

**A TRANSHISTORICAL INTERVIEW:
ADOLF DEISSMANN ON A 21ST CENTURY LEADER**

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Abstract

In this article, a transhistorical interviewer from the first decade of the 21st century conducts an interview with Adolf Deissmann in the first decade of the 20th century, on Paul of Tarsus of the 1st century. Statistics from Boston University's World Religion Database and many other sources indicate that a century-long trend (1910-2010) is making charismatic evangelical Christianity the most representative form of rapidly-replicating Christianity in the early 21st century. As a result, Paul, the social change leader of earliest Christianity, has gained a premier global position and has become a paradigmatic voice for that spreading spirituality.

In 1891, Cambridge University historian F. W. Farrar explored the thoughts of Stoic philosophers, giving attention to Seneca and Paul, contemporaries of the first century A.D. In 1982, Boston College philosopher Peter Kreeft constructed an imagined dialogue between John F. Kennedy, Aldous Huxley, and C. S. Lewis. Here, at a century's distance (1910-2011), Deissmann is chosen for a transhistorical interview about Paul of Tarsus because of Deissmann's scholastic longevity and continuing intellectual influence, production of literary classics, grasp and expression of the spiritual dimension, and ability to make academic findings accessible to a larger audience.

The transhistorical interview is a qualitative method of inquiry that is field-focused, employs self as instrument, is interpretive in character, uses expressive language, devotes attention to particulars, and is persuasive. From the mode of a transhistorical qualitative interview, Deissmann is asked to explain the impact of actually traveling the geographical area of Paul's life and leadership, to assess the emissarian leader historically, to critique Paul's methodologies, and to give his views on several other lines of thought.

(Key Words: Adolf Deissmann, Evangelical Christianity, Paul of Tarsus, Stoics, Huxley, Lewis)

INTRODUCTION

By the beginning of the 21st century it had become rather evident that spiritualities (sets of worshipviews/worldviews/worldvenues) (Wolf, 2010; Nelson, 2002; Beale, 2008; Novak, 1982; Griffiths, 1984; Bauer, 1976; Bauer, 1981; Harrison and Berger, Eds., 2006), not just secularizations (sets of worldviews/worldvenues), will be shaping the future that we will all share (Huntington, 1996; Enderle, Ed., 1999; Huntington and Berger, Eds., 2002). “God is back” is the way some put it. But for billions on the planet, from village farmers and shamans to urban businesspersons and university professors, God and the gods had never left (Micklethwait and Wooldridge, 2009; Prothero, 2010a, 2010b; Edgerton, 1992; Stark, 2007; Knapp, 2010). More than ever, then, it seems that in the 21st century, the most crucial and persistent question of the global conversation is: what is the best way to live life on this planet (Wolf, 2006:1-13)?

Statistics from Boston University’s World Religion Database and many other sources (Johnston and Ross, Eds., 2009; Berger and Huntington, Eds., 2003; Jenkins, 2007) indicate that a the century-long trend (1910-2010) is making charismatic evangelical Christianity the most representative form of rapidly-replicating Christianity in the first half of the 21st century. As a result, the apostle Paul of Tarsus, a primary change agent leader of earliest Christianity, has gained a premier global position and has become a paradigmatic voice for that spreading spirituality. For Paul represents the kind of Christianity where “the criterion of what is Christian,” according to Tübingen University professor Hans Küng, “is the original Christian message, the gospel, indeed the original figure of Christianity: the concrete, historical figure of Jesus of Nazareth, who for Christians is the Messiah, that Jesus Christ from whom any Christian church derives its existence” (Küng, 2008: xxii; Sanneh, 2003; Jenkins, 2008; Bell, 2007; Blasi et al., Eds., 2002; Meeks, 2005).

In 1891, Cambridge University historian F. W. Farrar explored the thoughts of Stoic philosophers Epictetus, Seneca, and Marcus Aurelius with that of the earliest Christians, giving due attention to Seneca and Paul, contemporaries of the first century A.D. (Farrar, 1875). In 1982, Boston College philosopher Peter Kreeft constructed a triologue between John F. Kennedy, Aldous Huxley and C. S. Lewis, all of whom died within hours of each other on November 22, 1963, and whom Kreeft saw as “a microcosm of humanity’s tripartite intellectual history.... The triologue centers on the Center, the hinge of our history: its main question is the identity of Jesus” (Kreeft, 1982:9). In this article, from the first decade of the 21st century, I reach back to interview Adolf Deissmann in the first decade of the 20th century via a transhistorical interview. The intent of the interview is to gain from professor Deissmann some sense of why a 1st century change advocate of the 1st century could become such a compelling leader for life and social transformation for multiplying millions in the 21st century.

