

activity amongst the Gentiles than Paul could possibly have had at that time, about which epoch, indeed, Barnabas is said to have sought him in Tarsus, apparently for the purpose of first commencing such a career.<sup>1</sup> Certainly the account of his active ministry begins in the Acts only in chap. xiii. Then, it is not possible to suppose that, if such a dispute regarding circumcision and the Gospel of the uncircumcision as is sketched in Gal. ii. had taken place on a previous occasion, it could so soon be repeated, Acts xv., and without any reference to the former transaction. Comparatively few critics, therefore, have ventured to maintain that the second visit recorded in the Epistle is the same as the second mentioned in the Acts (xi. 30), and in modern times the theory is almost entirely abandoned. If, therefore, it be admitted that Paul mentions all the journeys which he had made to Jerusalem up to the time at which he wrote, and that his second visit was not the second visit of the Acts, but must be placed later, it follows clearly, upon the Apostle's own assurance, that the visit mentioned in Acts xi. 30, xii. 25, cannot have taken place and is unhistorical; and this is the conclusion of the majority of critics, including many Apologists, who, whilst suggesting that, for some reason, Barnabas may alone have gone to Jerusalem without Paul, or otherwise deprecating any imputation of conscious inaccuracy to the author, still substantially confirm the result that Paul did not on that occasion go to Jerusalem, and consequently that the statement is not historical. On the other hand, it is suggested that the additional visit to Jerusalem is inserted by the author with a view to conciliation, by representing that Paul was in constant communication with the Apostles and the community of Jerusalem, and that he acted with their approval and sympathy. It is scarcely possible to observe the peculiar variations between the narratives of the Acts and of Paul without feeling that the author of the former deliberately sacrifices the independence and individuality of the great Apostle of the Gentiles.

The great mass of critics agree in declaring that the second visit described in the Epistle is identical with the third recorded in the Acts (xv.), although a wide difference of opinion exists amongst them as to the historical value of the account contained in the latter. This general agreement renders it unnecessary for us to enter at any length into the arguments which establish the identity, and we shall content ourselves with very concisely stating some of the chief reasons for this conclusion. The date in both cases corresponds, whilst there are insuperable chronological objections to identifying the second journey of the Epistle with any earlier or later visit mentioned in Acts. We have referred to other

<sup>1</sup> Acts xi. 25 f.



reasons against its being placed earlier than the third visit of Acts, and there are still stronger objections to its being dated after the third. It is impossible, considering the object of the Apostle, that he could have passed over in silence such a visit as that described Acts xv., and that the only alternative would be to date it later than the composition of the Epistle, to which the narrative of the Acts as well as all other known facts would be irreconcilably opposed. On the other hand, the date, the actors, the cause of dispute, and probably the place (Antioch) in which that dispute originated, so closely correspond that it is incredible that such a coincidence of circumstances should again have occurred.

Without anticipating our comparison of the two accounts of this visit, we must here at least remark that the discrepancies are so great that not only have apologetic critics, as we have indicated, adopted the theory that the second visit of the Epistle is not the same as the third of the Acts, but is identical with the second (xi. 30), of which so few particulars are given, but some, and notably Wieseler,<sup>1</sup> have maintained it to have been the same as that described in Acts xviii. 21 f., whilst Paley and others<sup>2</sup> have

<sup>1</sup> *Chron. ap. Zeit.*, p. 179 f., p. 201 f.; *Br. Pauli an d. Galater*, p. 93 f.

<sup>2</sup> Paley, *Evidences*, and *Horæ Paul.*, ch. v., Nos. 2, 10, p. 367 f., 382 f.; Schrader, *Der Ap. Paulus*, i., p. 75 f., 122 f. It may be well to quote the following passage from Paley, a witness whose testimony will scarcely be suspected of unorthodox partiality: "It must not be dissembled that the comparison of our Epistle with the history presents some difficulties, or, to say the least, some questions of considerable magnitude. It may be doubted, in the first place, to what journey the words which open the second chapter of the Epistle—'then fourteen years afterwards I went unto Jerusalem'—relate. That which best corresponds with the date, and that to which most interpreters apply the passage, is the journey of Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem, when they went thither from Antioch, upon the business of the Gentile converts, and which journey produced the famous council and decree recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Acts. To me this opinion appears to be encumbered with strong objections. In the Epistle, Paul tells us that 'he went up by revelation' (ii. 2). In the Acts we read that he was sent by the Church of Antioch. 'After no small dissension and disputation, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the Apostles and elders about this question' (xv. 2). This is not very reconcilable. In the Epistle St. Paul writes that, when he came to Jerusalem, 'he communicated that Gospel which he preached among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation' (ii. 2). If by 'that Gospel' he meant the immunity of the Gentile Christians from the Jewish law (and I know not what else it can mean), it is not easy to conceive how he should communicate that privately, which was the subject of his public message. But a yet greater difficulty remains—viz., that in the account which the Epistle gives of what passed upon this visit at Jerusalem, no notice is taken of the deliberation and decree which are recorded in the Acts, and which, according to that history, formed the business for the sake of which the journey was undertaken. The mention of the council and of its determination, whilst the Apostle was relating his proceedings at



been led to the hypothesis that the visit in question does not correspond with any of the visits actually recorded in the Acts, but is one which is not referred to at all in that work. These theories have found very little favour, however, and we mention them solely to complete our statement of the general controversy. Considering the fulness of the report of the visit in Acts xv. and the peculiar nature of the facts stated by the Apostle himself in his letter to the Galatians, the difficulty of identifying the particular visit referred to is a phenomenon which cannot be too much considered. Is it possible, if the narrative in the Acts were really historically accurate, that any reasonable doubt could ever have existed as to its correspondence with the Apostle's statements? We may here at once say that, although many of the critics who finally decide that the visit described in Acts xv. is the same as that referred to in the second chapter of the Epistle argue that the obvious discrepancies and contradictions between the two accounts may be sufficiently explained and reconciled, this is for very strong reasons disputed, and the narrative in the Acts, when tested by the authentic statements of the Apostle, pronounced inaccurate and unhistorical.

