornkamm, "The Revelation of God's Wrath", in Early Christian Experience (E.T. London, 1969), p.65; J. Jeremias, "Zwischen Karfreitag und Ostern", ZNW 42 [1949], pp.197f. cf. TDNT V, p.706; K. Kertelge, "Rechtfertigung" bei Paulus (Münster, 1967), pp.48-62, 71-84; D. Lührmann, Das Offenbarungsverständnis bei Paulus und in paulinischen Gemeinden (Neukirchen, 1965), pp.150ff. also ZThK 67 [1970], pp.437ff.; Ch. Müller, Gottes Gerechtigkeit und Gottes Volk (Göttingen, 1964), pp.110ff.; P. Stuhlmacher, Gerechtigkeit Gottes bei Paulus (Göttingen, 1965), pp.88ff.; E. Schweizer, "Dying and Rising with Christ", NTS 14 [1967-68], p.12. Reprinted in New Testament Issues, ed., R. Batey (London, 1970), pp.171ff., see also EvTh 26 [1966], p.255; H. Thyen, Studien zur Sündenvergebung im Neuen Testament und seinen alttestamentlichen und jüdischen Voraussetzungen, pp.163ff.; G. Schille, Frühchristliche Hymnen (Berlin, 1965), p.60; K. Wegenast, Das Verständnis der tradition bei Paulus und in den Deuteropaulinen (Neukirchen, 1962), pp. 76-79; with reserve O. Michel, Der Brief an die Römer (Göttingen¹² 1963), pp.103f.; W.G. Kümmel, "Paresis und endeixis; Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis der paulinischen Rechtfertigungslehre", ZThK 49 [1952], p.164.

Not all who accept the thesis do so without qualification. E. Lohse,⁸ for example, notes that tes en Christo Iesou (v.24) is particularly Pauline and therefore limits the fragment, with the exception of apolutrosis, to v.25. H. Conzelmann⁹ and W. Schrage¹⁰ accept v.24 as a Pauline transition and take v.25 as the formula's beginning. G. Fitzner¹¹ is even more radical and considers the whole phrase, eis endeixin ... anochē tou theou, a later insertion into the Pauline text. This in fact amounts to a rejection of the fragmentary hypothesis. The Catholic scholar, O. Kuss, is an isolated voice of German dissent.¹²

English publications have treated this interpretation with a withering silence.¹³ There are two exceptions, A.M. Hunter¹⁴ and J.A. Ziesler.¹⁵ Considering the thesis of his book, it is not surprising that Hunter in the appendix which he adds to the second edition inclines towards acceptance. Ziesler, who also limits discussion to an appendix, is non-committal.

⁸ E. Lohse, Martyrer und Gottesknecht (Göttingen² 1963), p.150.

⁹ H. Conzelmann, "Current Problems in Pauline Research", Interpretation 22 [1968], p.177; idem, An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament (E.T. London, 1969), p.71 and EvTh 28 [1968], pp.389-404.

¹⁰ W. Schrage, Kreuz, pp.77f.

¹¹ G. Fitzner, "Der Ort der Versöhnung nach Paulus", TZ 22 [1966], p.163.

¹² O. Kuss, Der Römerbrief I (Regensburg² 1957), p.161.

¹³ It is not mentioned for instance in the commentaries of F.F. Bruce (New London Series, 1963); E. Best (Cambridge Bible, 1967); V. Taylor (Epworth Preacher's Series, 1955); C.K. Barrett (Black's Series, 1957); T.W. Manson (Peake's Rev. One Volume Commentary, 1962); nor in such works as E. Kenneth Lee, A Study in Romans (London, 1962); A. Richardson, An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament (London, 1958); D.E.H. Whiteley, The Theology of St. Paul (Oxford, 1964).

¹⁴ A.M. Hunter, Paul and his Predecessors (London² 1961), pp.120ff.

¹⁵ J.A. Ziesler, The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul (Cambridge, 1972), pp.209f.