ADOLF DEISSMANN

Adolf Deissmann (1866-1937) was a generational contemporary of Sigmund Freud (1856-1937), Max Weber (1864-1920), Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924), and Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948). Adolf was 13 when Albert Einstein was born, and died 16 years before Einstein. Deissmann’s life was centered within Germany’s period of intellectual pre-eminence which began in the mid-nineteenth century and extended until the abrupt abortion with the assumption of power by Adolf Hitler.

German scholarship in Deissmann's time was often ponderous, convoluted, needlessly obscure, and lacking in humor. Deissmann however, as well as his colleague Max Weber, embodies the best qualities of social and historical studies of the time: fierce dedication to the ideals of science, indefatigable academic output, and intellectual boldness in undertaking daunting issues (Andreski, 2010:vii-viii & 1-5; Veith, 1993).

In addition, Deissmann displays (1) scholastic longevity and continuing intellectual influence, (2) the production of classic works, (3) a grasp and expression of the spiritual, and (4) the ability to make academic findings accessible to a larger audience (Deissman, 2004:397; Jackson et al., Eds., 1909; Willmer, 1866-1937:290; Douglas, et al., Eds., 1978).

First, there is the matter of *scholastic longevity and continuing intellectual influence*. Longevity says something about the enduring worth of a work, and Deissmann's sheer survival indicates something of his continued viability and relevance (Deissmann, 1996; Deissmann, 1927; Smith, 1972; Hexter, 1995; Stark, 1996; O'Brien in Hawthorn et al., Eds., 1993: 550-553). Several generative ideas Deissmann germinated during the 1890s sprouted and matured at the Universities of Marburg (1892-1895), Heidelberg (1895-1908) and Berlin (1908-34); and they still provoke comment and consideration entering the twenty-first century, whether to disagree with or to advocate his positions (Quinn and Walker, 2000:104, 211, 232, 246, 263, 293, 370, 443, 480, 536, 621, and 778; Mounce, 2000:xxx, cxxxv, 3, 79, 165, and 411; Brown, 1997:74-96; Kümmel and Kee, 1996; Guthrie, 1996; Carson and Moo, 2005; Schreiner, 2001:156-159 and 189-192; Meeks, 2005:51-52, 72-3 and 214-20; Still and Horrell, 2009; Malherbe, 2003).

A second reason for choosing Deissmann is his ability to produce almost overnight *classics*, with insights that continue to appreciate in value. His judgments have proved amazingly (though not always) sound, and his scholarship, remarkably enduring: *Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World* (Heidelberg, 1905/Peabody, 1996); as well as his *Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History* (Berlin, 1925/Charleston, 2010), were recognized as classics from their first appearance.

Further, there is the factor of his grasp and expression of *the spiritual dimension*. Deissmann visioned earliest Christianity as a popular socio-spiritual movement ("popular cult"), growing from a mystical personal experience of Jesus; and Paul, not as a theologian but as a man of the people, responding to the impact of the Damascus road encounter, a "reacting mystic."

It was also Deissmann who focused scholarly attention on the Pauline concept of "in Christ" (1892), suggesting that Christ and Spirit were interchangeable in Paul's thinking and worldview; and using the analogy of a person being in air, as the air is in the person. It has influenced earliest Christianity worldview studies ever since (Deissmann, 1927:152-153; Engberg-Pederson, 2004; Tucker, 2010; Fitzmyer, 1989:89-93 and 97-100; Seifrid in Hawthorne et al., Eds., 1993; Wedderburn, 1985:83-97; O'Brien, 1999:97-123, 138-52; Moule, 1977/1999:54-62; Jewett in Dunn, ed., 2003).

Finally, Deissmann has the ability to make the academically accurate but obscure, accessible, for Deissmann was both a scholar and a popularizer. We cannot summarily dismiss the Marburg/Heidelberg/Berlin university scholar when he breaks with the reserved academic decorum ranks of his day to vividly say:

Paul is essentially first and foremost a hero of religion. The theological element in him is secondary. Naïveté in him is stronger than reflection, mysticism stronger than dogmatism. Christ means more to him than Christology, God more than the doctrine of God.

He is far more a man of prayer, a witness, a confessor, and a prophet, than a learned exegete and close thinking scholastic (Deissmann, 1927:6).

That very point, in fact, is central to Deissmann's century-surviving work, *Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History*:

To show that is so, is, I consider, the object of this sketch (referring to the book, *Paul*). There is to be no attempt to plumb the depths of the manifold problems concerning the externals of Paul's biography. Even the questions of chronology and literary criticism must give place to the chief task of displaying the character of the man in the light of social and religious history (Deissmann, 1927:6-7; Hexter, 1995:111; see 110-112).