It is only necessary to read the two accounts in order to understand the grounds upon which even Apologists like Paley and Wieseler feel themselves compelled to suppose that the Apostle is describing transactions which occurred during some visit either unmentioned or not fully related in the Acts, rather than identify it with the visit reported in the fifteenth chapter, from which it so essentially differs. A material difference is not denied by anyone, and explanations with a view to reconciliation have never been dispensed with. Thiersch, who has nothing better than the usual apologetic explanations to offer, does not hesitate to avow the apparent incongruities of the two narratives. "The journey," he says, "is the same, but no human ingenuity can make out that also the conference and the decree resulting from it are the same."<sup>1</sup> He supposes that the problem is to be solved by asserting that the Apostle speaks of the private, the historian of the public, circumstances of the visit. All who maintain the historical character of the Acts must, of course, more or less thoroughly adopt this argument; but it is obvious that, in doing so, they admit, on the one hand, the general discrepancy, and, on the other, if successful in establishing their position, they could do no more than show that the Epistle does not absolutely exclude the account in the Acts. Both writers profess to describe events which occurred during the

Jerusalem, could hardly have been avoided if in truth the narrative belonged to the same journey. To me it appears more probable that Paul and Barnabas had taken some journey to Jerusalem, the mention of which is omitted in the Acts....." (*Evidences, and Horæ Paulinæ*, ch. v., No. 10, p. 382).

<sup>1</sup> Thiersch, *Die Kirche im ap. Zeitalter*, p. 129.



same visit ; both record matters of the highest interest closely bearing on the same subject ; yet the two accounts are so different from each other that they can only be rescued from complete antagonism by complete separation. Supposing the author of the Acts to be really acquainted with the occurrences of this visit, and to have intended to give a plain unvarnished account of them, the unconscious ingenuity with which he has omitted the important facts mentioned by Paul, and eliminated the whole of the Apostle's individuality, would indeed be as remarkable as it is unfortunate. But, supposing the Apostle Paul to have been aware of the formal proceedings narrated in the Acts, characterised by such unanimity and liberal Christian feeling, it would be still more astonishing and unfortunate that he has not only silently passed them over, but has conveyed so singularly different an impression of his visit.<sup>1</sup> As the Apostle certainly could not have been acquainted with the Acts, his silence regarding the Council and its momentous decree, as well as his ignorance of the unbroken harmony which prevailed, are perfectly intelligible. He, of course, only knew and described what actually occurred. The author of the Acts, however, might and must have known the Epistle to the Galatians, and the ingenuity with which the tone and details of the authentic report are avoided or transfigured cannot be ascribed to mere accident, but must largely be attributed to design, although also partly, it may be, to the ignorance and the pious imagination of a later age. Is it possible, for instance, that the controversy regarding the circumcision of Titus, and the dispute with Peter at Antioch, which are so prominently related in the Epistle, but present a view so different from the narrative of Acts, can have been undesignedly omitted? The violent apologetic reconciliation which is effected between the two accounts is based upon the foregone conclusion that the author of the canonical Acts, however he may seem to deviate from the Apostle, cannot possibly contradict him or be in error ; but the preceding examination has rendered such a position untenable, and here we have not to do with a canonised "St. Luke," but with an unknown writer, whose work must be judged by the ordinary rules of criticism.

According to the Acts, a most serious question is raised at Antioch. Certain men from Judæa came thither teaching, "Except ye have been circumcised after the manner of Moses ye cannot be saved." After much dissension and disputation, the Church of Antioch appoint that Paul and Barnabas, "and certain

<sup>1</sup> "Our difficulty in reading this page of history arises not so much from the absence of light as from the perplexity of cross lights. The narratives of St. Luke and St. Paul only then cease to conflict when we take into account the different positions of the writers and the different objects they had in view" (Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, p. 224).



others of them," shall go up to Jerusalem unto the Apostles and elders about this question. The motive of the journey is here most distinctly and definitely described. Paul is solemnly deputed by the Church to lay before the mother Church of Jerusalem a difficult question, upon the answer to which turns the whole future of Christianity. Paul's account gives a very different complexion to the visit: "Then, after fourteen years, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus also with me. But I went up according to revelation (*κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν*) and communicated to them the Gospel which I preach among the Gentiles," etc. Paley might well say: "This is not very reconcilable."<sup>1</sup> It is argued<sup>2</sup> that the two statements may supplement each other; that the revelation may have been made to the Church of Antioch and have led to the mission; or that, being made to Paul, it may have decided him to undertake it. If, however, we admit that the essence of truth consists not in the mere letter but in the spirit of what is stated, it seems impossible to reconcile these accounts. It might be granted that a historian, giving a report of events which had occurred, might omit some secret motive actuating the conduct even of one of the principal persons with whom he has to do; but that the Apostle, under the actual circumstances, and while protesting, "Now the things which I am writing unto you, behold, before God, I lie not!" should altogether suppress the important official character of his journey to Jerusalem, and give it the distinct colour of a visit voluntarily and independently made *κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν*, is inconceivable. As we proceed, it will become apparent that the divergence between the two accounts is systematic and fundamental; but we may here so far anticipate as to point out that the Apostle explicitly excludes an official visit not only by stating an "inward motive," and omitting all mention of a public object, but by the expression, "and communicated to them the Gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who," etc. To quote Paley's words: "If by 'that Gospel' he meant the immunity of the

<sup>1</sup> *Horæ Paul.*, ch. v., No. x. See back, p. 698, note 2.