C.H. Talbert¹⁶ and J. Reumann,¹⁷ two American scholars, have also written in agreement with the fragmentary hypothesis. Talbert takes a radical view-point and identifies the fragment with vv.25, 26. These verses are, in his opinion, a post-Pauline insertion and once removed allow dikaïoumenoi to be linked with pou oun he kauchesis. This, however, still leaves the transition from v.23 to 24 incongruent.¹⁸ Reumann offers a masterly survey of the theory, adding a few supportive points, and coming down in agreement with it.

Such a bold conception as this hypothesis of Bultmann and Käsemann demands the most careful scrutiny. If it is correct, it means that Rom.iii:25 is not a major insight into the Apostle's theologia crucis, but merely demonstrates "something of Paul's view of tradition and revelation."¹⁹ Even though the fragment "described the salvation-event as grounding righteousness through Christ's death"²⁰ it falls far short of the Apostle's view-point. The question forces itself upon us, "is this so?"

Outstanding among the reasons put forward by Bultmann and Käsemann is the concentration of hapax legomena found in the passage. It is not sufficient merely to find hapax in a verse to indicate the presence of a hymnic fragment. One must also demonstrate that the hapax words are common in the proposed original Sitz im Leben - the Urgemeinde or whatever it may be.²¹

Two of the words, hilastērion and paresis, are rare in any context, the latter only occurs in Rom.iii:25 within the whole of the Greek Bible. Paul could as readily use such terms as anyone else and their occurrence is not made less surprising in a non-Pauline Vorlage. Equally progegonota hamartēmata is just

¹⁶ C.H. Talbert, "A Non-Pauline Fragment at Romans 3:24-26?", JBL 85 [1966], pp.287-296.

¹⁷ J. Reumann, "The Gospel of the Righteousness of God", Interpretation 20 [1966], pp.432-452.

¹⁸ Käsemann rejects Talbert's interpretation on the grounds that there is no evidence for such a later insertion, and because it is impossible to conceive of the verses 25f. as a unity, see his An Die Römer (HNT, Tübingen, 1973), p.92.

¹⁹ J. Reumann, Interpretation 20, p.451.

²⁰ E. Käsemann, "Verständnis", p.154.

²¹ D. Zeller ("Sühne und Langmut", Theologie und Philosophie 43 [Frankfurt, 1968], pp.51-75) has made the attempt to exegete the fragment wholly within Jewish-Christian terms, that is, non-Pauline.

as much a hapax in a Jewish-Christian milieu as within the Pauline Corpus.²²

There are only two other occurrences of protithēmi in the New Testament besides Rom.iii:25, both of which are in Paul (Rom.i:3, Eph.i:9).²³ This is hardly a sufficient number to say Rom.iii:25 departs from the usual Pauline meaning. In fact, Eph.i:9 could be identical to Rom.iii:25 (cf. RSV); but because Käsemann denies the Pauline authorship of Ephesians,²⁴ his Sprachgebrauch rests on one text. This is extremely tenuous.

Bultmann's claim that Paul prefers stauros to haima is really only valid for Galatians and 1 Corinthians, stauros does not occur in Romans. Paul uses haima in Romans v:9, as Bultmann observes, and the proximity of hilastērion would bring haima naturally into the context. It is therefore inaccurate to say haima is un-Pauline.

The substantive apolutrōsis is used only once in Paul's writings with a future reference (Rom.viii:23, or twice if one includes Eph.iv:30), which again falls short of the necessary number of examples required before one can say that apolutrōsis used with a present allusion is limited in the Pauline corpus to liturgical or set formulae. There is little reason for denying that the use of apolutrōsis as a present experience in 1 Cor.i:30 came direct from Paul's pen; if it sounds like a formula, then he formulated it. We should not forget that Paul was capable of quite poetic expressions and not everything was dashed off in ragged haste.²⁵

It is questionable whether dikaiosunē in v.25 refers to the divine attribute while v.26 points to the divine activity. The phrase eis endeixin tēs dikaiosunēs autou is too closely related to the divine action in setting Christ forth as a hilastērion to rest happy with the view which here construes dikai-

²² The use of parexis may have drawn the infrequent progino-mai and hamartēma into the context. The genitive pf. part. progegenemenon occurs with pariēmi in W. Dittenberger, Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae, 444, 16. The plural of hamartēma occurs with pariēmi in Xenophon (The Cavalry Commander, VII, 10) and Sir.xxiii:2.