For all these reasons Deissmann has been chosen as a historically-distanced person to interview, a person from whom we secure a humanely sensitive, rather widely received, and academically credible qualitative account of the apostle Paul. It is a condensed, comprehensive, and, not unimportantly, an account appreciated for over a century, of an ancient yet dynamic leader whose worshipview, worldview, and recommendations for worldvenues, millions of our contemporaries are revisiting to help them sift through the troubling issues of today's conflicted world.

A TRANSHISTORICAL INTERVIEW

There are several reasons for the transhistorical interview approach to a qualitative look at the apostle Paul. Positioned as an ethnomethodology, (Delamont and Hamersley (58):231-250; Jacob (17):16-24; Marshall and Rossman, 2010:1-16) the Stanford school of thought, gathered around the thinking of Elliott Eisner (Uhrmacher, 2001; Eisner and Peshkin, 1990; Merriman, 2009; Borg et al., 2006), argues for at least six features to qualitative inquiry: it is field-focused, employs self as instrument, is interpretive in character, uses expressive language, devotes attention to particulars, and, finally, is persuasive (Eisner, 1998:27-41).

Because of the field-focused characteristic, qualitative study is nonmanipulative, studying situations and objects intact, observing, interviewing, recording, describing, interpreting, and appraising settings as they are.

The self as an instrument relates to the importance of sensibility and perceptivity in the context of qualitative research, the ability to "see what counts," knowing "what to neglect" and having a "sense for the significant" for "without sensibility the subtleties of the social world go unexperienced. Without a schema no sorting into significance is possible" (Eisner, 1998:34).

Its interpretative character is the third feature: the ability to explain why something is taking place. In qualitative inquiry, the research penetrates the behavioral surface, seeking what Geertz (1973) calls "thick description," aiming beneath manifest behavior to reveal the

meaning events and experiences have for those experiencing them. Historical context provides a background against which particular episodes acquire meaning (Eisner, 1998:35-36).

A fourth feature that qualitative studies display is the use of expressive language. As Eisner explains, “The kind of detachment that some journals prize—the neutralization of voice, the aversion to metaphor and to adjectives, the absence of the first person singular—is seldom a feature of qualitative studies. We display our signatures” (Eisner 1998:36). The presence of voice and the use of expressive language in qualitative research is important in furthering human understanding; called *einfihlung* by German psychologists, *empathy* in English (1998: 36-38).

Attention to details provides flavor. Conventional social science uses particulars to arrive at general statements through the use of sampling procedures and inferential statistics, losing personal flavor. Qualitative studies tend to restore flavor and “this is done, first of all, by sensitivity to what might legitimately be called the aesthetic features of the case” (Eisner 1998:38-39).

The last feature, persuasiveness, is seeing things in a way that satisfies by the cogency of the interpretation. “The entire character of the enterprise has a strong rational and often aesthetic spirit...an approach to the social world that accepts its dynamic and living quality” (1998:39).

The concerns of Eisner and qualitative studies are “the kinds of meaning that people have in their lives” (Eisner 1998:15). He brings frames of reference from the arts and humanities to the world of education. From the arts, Eisner posits a species of qualitative inquiry called “educational connoisseurship and educational criticism” (1998:6), drawing from the fact that *connoisseurship* comes from the Latin *cognoscere*, to know, that is, the ability to see and not merely to look; and that criticism refers to the process of enabling others to see the qualities that a work of art possesses.

With cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz’s advocacy of “thick description” in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973), the effort at interpretation has grown; to get below the surface, to “that most enigmatic aspect of the human condition: the construction of meaning” (Eisner, 1998:15). The works of educators such as Goodman, Lincoln and Guba, Kozol, Eisner, Geertz, and Hiebert (Goodman, 1960; Goodman, 1964; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Kozol, 1968; Geertz, 2001; Hiebert 2008) have served to strengthen the exploration of life meaning across disciplines and cultures.

Professor Adolf Deissmann at Uppsala University provides us with a unique, century-savored thick description of one of the two persons who pounded the nails into the hinge of global history. Personally, I must confess (as is appropriate in the qualitative research mode) that Deissmann seldom disappoints me, though he often still surprises me. For through his 19th century trails, I feel that I am able, even at this distance, to touch some of the depth of the tentmaker of earliest Christianity – that mobile urban emissary who said he had discovered life’s meaning constructed from an empty tomb, a meaning birthed out of an existence which he evocatively called a life “in Christ.” And I can only imagine what it must have been like on those Sunday afternoons when Max Weber and friends were regaled with the journey notes of Heidelberg University’s recently returned peripatetic professor, Adolf Deissmann.

A TRANSHISTORICAL INTERVIEW OF ADOLF DEISSMANN

In what follows then, from the mode of a transhistorical Interviewer, Deissmann is asked to explain the impact of actually traveling the geographical area of the apostle Paul's life. Further on he is asked to assess the apostle historically, to critique Paul's methodologies, and to give his views on several other lines of thought.