<sup>2</sup> "Here, however, there is no contradiction. The historian naturally records the external impulse which led to the mission; the Apostle himself states his inward motive. 'What I did,' he says, 'I did not owing to circumstances, not as yielding to pressure, not in deference to others, but because the Spirit of God told me it was right.' The very stress which he lays on this revelation seems to show that other influences were at work" (!) (Lightfoot, *St. P. Ep. to the Gal.*, p. 124). Dr. Lightfoot quotes as parallel cases, suggesting how the one motive might supplement the other, Acts ix. 29, 30; cf. xxii. 17, xxiii. 2-4, and xv. 28. It is unfortunate that all these "parallel cases" are taken from the work whose accuracy is in question, and that the first is actually discredited by the Apostle's own account, whilst the others are open to equally strong objections. See also Alford, *Greek Test.*, ii., *Proleg.*, p. 27, iii., p. 12; Meyer, *Br. an die Gal.*, p. 61 f.



Gentile Christians from the Jewish law (and I know not what else it can mean), it is not easy to conceive how he should communicate that privately, which was the subject of his public message";<sup>1</sup> and we may add, how he should so absolutely alter the whole character of his visit. In the Acts, he is an ambassador charged with a most important mission; in the Epistle, he is Paul the Apostle, moved solely by his own reasons again to visit Jerusalem. The author of the Acts, however, who is supposed to record only the external circumstances, when tested is found to do so very imperfectly, for he omits all mention of Titus, who is conjectured to be tacitly included in the "certain others of them," who were appointed by the Church to accompany Paul, and he is altogether silent regarding the strenuous effort to enforce the rite of circumcision in his case, upon which the Apostle lays so much stress. The Apostle, who throughout maintains his simply independent attitude, mentions his taking Titus with him as a purely voluntary act, and certainly conveys no impression that he also was delegated by the Church. We shall presently see how significant the suppression of Titus is in connection with the author's transformation of the circumstances of the visit. In affirming that he went up "according to revelation," Paul proceeds in the very spirit in which he began to write this Epistle. He continues simply to assert his independence and equality with the elder Apostles. In speaking of his first journey he has this object in view, and he states precisely the duration of his visit and whom he saw. If he had suppressed the official character of this second visit and the fact that he submitted for the decision of the Apostles and elders the question of the immunity of the Gentile converts from circumcision, and thus curtly ascribed his going to a revelation, he would have compromised himself in a very serious manner, and exposed himself to a charge of disingenuousness of which his enemies would not have failed to take advantage. But, whether we consider the evidence of the Apostle himself in speaking of this visit, the absence of all external allusion to the supposed proceedings when reference to them would not only have been most appropriate but was almost necessary, the practical contradiction of the whole narrative implied in the subsequent conduct of Peter at Antioch, or the inconsistency of the conduct attributed in it to Paul himself, we are forced back to the natural conclusion that the Apostle does not suppress anything, and does not give so absurdly partial an account of his visit as would be the case if the narrative in the Acts be historical, but that, in a few rapid powerful lines, he completes a suggestive sketch of its chief characteristics. This becomes more apparent at every step we take in our comparison of the two narratives.

<sup>1</sup> *Horæ Paul.*, ch. v., No. x. See p. 698, note 2.



If we pass on to the next stage of the proceedings, we find an equally striking divergence between the two writers, and it must not escape attention that the variations are not merely incidental, but are thorough and consecutive. According to the Acts, there was a solemn congress held in Jerusalem, on which occasion, the Apostles and elders and the Church being assembled, the question whether it was necessary that the Gentiles should be circumcised and bound to keep the law of Moses was fully discussed, and a formal resolution finally adopted by the meeting. The proceedings, in fact, constitute what has always been regarded as the first Council of the Christian Church. The account in the Epistle does not seem to betray any knowledge of such a congress. The Apostle himself says merely: "But I went according to revelation and communicated to them (*αὐτοῖς*) the Gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which seemed (to be something) (*κατ' ἰδίαν δὲ τοῖς δοκοῦσιν*)."<sup>1</sup> The opinion that the author of Acts "alludes in a general way to conferences and discussions preceding the congress"<sup>2</sup> is based upon the statement, xv. 4, 5: "And when they came to Jerusalem they were received by the Church and by the Apostles and the elders, and declared all that God did with them. But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees, who believed, saying: That it is necessary to circumcise them and to command them to keep the law of Moses. And the Apostles and the elders came together to see regarding this matter. And when there had been much disputation Peter rose up and said," etc. If it were admitted that more than one meeting is here indicated, it is clear that the words cannot be legitimately strained into a reference to more than two conferences. The first of these is a general meeting of the Apostles and elders and of the Church to receive the delegates from Antioch, and the second is an equally general and public conference (verse 6): not only are the Apostles and elders present, but also the general body of Christians, as clearly appears from the statement (verse 12) that, after the speech of Peter, "all the multitude (*πάν τὸ πλῆθος*) kept silence."<sup>3</sup> The "much disputation" evidently takes place on the occasion when the Apostles and elders are gathered together to consider the matter. If, therefore, two meetings can be maintained from the narrative in Acts, both are emphatically public and general, and neither, therefore, the private conference of the Epistle. The main fact that the author of the Acts describes a general congress of the Church as taking place is never called in question.

<sup>1</sup> Gal. ii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Lightfoot, *Galatians*, p. 125.

<sup>3</sup> It has been pertinently asked, How it is possible that such a meeting could have taken place? What room could have been found to contain the assembly? (cf. Reuss, *N. Rev. de Théol.*, 1858, li., p. 36).