²³ Pauline authorship is here accepted.

²⁴ RGG³ II, pp.517f.

²⁵ Cf. the chapter "The writer" in J. Weiss's Earliest Christianity II (E.T. New York, 1937), pp.399ff.

osune as passive. Paul, as with Qumran,²⁶ has joined the cultic and the judicial in his exposition: the righteousness of God is manifest in that he, and he alone, expiates sin, condemns it. It is not a case of expiation-demanding righteousness but expiation-providing righteousness. Provided now in the redemptive expiatory event of Christ's death, because the cosmic debt of sin (Col.ii:14), the incubus which reigned from Adam (Rom.v:14), that had held men captive (Gal.iii:23ff.) had never until Christ's death been brought to book.

In the past God had given men up to their sins, patiently passed over their transgressions, but now the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness. The cross is thus judicial in a real sense, condemning as well as delivering. The opposing of orge in Rom.i:18 against paresis and anoe in the manner of Kasemann is thus seen to be an error. To think that the past was a time of wrath and the present a period of grace sounds more like Marcion than Paul. Rom.i:18 is actually not the beginning of a long digression which describes the past as a time of wrath, but the announcement of what is happening now in the realized end-time.²⁷ Verse 18 accordingly counterpoises beautifully with the past seen as a time of anoe and paresis.

The actual number of hapax words in Rom.iii:24f. is exaggerated by the formulary hypothesis. We can now exclude apolutrosis, haima, protithemi, and dikaosune. The other unique terms like hilasterion or paresis we have noted are universally rare. In Rom.iii:24f. Paul has come to the zenith of his soteriological exposition, he is straining language, in such circumstances hapax are to be expected. This is supported by the frequency of hapax words elsewhere in the chapter (excluding the scriptural catena vv.10-18), for example:

ho epiphoron (v.5); endikon (v.8); proecho (v.9); proaitiaomai (v.9 unattested anywhere else); hypodikos (v.19); ekkleio (passive v.27); poios (v.27 only in 1 Cor.xv:35).²⁸

²⁶1 QS 3:3f.; 1 QH 4:37; CD 4:6.

²⁷This is brilliantly presented by C.K. Barrett, Romans, p.33: "Paul does not say that the wrath of God was revealed in the old time before the promulgation of the Gospel, or that it will be revealed at the last day, he says that God's wrath is being revealed from heaven now...."

²⁸I owe this point to John Williams in a Seminar paper read in Manchester University, Nov.14, 1972.

Käsemann claims that the fragmentary hypothesis is the only viable explanation of the awkward dikaïoumenoi. This is open to challenge. The pantes in v.23 does not require a corresponding pantes in v.24, as Käsemann claims, because v.23 is itself an epexegetic gloss on the pantes of v.22. Thus v.24 refers back to v.22a and the intervening phrase is a parenthesis.²⁹ We affirm this despite Käsemann's rejection.³⁰

Verse 24 is not an unrelated praise-hymn disturbingly thrust into the context (as for example 1 Tim.iii:16), it is intimately associated with the context. It is therefore incredible to believe that Paul when incorporating this supposed fragment into his epistle was careful enough to make the corrective additions, dōrean tē autou chariti and en Christō Iēsou,³¹ and yet not neat enough to modify dikaïoumenoi into his context. In other words, the formula theory explains nothing and leaves dikaïoumenoi just as awkward as it is for those who take vv.24f. as original with St. Paul.

The same scepticism is warranted in connection with the claim that dia pisteōs is a Pauline addition disturbingly forced into the fragment. H. Ljungman in his thorough study on pistis says that one looks in vain for support of Käsemann's contention that dia pisteōs is forcefully and disturbingly pushed into the context.³²

A. Pluta in a recent monograph³³ has revealed the remarkable literary pattern of vv.24f. On the basis of the balanced nature of the pericope, where a long line is followed by two short lines, one a dia phrase, the other an en phrase,³⁴ he

²⁹ Sanday and Headlam, Romans, pp.85f.

³⁰ Römer, p.88.

³¹ Following Lohse; Käsemann admits it could be a Pauline phrase (Römer, p.89).