From the 300 pages of Deissmann's *Paul*, I have edited a cadre of his vivid descriptions of Paul. By editing, themes throughout the book are brought together—hopefully only for the compaction of (not distortion of) Deissmann's original opinions.

Without the embedded place that Deissmann holds in critical academia, the interview excerpts which follow might earlier seem to many to be misspoken. But Deissmann's 19th century estimates about the power of Paul to generate events in history perhaps appear less projective in the light of the 20th century's 1989-1991 revolutions of Europe, and the growing ferment of Paul's thought on the global South.

At any rate, coming from the cold corridors of nineteenth and early twentieth century German skepticism, Deissmann's words carry a different kind of taste, evoking pause, even consideration. Their value here is especially that they cast a backdrop to the apostle Paul, and they do it tersely, authoritatively, and, in the span of the literature, rather rarely.

They supply us with an accurate background and an emotionally rich portrait of one of the game-changers of history, the apostle Paul. Let me say now only that, if someone like myself or perhaps even yourself, were to write what follows, it surely would be dismissed with knowing smiles.

But because of who Deissmann was and remains in the field of Pauline studies historically, the following interview actually becomes a kind of shorthand. It allows us to vividly grasp emotionally as well as intellectually the significance of Paul and begin to get inklings of the importance of the lifestyle pattern he advocated: a qualitative way to better locate, position, and appraise the apostle Paul and the pattern of life-change he replicated across the Roman Empire (Wolf, 2010). Thus this century old German scholar supplies precisely what is needed – a voice that is solid, skeptical, stoic, and, for this context, scholarly; and Deissmann now also carries the advantage of vintage.

In this transhistorical interview, professor Deissmann is asked to explain the impact of actually traveling the geographical area of the apostle Paul's life. For while field study is common today because of the disciplines of sociology and anthropology, those were nascent fields at the time of Deissmann, and armchair theology still ruled Continental and New World academic posts.

INTERVIEWER: *Professor Deissmann, you were invited by the Olaus Petri Trustees to deliver eight lectures in German at Sweden's University of Uppsala in 1909. Your comments in this interview were first given as lectures before faculty and students of the University, having just returned from your second field site visit to the Middle East.*

This was a rather unusual experience for a European professor of the social sciences and religious studies at the turn of the twentieth century. Could you describe for us your learning curve from your onsite observations, your field studies in Asia Minor and the Mediterranean area?

DEISSMANN: After long years devoted to the study of the ancient records of Paul and their modern interpreters, it was my rare good fortune to find a new teacher.

This new teacher is in no sense academic: paper and paragraphs are unknown to her. All that she teaches she dispenses with generous hand in the bright sunshine and open air – the world of the South and East (the Mediterranean and Asia Minor), the world of Paul.

An Anatolian, Paul, a man of the ancients, a *homo novus*, rising from the mass of the insignificant many. Heeded by no man of letters among his pagan contemporaries, yet destined to be a leading personality in the world's history: a *homo religiosus*, at once a classic of mysticism and a most practical man of affairs. A prophet and dreamer, crucified to the world in Christ, yet for ever memorable as a citizen of the world at the present moment – such is the man whose outlines I have been seeking to portray (Deissmann, 1927:viii).

INTERVIEWER: *Address for us, please, Professor Deissmann, some of the issues surrounding ethnocentricity and participant research.*

DEISSMANN: If the traveler goes in a teachable spirit, and leaves at home all conceit of his own superior civilization, he will learn to see things in their true relief and to view them from the proper distance. He sees what light and shade are, and the meaning of heights and depths. His appreciation of simplicity and wide spontaneous growth, and of things not yet harmonized and conventionalized, becomes keener.

Wondrous problems of classification and division suggest themselves. The extremes of contrast between the modern book-culture of the West and the ancient non-literary culture of Anatolia become tangible. Ill fares it...with our painful inheritance from the scholar's study—the microscopic ingenuity, inexorable, and overweening in its ignorance of the world (Deissmann, 1927:ix).

INTERVIEWER: *How did your onsite field research effect your own personal view of Paul and his life work?*

DEISSMANN: Beside the Paul who has been turned into a western scholastic philosopher, beside the aristocratized, conventionalized, and modernized Paul, I would fain set Paul whom I think to have seen at Tarsus, Jerusalem and Damascus, in Antioch, Lycaonia, Galatia, Ephesus, and Corinth, and whose words became alive to me at night on the decks of Levant shipping, and to the sound of birds of passage winging their flight towards the Taurus – alive in their passionate emotion, the force of their popular appeal, and their prophetic depth.