On the other hand, few who appreciate the nature of the discrepancy which we are discussing will feel that the difficulty is solved by suggesting that there is space for the insertion of other incidents in the Apostle's narrative. It is rather late now to interpolate a general Council of the Church into the pauses of the Galatian letter. To suppose that the communications of Paul to the "Pillar" Apostles, and the distressing debate regarding the circumcision of Titus, may be inferred between the lines of the account in the Acts, is a bold effort of imagination; but it is far from being as hopeless as an attempt to reconcile the discrepancy by thrusting the important public congress into some corner of the Apostle's statement. In so far as any argument is advanced in support of the assertion that Paul's expression implies something more than the private conference, it is based upon the reference intended in the words *ἀνεθέμην αὐτοῖς*. When Paul says he went up to Jerusalem and communicated "to them" his Gospel, but privately *τοῖς δοκοῦσιν*, whom does he mean to indicate by the *αὐτοῖς*? Does he refer to the Christian community of Jerusalem, or to the Apostles themselves? It is pretty generally admitted that either application is permissible; but whilst a majority of apologetic, together with some independent, critics adopt the former, not a few consider, as Chrysostom, Œcumenius, and Calvin did before them, that Paul more probably referred to the Apostles. In favour of the former there is the fact, it is argued, that the *αὐτοῖς* is used immediately after the statement that the Apostle went up "to Jerusalem," and that it may be more natural to conclude that he speaks of the Christians there, more especially as he seems to distinguish between the communication made *αὐτοῖς* and *κατ' ἰδίαν τοῖς δοκοῦσιν*;<sup>1</sup> and, in support of this, "they" in Gal. i. 23, 24, is, though we think without propriety, referred to. It is, on the other hand, urged that it is very unlikely that the Apostle would in such a way communicate his Gospel to the whole community, and that in the expressions used he indicates no special transaction, but that the *ἀνεθέμην αὐτοῖς* is merely an indefinite statement for which he immediately substitutes the more precise *κατ' ἰδίαν δὲ τοῖς δοκοῦσιν*.<sup>2</sup> It is quite certain that there is no

<sup>1</sup> Meyer argues, not without force, that if Paul had not by *κατ' ἰδίαν δὲ* intended to distinguish a different communication, he must have said: *ἀνεθέμην αὐτοῖς, κ. τ. λ., ἀνεθέμην δὲ τοῖς δοκ.* omitting the distinguishing *κατ' ἰδίαν* (*Br. an die Gal.*, p. 62, anm.).

<sup>2</sup> An able and impartial critic, Reuss, attempts to reconcile the two accounts by arguing that such a question could not possibly have been laid before and decided by the whole community. He, therefore, supposes that private conferences took place. This "reconciliation," however, is excluded by the account in Acts, which so distinctly represents a large public congress, and it by no means lessens the fundamental discrepancy of the narratives (cf. Reuss, *N: Rev. de Théol.*, 1858, ii. 334 f., 1859, iii., p. 62 f.).



mention of the Christian community of Jerusalem to which the *αὐτοῖς* can with any real grammatical necessity be referred ; but when the whole purport of the first part of the Apostle's letter is considered the reference to the Apostles in the *αὐτοῖς* becomes clearer. Paul is protesting the independence of his Gospel, and that he did not receive it from man, but from Jesus Christ. He wishes to show that he was not taught by the Apostles nor dependent upon them. He states that after his conversion he did not go to those who were Apostles before him, but, on the contrary, went away to Arabia, and only three years after he went up to Jerusalem, and then only for the purpose of making the acquaintance of Peter, and on that occasion other of the Apostles saw he none save James the Lord's brother. After fourteen years, he continues to recount, he again went up to Jerusalem, but according to revelation, and communicated to them—*i.e.*, to the Apostles—the Gospel which he preached among the Gentiles. The Apostles have been in the writer's mind throughout, but in the impetuous flow of his ideas, which, in the first two chapters of this Epistle, outrun the pen, the sentences become involved. It must be admitted, finally, that the reference intended is a matter of opinion, and cannot be authoritatively settled. If we suppose it to refer to the community of Jerusalem, taking thus the more favourable construction, how would this affect the question? Can it be maintained that in this casual and indefinite "to them" we have any confirmation of the general congress of the Acts, with its debates, its solemn settlement of that momentous proposition regarding the Gentile Christians, and its important decree? It is impossible to credit that, in saying that he "communicated to them" the Gospel which he preached amongst the Gentiles, the Apostle referred to a Council like that described in the Acts, to which, as a delegate from the Church of Antioch, he submitted the question of the conditions upon which the Gentiles were to be admitted into the Church, and tacitly accepted their decision. Even if it be assumed that the Apostle makes this slight passing allusion to some meeting different from his conference with the pillar Apostles, it could not have been a general congress assembled for the purpose stated in the Acts and characterised by such proceedings. The discrepancy between the two narratives is not lessened by any supposed indication either in the Epistle or in the Acts of other incidents than those actually described. The suggestion that the dispute about Titus involved some publicity does not avail, for the greater the publicity and importance of the episode the greater the difficulty of explaining the total silence regarding it of the author of Acts. The more closely the two statements are compared the more apparent does it become that the author describes proceedings which are totally different in general character, in



details and in spirit, from those so vividly sketched by the Apostle Paul.