³² H. Ljungman, Pistis: A Study of its Presuppositions and its Meaning in Pauline Use (Lund, 1964), p.46.

³³ A. Pluta, Gottes Bundestreue: Ein Schlüsselbegriff in Rom.3:25a (Stuttgart, 1969). Cf. O. Michel, Römer, ad loc. for the same point.

³⁴ Dikaïoumenoi dōrean tē autou chariti
dia tēs apolutrōseōs
tēs en Christō Iēsou
ho proetheto ho Theos hilastērion
dia pisteōs

concludes that "dia pisteōs müsste also original text sein."³⁵ Pluta, as a matter of fact, accepts the Bultmann-Käsemann hypothesis and so is forced to the unlikely conclusion that dia pisteōs is also non-Pauline and belongs originally to the Jewish-Christian formula. It is more reasonable to accept dia pisteōs with Ljungman as both original to the context and original to St. Paul.

The argument drawn from the style, namely, the genitival and prepositional frequency is particularly dubious. The frequency of the genitives is caused by the three occurrences of dia c. gen. and the one occurrence of endeixis, which often takes the genitive. A frequency, by the way, which is in no way in excess of the number of genitives found in vv.21-23 and vv.26-31.³⁶ The same is true of the supposed heaping up of prepositions. The pre-Pauline fragment as delimited by Bultmann contains six prepositions. Verses 21-23 are of similar length and contain four prepositional connectives; verses 27-31 (only slightly longer) have six prepositional linkings.

For the prepositional and genitival argument Käsemann appeals to E. Percy, but that author designates the heaping up of genitives and prepositions as frequent with Paul, not only in the disputed Ephesians but also in the Pauline writings in general.³⁷

Of the twelve criteria laid down by E. Stauffer for isolating creedal formulae only five can be said to be present in Rom.iii:24f. (viz., 2,3,4,11,12). It is challengeable whether numbers two or three really apply, as the contextual dislocation (i.e. dikaïoumenoi) is not really the kind envisaged by Stauffer.

This leaves only the different language (No.4),³⁸ the rela-

en tō autou haimati
eis endeixin tēs dikaïosunēs autou
dia tēn paresin tōn progegonotōn
en tē anoche tou Theou

³⁵ A. Pluta, Bundestreue, p.43.

³⁶ vv.21-23 contain ten genitives as against seven in the supposed fragment.

³⁷ "Nirgends dürften uns aber sonst Anhäufungen von Präpositions-
ausdrücken in solcher Ausdehnung begegnen wie im Epheser-
brief sowie in den anerkannten Paulinen; ..." E. Percy, Die
Probleme der Kolosser- und Epheserbriefe (Lund, 1946), p.212.

³⁸ This essay denies the validity of this argument, see above.

tive pronominal linkage (No.11),³⁹ and the theological reference to the elementary truths of salvation-history (No.12). The last, of course, can be questioned, for Rom.iii:25 hardly belongs to the same theological category as texts like Acts iv:10; Rom.i:3; 1 Cor.xv:3; 1 Tim.iii:16. Though not appealed to by Käsemann, Stauffer's eighth criterion concerning rhythmical form is also valid provided we allow dia pisteōs to be original in the pericope. This criterion, because of Paul's own poetic ability, can only come in as ancillary proof once the formula is isolated on other grounds. It is the contention of this essay that such grounds are lacking.

We come then to the conclusion that despite its wide acceptance, in Germany especially, the fragmentary hypothesis of Bultmann and Käsemann is invalid and that Rom.iii:24f. is a genuine insight into Paul's own peculiar thought.

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³⁹First noted by J. Reumann, Interpretation 20, p.436, and now endorsed by Käsemann (Römer, p.89). We should notice that the relative pronoun more usually begins the formula rather than occurring in its midst. Cf. R.H. Fuller's criterion (No.4) in The Foundations of New Testament Christology (London, 1965), p.21. Reumann (art. cit.) is aware of this difference. If one begins the fragment with v.25 as many do then of course this criterion is fulfilled more exactly (cf. Acts iv:10), but at the loss of any support from dikaïoumenoi for evidence of dislocation.