I mean Paul the Jew, who in the days of the Caesars breathed the air of the Mediterranean and ate the bread which he had earned by the labor of his own hand; the missionary whose dark shadow fell on the glittering marble pavement of the great city in the blinding glare of noon; the mystic devotee of Christ who will be understood not as the incarnation of a system but as a

living complex of inner polarities which refuse to be parceled out – contending forces the strain of which he once alluded to himself in writing the saints at Philippi: ‘I am torn between the two’.

Seeing with my own eyes the places where the primitive gospel was preached and Paul’s life work was done, I gained a general impression of the structure of the Pauline world which to me personally has increased in value and effect from year to year (Deissmann, 1927:viii-x).

INTERVIEWER: *Help us, then, Professor Deissmann, to compare and evaluate Paul historically. From our vantage point of the early 21st century, we have witnessed in our lifetimes the spread of the underground church in China, the explosion of evangelical faith in Latin America, the velvet revolutions of 1989 in Asia and Europe, the worshipview/worldview/worldvenue contest for Sub-Sahara Africa, and the transformation of the Arab world by the 2011 Tunisia-Egypt revolution – all of which would acknowledge the influence of the thinking of the apostle Paul.*

You have had some strong words about Paul and his historical significance, positions which some have disagreed with. Could you elaborate for us?

DEISSMANN: There is no single person since Nero’s days who has left such permanent marks on the souls of men as Paul the *homo novus*. The cosmopolitan trait that this unknown man here and there exhibits is the single silent prophecy of his future influence on the history of the world. Paul of Tarsus, was not confined by the walls of his workshop or by the narrow, gloomy courts of his Ghetto. He was a citizen of the world (Deissmann, 1927:77).

Two names contain in themselves the primitive history of Christianity: the names of Jesus and Paul. Jesus and Paul – these two do not stand side by side as first and second. From the broadest historical standpoint Jesus appears as the One, and Paul as the first after the One, or – in more Pauline phraseology – as the first in the One.

Jesus stands in history linking heaven and earth together, but He stands in lonely majesty and might: He himself alone. Paul needs some foundation. What Paul is, he is in Christ.

But compare Paul with others. Then Paul is spiritually the great power of the apostolic age: he labored more, and not only labored more, but created more than all the others. Therefore, the others recede behind him, and therefore the historian, as he surveys the beginnings of Christianity, sees Paul as first after Jesus (Deissmann, 1927:3). Who at that time in the official world had taken note of the obscure traveling preacher?

The Christ-cult was in the time of Paul a secret affair of humble unknown people in the back streets of the great Mediterranean cities (Deissmann, 1927:56). Now we see that this man, ailing, ill-treated, weakened by hunger and perhaps by fever, completed such a life-work that, as a mere physical performance, challenges our admiration. Just measure out the mileage which

Paul traveled by water and land, and yourself try to follow the course of his journeys.

You sit, with your visêd pass and diplomatic recommendations in your pocket, in...comfort...on the Anatolian railway, and travel in the evening twilight easily towards you destination. While, having already booked your rooms, you are carried rapidly and without effort over the pass, you see in the fading light of evening, deep below you, the ancient road, narrow and stony, that climbs the pass, and upon that road a few people on foot and riding donkeys are hurrying along towards the crowded, dirty inn.

They are bound to reach it before darkness settles in, for the night is no friend to man. The wild dogs of the inhospitable shepherds set themselves raging in the way. Robbers are ready to take money, clothes, and beasts. And the demons of fever threaten the overheated and weary in the cold night wind, which is already blowing down from the side valleys.

It is Paul we have seen on that darkening road up the pass. It is the wearied Paul who seeks repose on the hard wood. And it was Paul who was tossed about on a broken ship's plank for a day and a night. Paul, the man who suffered so much hunger and thirst.

One of the most lasting impressions of these journeys, made for the most part with all modern conveniences for travel, is inexpressible astonishment at the purely physical achievement of Paul the traveler, who could truly say, not without ground, that he buffeted his body and brought it into subjection like a slave. Strength in weakness (Deissmann, 1927:63-65).

Born in the borderland between the Hellenistic and Semitic world, on one of the great international roads, connecting East and West, Saul, the Semitic-Hellenist, who was also called Paul, felt a vast compelling impulse to traverse the world from East to West; the sick man buffeted by the messenger of Satan spent almost a generation of traveling; the Jew, who came from Cilicia, Jerusalem, and Syria to Ephesus and Corinth, looked towards Rome and beyond Rome longingly towards the end of the world, to Spain.

The mystic, filled with the Spirit, who, on the coast of Asia Minor heard in a vision the voice of the West – Come over and help us – is a man whose practical performance is almost unparalleled – I have labored more abundantly than they all (Deissmann, 1927:223-224). His longing in Christ for the new world, though enthusiastic and ardent to an extent that makes the comfortable paper eschatology of our dogmatic shrivel up to nothing in comparison, did not degenerate into an unhealthy and barren chiliasm or quietism.