We shall have more to say presently regarding the irreconcilable contradiction in spirit between the whole account which is given in the Acts of this Council and the writings of Paul; but it may be more convenient, if less effective, if we, for the present, take the chief points in the narrative as they arise and consider how far they are supported or discredited by other data. We shall refer later to the manner in which the question which leads to the Council is represented as arising, and at once proceed to the speech of Peter. After there had been much disputation as to whether the Gentile Christians must necessarily be circumcised and required to observe the Mosaic law, it is stated that Peter rose up and said: xv. 7., "Men (and) brethren, ye know that a good while ago God made choice among you that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the Gospel and believe. 8. And God which knoweth the hearts bare them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit even as unto us; 9. and put no distinction between us and them, having purified their hearts by the faith. 10. Now, therefore, why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? 11. But by the grace of our Lord Jesus we believe we are saved even as also they."<sup>1</sup> The liberality of the sentiments thus put into the mouth of Peter requires no demonstration, and there is here an explicit expression of convictions, which we must, from his own words, consider to be the permanent and mature views of the Apostle, dating, as they do, "from ancient days" (*ἀπὸ ἡμερῶν ἀρχαίων*) and originating in so striking and supernatural a manner. We may, therefore, expect that, whenever we meet with an authentic record of Peter's opinions and conduct elsewhere, they should exhibit the impress of such advanced and divinely-imparted views. The statement which Peter makes, that God had a good while before selected him that the Gentiles by his voice should hear the Gospel, is, of course, a reference to the case of Cornelius, and this unites the fortunes of the speech and proceedings of the Council with that episode. We have seen how little ground there is for considering that narrative, with its elaborate tissue of miracles, historical. The speech which adopts it is thus discredited, and all other circumstances confirm the conclusion that the speech is not authentic. If the name of Peter were erased and that of Paul substituted, the sentiments expressed would be singularly appropriate. We should have the divinely-appointed Apostle of the Gentiles advocating complete immunity from the Mosaic law, and enunciating Pauline principles in

<sup>1</sup> Acts. xv. 7-11.



peculiarly Pauline terms. When Peter declares that "God put no distinction between us (Jews) and them (Gentiles), purifying their hearts by faith,<sup>1</sup> but by the grace (χάρις) of our Lord Jesus Christ we believe we are saved even as also they," do we not hear Paul's sentiments, so elaborately expressed in the Epistle to the Romans and elsewhere? "For there is no difference between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord of all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"<sup>2</sup>....."justified freely by his grace (χάρις) through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."<sup>3</sup> And when Peter exclaims, "Why tempt ye God to put a yoke (ζυγός) upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" have we not rather a paraphrase of the words in the Epistle to the Galatians? "With liberty Christ made us free; stand fast, therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke (ζυγός) of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you that, if ye be circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. But I testify again to every man who is circumcised that he is a debtor to do the whole law"<sup>4</sup>....."For as many as are of works of law are under a curse," etc.<sup>5</sup> These are only a few sentences of which the speech in Acts is an echo, but no attentive reader can fail to perceive that it contains in germ the whole of Pauline universalism.

From the Pauline author of the Acts this might fairly be expected, and, if we linguistically examine the speech, we have additional evidence that it is simply, like others which we have considered, a composition from his own pen.<sup>6</sup> It cannot be doubted that the language is that of the author of the Acts, and no serious attempt has ever been made to show that it is the language of Peter. If it be asserted that, in the form before us, it is a translation, there is not the slightest evidence to support the assertion; and it has to contend with the unfortunate circumstance that, in the supposed process, the words of Peter have not only become the words of the author, but his thoughts the thoughts of Paul.

We may now inquire whether we find in authentic records of the Apostle Peter's conduct and views any confirmation of the liberality which is attributed to him in the Acts. He is here represented as proposing the emancipation of Gentile converts from the Mosaic law: does this accord with the statements of the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Rom. iv. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. x. 12, 13; cf. Gal. iii. 26 f.: "For ye are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus;.....There is neither Jew nor Greek;.....for ye are all one man in Christ Jesus."

<sup>3</sup> Rom. iii. 24.

<sup>4</sup> Gal. v. 1-3.

<sup>5</sup> *Ib.*, iii. 10.

<sup>6</sup> The linguistic analysis will be found in the complete edition, vol. iii., pp. 239-241.



Apostle Paul and with such information as we can elsewhere gather regarding Peter? Very much the contrary.

Peter in this speech claims that, long before, God had selected him to make known the Gospel to the Gentiles, but Paul emphatically distinguishes him as the Apostle of the Circumcision; and although, accepting facts which had actually taken place and could not be prevented, Peter with James and John gave Paul right hands of fellowship, he remained, as he had been before, Apostle of the Circumcision,<sup>1</sup> and, as we shall see, did not practise the liberality which he is said to have preached. Very shortly after the Council described in the Acts, there occurred the celebrated dispute between him and Paul which the latter proceeds to describe immediately after the visit to Jerusalem: "But when Cephas came to Antioch," he writes, "I withstood him to the face, for he was condemned. For before certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those of the Circumcision. And the other Jews also joined in his hypocrisy, insomuch that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel, I said unto Cephas before all: If thou being a Jew livest ( $\xi\eta\varsigma$ ) after the manner of Gentiles and not after the manner of Jews, how compellest ( $\alpha\nuαγκάζεις$ ) thou the Gentiles to adopt the customs of the Jews? ( $\iotaουδαϊζειν$ )"<sup>2</sup>

It is necessary to say a few words as to the significance of Peter's conduct and of Paul's rebuke, regarding which there is some difference of opinion.<sup>3</sup> Are we to understand from this that Peter, as a general rule, at Antioch and elsewhere, with enlightened emancipation from Jewish prejudices, lived as a Gentile and in full communion with Gentile Christians?<sup>4</sup> Meyer<sup>5</sup> and others argue that, by the use of the present  $\xi\eta\varsigma$ , the Apostle indicates a continuous practice based upon principle, and that the  $\xi\eta\nu$  is not the mere moral life, but includes the external social observances of Christian community; the object, in fact, being to show that upon principle Peter held the advanced liberal views of Paul, and that the fault which he committed in withdrawing from free intercourse with the Gentile Christians was momentary, and merely the result of "occasional timidity and weakness." This theory cannot bear

<sup>1</sup> Gal. ii. 7 f.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.*, ii. 11-14.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Ep. to the Gal.*, 338.