On the contrary, it set free moral forces to act in this passing world. Certainly without the hope of Christ, Paul would not have become famous in history as the man of action, the Apostle of Christ (Deissmann, 1927:219-220).

Yes, this *homo novus*, Paul, standing in his own place, amongst the common people of the ancient world, rises high above the mass that surrounds him; rises, too, above his famous contemporaries who sprang from the upper class.

There is no single person of Nero's days who has left such permanent marks on the souls of men as Paul the *homo novus* (Deissmann, 1927:77).

INTERVIEWER: *Paul is well known in today's world: quoted by our politicians, known to world leaders, studied in universities. From your reflections, what was special about the man we know of as the apostle Paul, and how was he regarded in his own generation?*

DEISSMANN: It was as a missionary that Paul had the most definite influence upon subsequent history (Deissmann, 1927:223-224). In the streets, in the marketplace, in the lecture halls – for example ‘in the school of Tyrannus’ at Ephesus—and even in prison, in ‘bonds’, he on occasion did successful mission work: ‘the word of God was not bound’ (Deissmann, 1927:238).

He gathered around himself gradually quite a number of helpers for his missionary work. They shared his great work as fellow travelers: letter-writers, letter-carriers, personal representatives, and of course, also as evangelists and teachers. In difficult situations he was able to rely upon them (Deissmann, 1927:239). Paul was fond of coining expressive names full of personal feeling for these helpers. What a vast deal lies hidden behind these brief names. How many experiences, how much endurance, how much brotherhood. The emotional strength especially which pulses in these names was one of the magic charms wielded by Paul, the leader of men.

His influence upon the common people depended not least on his ability to arouse the slumbering forces in the souls of the simplest by the hearty directness of his appeal as man to man (Deissmann, 1927:240-241). This does not mean, of course, that the world contemporary with him observed, or had the remotest conception of the mighty influence vouchsafed to the work of his life. His own age saw nothing remarkable in the traveling tentmaker.

To the Roman official, before whose tribunal he was brought by the denunciation of malicious adversaries, he was an obscure Jew, or perhaps a mad enthusiast. To the world at large Paul, the missionary, was just one of the many traveling speakers who then went up and down in the world in the service of some philosophical or religious idea: ‘a setter forth of strange demons’ (Deissmann, 1927:224-226).

INTERVIEWER: *What kind of person would you say Paul was personally? In other words, what kind of person was behind this movement which was to shape history so strongly? Some say he was stressed personally, and lived in a kind of social dissonance, a largely marginalized person. Today we see various marginalized leaders, leaders struggling with anger, frustration, conflicts. What kind of person was Paul? How would you describe him psychologically and interpersonally as a world-class leader?*

DEISSMANN: Paul is by nature tender. He weeps and he even speaks with antique simplicity of his weeping. He enters a new place of his missionary work with timidity, with ‘fear and trembling’.

He is capable of the deepest feeling, calls the mother of a friend in a popular good-humored way his own mother; writes as a father; can even feel like a

mother, emotion and love flow from his lips (Deissmann, 1927:66). At times, however, this tender, gently smiling Paul, who can sometimes be so tolerant of others, is hard: he writes like a jailer, he is angry and his words of wrath strike the offender like lightening.

In particular, he is boundlessly severe towards his opponents. Not shrinking from the bitterest tone, he coins polemical phrases of an absolutely fanatical coarseness (for example, Galatians 5.12: ‘As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and castrate themselves!’). The effect... is crushing.

This mixture of mildness and severity in Paul reminds us, as does much else, of Luther (Deissmann, 1927:66-67). And yet, Paul’s position is utterly different from that of Luther. From 1517 onwards Luther had a position of great publicity, as a man of letters, reformer, politician and organizer. Paul remained in obscurity. It was only long after his death that he became a person of historical importance (Deissmann, 1927:75).

Paul in the world of his day was indeed no man of letters, whose works aroused interest, no man of learning, with impressive theories of culture. The appearance of this one religious traveling preacher amongst the many apostles of other cults in the great cities surrounding the Mediterranean would in those days gain no more attention than would in our day the activities of an American Adventist in Hamburg or Berlin (Deissmann, 1927:74).

From all this we may draw conclusions about Paul’s personality: being himself both tender and severe he had made the people with whom he came into contact friends or opponents. He did not know the comfortable quietness of the ordinary man. His way in life lay through the fires and tempests of love and hate.

That the man Paul was a man of the ancient world goes without saying. But as a warning against every attempt at modernization it is well to formulate the sentence expressly. Nevertheless, it certainly ought not to be forgotten that in the great movements of the soul of humanity, the difference between the so-called modern man and the man of antiquity is not so very great (Deissmann, 1927:69-70).