<sup>4</sup> Hilgenfeld argues that in speaking of "eating with them" Paul refers to the Agape, the meals of the Christians which had a religious significance. Although this is well worthy of consideration, it is not necessary for us here to go into the question (cf. *Galaterbrief*, p. 59 f.; *Zeitschr. wiss. Th.*, 1858, p. 87 f.).

<sup>5</sup> *Br. an die Gal.*, 98 f.



the test of examination. The account of Paul is clearly this: *when Cephas came to Antioch*, the stronghold of Gentile Christianity, *before certain men came from James*, he ate with the Gentiles, but as soon as these emissaries arrived he withdrew, "fearing those of the circumcision." Had his normal custom been to live like the Gentiles, how is it possible that he could, on this occasion only, have feared those of the circumcision? His practice must have been notorious; and had he, moreover, actually expressed such opinions in the congress of Jerusalem, his confession of faith having been so publicly made, and so unanimously approved by the Church, there could not have been any conceivable cause for such timidity. The fact evidently is, on the contrary, that Peter, under the influence of Paul, was induced for the time to hold free communion with the Gentile Christians; but as soon as the emissaries of James appeared on the scene he became alarmed at this departure from his principles, and fell back again into his normal practice. If the present  $\xi\eta\varsigma$  be taken to indicate continuous habit of life, the present  $\alpha\nu\alpha\gamma\kappa\acute{\alpha}\xi\epsilon\iota\varsigma$  very much more than neutralises it. Paul with his usual uncompromising frankness rebukes the vacillation of Peter; by adopting even for a time fellowship with the Gentiles, Peter has practically recognised its validity, has been guilty of hypocrisy in withdrawing from his concession on the arrival of the followers of James, and is condemned; but after such a concession he cannot legitimately demand that Gentile converts should "judaise." It is obvious that whilst Peter lived as a Gentile he could not have been compelling the Gentiles to adopt Judaism. Paul, therefore, in saying, "Why compellest thou ( $\alpha\nu\alpha\gamma\kappa\acute{\alpha}\xi\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ ) the Gentiles to adopt the customs of the Jews? ( $\iota\omicron\upsilon\delta\alpha\iota\zeta\epsilon\iota\nu$ )," very distinctly intimates that the normal practice of Peter was to compel Gentile Christians to adopt Judaism. There is no escaping this conclusion, for, after all specious reasoning to the contrary is exhausted, there remains the simple fact that Peter, when placed in a dilemma on the arrival of the emissaries of James, and forced to decide whether he will continue to live as a Gentile or as a Jew, adopts the latter alternative, and, as Paul tells us, "compels" (in the present) the Gentiles to judaise. A stronger indication of his views could scarcely have been given. Not a word is said which implies that Peter yielded to the vehement protests of Paul, but, on the contrary, we must undoubtedly conclude that he did not; for it is impossible to suppose that Paul would not have stated a fact so pertinent to his argument, had the elder Apostle been induced by his remonstrance to walk uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel which Paul preached, and both to teach and practise Christian universalism. We shall have abundant reason, apart from this, to conclude that Peter did not yield, and it is no false indication of this that, a



century after, we find the *Clementine Homilies* expressing the bitterness of the Petrine party against the Apostle of the Gentiles for this very rebuke, and representing Peter as following his course from city to city for the purpose of refuting Paul's unorthodox teaching.

It is contended that Peter's conduct at Antioch is in harmony with his denial of his master related in the Gospels, and, therefore, that such momentary and characteristic weakness might well have been displayed even after his adoption of liberal principles. Those who argue in this way forget that the denial of Jesus, as described in the Gospels, proceeded from the fear of death, and that such a reply to a merely compromising question, which did not directly involve principles, is a very different thing from conduct like that at Antioch, where, under one influence, a line of action was temporarily adopted which ratified views upon which the opinion of the Church was divided, and then abandoned merely from fear of the disapproval of those of the circumcision. The author of the Acts passes over this altercation in complete silence. No one has ever called in question the authenticity of the account which Paul gives of it. If Peter had the courage to make such a speech at the Council in the very capital of Judaic Christianity, and in the presence of James and the whole Church, how could he possibly, from fear of a few men from Jerusalem, have shown such pusillanimity in Antioch, where Paul and the mass of Christians supported him? If the unanimous decision of the Council had really been a fact, how easily he might have silenced any objections by an appeal to that which had "seemed good to the Holy Spirit" and to the Church! But there is not the slightest knowledge of the Council and its decree betrayed either by those who came from James, or by Peter, or Paul. The episode at Antioch is inconsistent with the conduct and words ascribed to Peter in the Acts, and contradicts the narrative in the fifteenth chapter which we are examining.

The author of the Acts states that, after Peter had spoken, "all the multitude kept silence and were hearing Barnabas and Paul declaring what signs and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them."<sup>1</sup> We shall not at present pause to consider this statement, nor the *rôle* which Paul is made to play in the whole transaction, beyond pointing out that, on an occasion when such a subject as the circumcision of the Gentiles and their subjection to the Mosaic law was being discussed, nothing could be more opposed to nature than to suppose that a man like the author of the Epistle to the Galatians could have assumed so passive and subordinate an attitude. After Barnabas and Paul



had spoken, James is represented as saying: "Men (and) brethren, hear me. Simeon declared how God at first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And with this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written: 'After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David which has fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and will set it up: that the residue of men may seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name has been called, saith the Lord who doeth these things, known from the beginning.' Wherefore, I judge that we trouble not those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God; but that we write unto them that they abstain from the pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from<sup>1</sup> blood. For Moses from generations of old hath in every city those who preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath."<sup>1</sup> There are many reasons for which this speech also must be pronounced inauthentic. It may be observed, in passing, that James completely disregards the statement which Barnabas and Paul are supposed to make as to what God had wrought by them among the Gentiles; and, ignoring their intervention, he directly refers to the preceding speech of Peter claiming to have first been selected to convert the Gentiles. We shall reserve discussion of the conditions which James proposes to impose upon Gentile Christians till we come to the apostolic decree which embodies them.