INTERVIEWER: *In the 21st century we have major branches of Christianity that go by various designations: Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant, are some of the more readily recognized. You have described Paul’s kind of Christianity—his version, if you please—in a certain way. What is your designation of choice for Paul’s kind of Christianity, and why?*

DEISSMANN: Christ-centered Christianity. The Christ-centered Christianity of Paul is the necessary form in which alone the Master’s revelation could be assimilated by mankind, and which alone was capable of fashioning a perennial religion for the people and a religion of the peoples powerful enough to mold the history of the world.

Paul did not invent a Christology intellectually adapted to the wisdom of the intellectual.

What he did was, out of the depths of his own mystical spiritual experience of Christ to bring to the poor and lowly and to those who felt themselves inwardly poor and lowly, the holy figure of the Divine-Human Redeemer – that figure which was folly to earth’s wisdom – in order that in fellowship with Him even the poorest and most helpless soul might be granted access to the living God (Deissmann, 1927:258).

During the well-nigh two thousand years of Christian thinking upon Christ, the words of Jesus and the cross of Jesus have constantly been the sign-posts visible from afar, which have prevented the all-too-subtle Christologists from completely losing their way.

The identity insisted upon by Paul of the Crucified with the Living One and of the Living One with the Crucified, of the earthly with the heavenly and of the heavenly with the earthly, imparts to Christ-mysticism and the Christ-cult two things: ethical sobriety and enthusiastic fervor.

The mere spiritual Christ, so easily liable to become attenuated to a Christ idea, would have created neither a religion of the people nor a religion of the peoples, but would have remained a rapidly worn out thesis for discussion among a narrow circle of Christologists.

The mere historical Jesus would certainly have had greater carrying power as the foundation of the new churches, but would have made Christianity retrospective, bound by the Law like Judaism, rigid like Islam.

The Pauline Christ-intimacy with its decisive confession to the Christ present and coming, who is the crucified Jesus, made both past and future present. It was capable of creating a cult fellowship both popular and of world-wide historic effect, which, filled with ethical power, was no book religion looking backward to the Law, but a spiritual religion with face set forward. In all this Paul united Christian piety inseparably with the person of Jesus Christ, and that is his achievement in the world’s history (Deissmann, 1927:256-257).

The Christ-centered Christianity of Paul is therefore neither a breach with the Gospel of Jesus nor a sophistication of the Gospel of Jesus. It secures for the many the Gospel experience of God which had been the possession of the One, and it does so by anchoring these many souls in the Soul of the One (Deissmann, 1927:258).

INTERVIEWER: *What was it in your opinion, then, that drove this man out into the world? What was it that Paul found so compelling, so powerful in his life and career?*

DEISSMANN: The experience of Damascus was fundamental for Paul, as a missionary, as for much else. The conversion was not only the transformation of an enemy of Christ into a friend of Christ but also the transformation of an apostle of Pharisaic-Judaism into an apostle of Christ (Deissmann, 1927:231). Damascus had this double meaning for him: the revelation of the living Christ within him, and the obligation to preach that Christ as a gospel to the nations (Deissmann, 1927:235).

Paul's religious experience was Christo-centric. Paul's religion is Christo-centric. It is not first of all the product of a number of convictions and elevated doctrines about Christ. It is 'fellowship' with Christ, Christ-intimacy. Paul lives 'in' Christ, 'in' the living and present spiritual Christ, who is about him on all sides, who fills him, who speaks to him, and speaks in and through him. Christ is for Paul not a person of the past, with whom he can only come into contact by mediating on the words that have been handed down from him, not a 'historical' personage, but a reality and power of the present, an 'energy', whose life-giving powers are daily expressing themselves in him, and to whom, since that day at Damascus, he has felt a personal-cult dependence (Deissmann, 1927:135-136).

INTERVIEWER: *How did Paul diffuse this experience, this personal and social innovation to others? How did he generate such a powerful social movement?*

DEISSMANN: The message of Christ which the tentmaker of Tarsus preached to the simple people of the great Hellenistic cities in the age of the Caesars, must have been simple—or at any rate understandable by the simple—transporting and inspiring to the common people.

There is a way by which we can recognize even today the popular simplicity of the Pauline gospel. We must take seriously the observation that in the numberless confessions about Christ which follow one another without system in the letters of Paul the reference is not to a diversity of many objects but to the diversity of the psychological reflections of the one object of religion.

To this one object the confessor bears witness in a continually new variation of figurative words of similar meaning and often with the parallelism of prophetic emphasis. Of Paul's pictorial expressions for salvation in Christ, five are the most important: justification, reconciliation, forgiveness, redemption, adoption.