The precise signification of the sentence with which (verse 21) he concludes has been much debated, but need not detain us long. Whatever may be said of the liberal part of the speech, it is obvious that the author has been more true to the spirit of the time in conceiving this and other portions of it than in composing the speech of Peter. The continued observance of the Mosaic ritual, and the identity of the synagogue with the Christian Church, are correctly indicated; and when James is again represented (xxi. 20 f.) as advising Paul to join those who had a vow, in order to prove that he himself walked orderly and was an observer of the law, and did not teach the Jews to apostatise from Moses and abandon the rite of circumcision, he is consistent in his portrait. It is nevertheless clear that, however we may read the restrictions which James proposes to impose upon Gentile Christians, the author of Acts intends them to be considered as a most liberal and almost complete concession of immunity. "I judge," he makes James say, "that we trouble not those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God"; and again, on the second occasion of which we have just been speaking, in referring to the decree, a contrast is drawn between the Christian Jews, from

<sup>1</sup> Acts xv. 13-20.



whom observance of the law is demanded, and the Gentiles, who are only expected to follow the prescriptions of the decree.

James is represented as supporting the statement of Peter how God visited the Gentiles by "the words of the Prophets," quoting a passage from Amos ix. 11, 12. It is difficult to see how the words, even as quoted, apply to the case at all; but this is immaterial. Loose reasoning can certainly not be taken as a mark of inauthenticity. It is much more to the point that James, addressing an assembly of Apostles and elders in Jerusalem, quotes the prophet Amos freely from the Septuagint version,<sup>1</sup> which differs widely in the latter and more important part from the Hebrew text. The passage in the Hebrew reads: ix. 11. "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old, 12. that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord that doeth this." The authors of the Septuagint version altered the twelfth verse into: "That the residue of men may seek after the Lord and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord who doeth these things." It is perfectly clear that the prophet does not, in the original, say what James is here represented as stating, and that his own words refer to the national triumph of Israel, and not to the conversion of the Gentiles. Amos, in fact, prophesies that the Lord will restore the former power and glory of Israel, and that the remnant of Edom and the other nations of the theocracy shall be re-united, as they were under David. No one questions the fact that the original prophecy is altered. The question as to whether James or the author of the Acts is responsible for the adoption of the Septuagint version is felt to be a serious problem. Some critics affirm that in all probability James must have spoken in Aramaic; whilst others maintain that he delivered this address in Greek. In the one case, it is supposed that he quoted the original Hebrew, and that the author of the Acts, or the document from which he derived his report, may have used the Septuagint; and in the other, it is suggested that the LXX. may have had another and more correct reading before them, for it is supposed impossible that James himself could have quoted a version which was actually different from the original Hebrew. These and many other similar explanations, into which we need not go, do little to remove the difficulty presented by the fact itself. To suppose that our Hebrew texts are erroneous in order to justify the speech is a proceeding which

<sup>1</sup> "St. James and St. Luke *adopt* that version as not contrary to the mind of the Spirit, and indeed as expressing that mind," etc. (Wordsworth, *Gk. Test., The Acts*, p. 113).



does not require remark. It will be remembered that in the Acts the Septuagint is always employed in quotations from the Old Testament, and that this is by no means the only place in which that version is used when it departs from the original. It is difficult to conceive that any intelligent Jew could have quoted the Hebrew of this passage to support a proposal to free Gentile Christians from the necessity of circumcision and the observance of the Mosaic Law. It is equally difficult to suppose that James, a bigoted leader of the Judaistic party and the head of the Church at Jerusalem, could have quoted the Septuagint version of the Holy Scriptures, differing from the Hebrew, to such an assembly. It is useless to examine here the attempts to make the passage quoted a correct interpretation of the prophet's meaning, or seriously to consider the proposition that this alteration of a prophetic utterance is adopted as better expressing "the mind of the Spirit." If the original prophecy did not express that mind, it is rather late to amend the utterances of the prophets in the Acts of the Apostles.

Linguistic analysis<sup>1</sup> confirms the conclusion that the speech of James at the Council proceeds likewise from the pen of the general author, and the incomprehensible liberality of the sentiments expressed, as well as the peculiarity of the quotation from Amos according to the Septuagint, thus receive at once their simple explanation.

If we now compare the account of James's share in granting liberal conditions to Gentile Christians with the statements of Paul, we arrive at the same result. It is in consequence of the arrival of "certain men from James" (τινὰς ἀπὸ Ἰακώβου) that Peter, through fear of them, withdrew from communion with the Gentiles. It will be remembered that the whole discussion is said to have arisen in Antioch originally from the Judaistic teaching of certain men who came "from Judæa," who are disowned in the apostolic letter.<sup>2</sup> It is unfortunate, to say the least of it, that so many of those who systematically opposed the work of the Apostle Paul claimed to represent the views of James and the mother Church.<sup>3</sup> The contradiction of the author of the Acts, with his object of conciliation, has but small weight

<sup>1</sup> The linguistic analysis will be found in the complete edition, vol. iii., pp. 252-254.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xv. 24.