These classical words have exerted such an enormous influence upon later dogma that they have themselves in the passage of the centuries become covered with so thick a coating of dogmatic verdigris, that for many people it has become difficult to recognize their original meaning. But to the pre-dogmatic simple person of the ancient world the original meaning was clear because he understood without difficulty that the apostolic words were pictorial (Deissmann, 1927:166-168).

All these 'concepts' of justification, reconciliation, forgiveness, redemption, adoption are not distinguishable from one another like the acts of a drama, but are synonymous forms of expression for one single thing (Deissmann, 1927:176). In each of these five picture-words man stands before God—each time in a different guise before the same God: first as an accused person, secondly as an enemy, thirdly as a debtor, fourthly and fifthly as a slave.

Transferred into the position 'in Christ' he experiences the setting aside of this barrier and finds access to God. This access to God in Christ is called acquittal, or reconciliation, or remission, or redemption, or adoption. Paul the architect, did not plan five or more doors side by side, or one after the other

into the royal palace of grace, but one single open door. But he had many different sketches of the *janua vitae*—the doorway to life—in his mind (Deissmann, 1927:168). It is furthermore remarkable, that all five of the groups of metaphors just mentioned are taken from the practice of law.

Paul was fond of legal metaphors which would present itself especially easily to the city-dweller, and would be well understood by his churches (Deissmann, 1927:176-177). The cosmopolitan cities were especially his sphere of work. Paul the city-dweller evangelized in the great cities (Deissmann, 1927:227).

The subject matter of Paul's mission preaching is Christ exalted on the Cross, the living Christ, the Crucified, with an especial emphasis on the near approach of the completed Kingdom of God, and with strong ethical demands. Everything is presented at first with the greatest possible simplicity: 'I fed you with milk, not with meat; for you were not able to bear it.' But then the treasures of those 'riches in Christ'...were gradually opened out, and those unknown people, whom chance had thrown together in the slums of the cosmopolitan city, became members of 'the body of Christ', 'enriched in Him, in all utterance and in all knowledge (Deissmann, 1927:244).'

INTERVIEWER: *Thank you, Dr. Deissmann, for you time, your comments, and your contribution to our discussion. You have been most helpful to orient us to the cultural and physical circumstances of Paul's world, as well as giving us penetrating insights and correlations as to the kind of person Paul was and the movement of which he was so much a foundational and flaming part. I hope we will be able to speak again in the future.*

DEISSMANN: I hope to be able to continue the discussion (Deissmann, 1927: vii).

CONCLUSION

Today, millions around the world continue Deissmann's discussion on the most persistent and crucial question of the 21st century's global conversation: what is the best way to live life on this planet? On that question, through the qualitative inquiry method of the transhistorical interview, we have listened to a generational contemporary of Sigmund Freud, Max Weber, Woodrow Wilson, Mahatma Gandhi, and Adolf Hitler: Heidelberg University's Adolf Deissmann

Others have emphasized Deissmann's scholastic longevity, continuing intellectual influence, and production of classic works. I hope in this transhistorical interview, you have come to see why I think professor Deissmann's ability to make academic findings accessible to a larger audience and his grasp and expression of spiritual realities are of equal and even greater value. Deissmann himself would be pleased, I think, to know that one hundred years after his 1909 "sketch of Paul" (2010), scholars are still discovering his then-disputed way of doing and reporting social sciences research – field-focused, employing self as instrument, interpretive in character, use of expressive language, devoting attention to particulars, and using persuasion. He would most surprised, perhaps, to realize that it has even found a home in academic circles through Geertz, Eisner, and others' qualitative inquiry practices.

But Deissmann has not spoken of himself. Instead, he has given us and solid orientation and a sensitive interpretation of an ancient yet dynamic leader, the apostle Paul. With Christianity still the world's largest religion, the voice of Paul is more listened to today than at any time in history. For it is Paul's worshipview, worldview, and recommendations for worldvenues, that millions are hearing, considering, and adopting to guide their own lives.

Of major significance then, is this: Charismatic evangelical Christianity continues the century-long growth trend (1910-2010) that has made Christianity the most rapidly-replicating spirituality of the first half of the 21st century. And in this "combination of Biblical and Mystical Christianity...in which God's (external) Word remains authoritative, but is supplemented by the (inner) gift of the Holy Spirit (Woodhead, 2006:148)," Paul is the central voice.

Thus, Paul, the primary change agent leader of earliest Christianity, has gained a premier global position by becoming a paradigmatic voice for that spreading spirituality. Through this transhistorical interview, Adolf Deissmann gives us a vivid sense of why Paul was not only an impacting 1st century change advocate, but why, for multiplying millions, he is also such a compelling leader for life and social transformation in the 21st century – still unknown, yet well known.

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