<sup>3</sup> "Of the Judaisers who are denounced in St. Paul's Epistles this much is certain, that they exalted the authority of the Apostles of the Circumcision; and that, in some instances at least, as members of the mother Church, they had direct relations with James, the Lord's brother. But when we attempt to define those relations we are lost in a maze of conjecture" (Lightfoot, *Ep. to the Gal.*, p. 353).



before the statements of Paul and the whole voice of tradition. At any rate, almost immediately after the so-called Apostolic Council, with its decree adopted mainly at the instigation of James, his emissaries caused the defection of Peter in Antioch and the rupture with Paul. It is generally admitted, in the face of the clear affirmation of Paul, that the men in question must in all probability have been actually sent by James. It is obvious that, to justify the fear of so leading an apostle as Peter, not only must they have been thus deputed, but must have been influential men, representing authoritative and prevalent Judaistic opinions. We shall not attempt to divine the object of their mission, but we may say that it is impossible to separate them from the Judaistic teachers who urged circumcision upon the Galatian Christians and opposed the authority of the Apostle Paul. Not pursuing this further at present, however, it is obvious that the effect produced by these emissaries is quite incompatible with the narrative that, so short a time before, James and the Church of Jerusalem had unanimously promulgated conditions, under which the Gentile Christians were freely admitted into communion, and which fully justified Peter in eating with them. The incident at Antioch, as connected with James as well as with Peter, excludes the supposition that the account of the Council contained in the Acts can be considered historical.

The Apostolic letter embodying the decree of the Council now demands our attention. It seemed good to the Apostles and the elders with the whole Church to choose two leading men among the brethren, and to send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, and they wrote by them (xv. 23): "The Apostles and brethren which are elders unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greeting. 24. Forasmuch as we heard that certain which went out from us troubled you with words, subverting your souls, to whom we gave no commandment, 25. it seemed good unto us, having become of one mind, to choose out and send men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, 26. men that have given up their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27. We have, therefore, sent Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by word of mouth. 28. For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: 29. that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves ye shall do well. Fare ye well." It is argued that the simplicity of this composition, its brevity and the absence of hierarchical tendency, prove the authenticity and the originality of the epistle. Nothing, however, could be more arbitrary than to assert that the author of the Acts, composing a letter supposed to



be written under the circumstances, would have written one different from this. We shall, on the contrary, see good reason for affirming that he actually did compose it, and that it bears the obvious impress of his style. Besides, Zeller<sup>1</sup> has pointed out that, in a document affirmed to be so removed from all calculation or object, verse 26 could hardly have found a place. The reference to "our beloved" Barnabas and Paul, as "men that have given up their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," is scarcely consistent with the primitive brevity and simplicity which are made the basis of such an argument.

In the absence of better evidence, Apologists grasp at extremely slight indications of authenticity, and of this nature seems to us the mark of genuineness which Bleek and others<sup>2</sup> consider that they find in the fact that the name of Barnabas is placed before that of Paul in this document. It is maintained that, from the 13th chapter, the author begins to give the precedence to Paul, but that, in reverting to the former order, the synodal letter gives evidence both of its antiquity and genuineness. If any weight could be attached to such an indication, it is unfortunate for this argument that the facts are not as stated, for the order "Barnabas and Paul" occurs at xiv. 12 and 14, and even in the very account of the Council at xv. 12. The two names are mentioned together in the Acts sixteen times, Barnabas being named first eight times (xi. 30, xii. 25, xiii. 1, 2, 7, xiv. 12, 14, xv. 12), and Paul as frequently (xiii. 43, 46, 50, xv. 2 twice, 22, 25, 35). Apologists like Lekebusch<sup>3</sup> and Oertel<sup>4</sup> reject Bleek's argument. The greeting *χαίρειν*, with which the letter opens, and which, amongst the Epistles of the New Testament, is only found in that bearing the name of James (i. 1), is said to be an indication that the letter of the Council was written by James himself. Before such an argument could avail, it would be necessary, though difficult, to prove the authenticity of the Epistle of James, but we need not enter upon such a question. *χαίρειν* is the ordinary Greek form of greeting in all epistles,<sup>5</sup> and the author of Acts, who writes purer Greek than any other writer in our Canon, naturally adopts it. Not only does he do so here, but he makes use of the same *χαίρειν* in the letter of the chief captain Lysias (xxiii. 26),<sup>6</sup> which also evidently proceeds from his hand. More-

<sup>1</sup> *Apostelgesch.*, 246 f.

<sup>2</sup> Bleek, *Einl.*, p. 349; Baumgarten, *Apog.*, p. 470 f.; Ewald, *Gesch. V. Isr.*, vi., p. 440, ann.; Gloag, *Acts*, ii., p. 89 f.; Lange, *Das ap. Z.*, ii., p. 189; Meyer, *Apog.*, p. 345 f.

<sup>3</sup> *Die Apostelgesch.*, p. 316.

<sup>4</sup> *Paulus in D. Apostelgesch.*, 1868, p. 227.

<sup>5</sup> Wetstein quotes Artemidorus (*Oneir.*, iii. 44): *ἴδιον πάσης ἐπιστολῆς τὸ χαίρειν καὶ ἑρῶσο λέγειν* (*Ad Act. Apost.*, xv. 2).

<sup>6</sup> This letter terminates, v. 30, with the usual *ἑρῶσο*, according to the *Cod. Sinaiticus*, *E*, *G*, and others; *A* and *B* omit it.



over, the word is used as a greeting in Luke i. 28, and not unfrequently elsewhere in the New Testament, as Matt. xxvi. 49, xxvii. 29, xxviii. 9, Mark xv. 18, John xix. 3, 2 John 10, 11. Lekebusch,<sup>1</sup> Meyer,<sup>2</sup> and Oertel<sup>3</sup> reject the argument, and we may add that, if *χαίρειν* prove anything, it proves that the author of Acts, who uses the word in the letter of Lysias, also wrote the synodal letter.

In what language must we suppose that the Epistle was originally written? Oertel maintains an Aramaic original,<sup>4</sup> but the greater number of writers consider that the original language was Greek. It cannot be denied that the composition, as it stands, contains many of the peculiarities of style of the author of Acts; and these are, indeed, so marked that even Apologists like Lekebusch and Oertel, whilst maintaining the substantial authenticity of the Epistle, admit that at least its actual form must be ascribed to the general author. The originality of the form being abandoned, it is difficult to perceive any ground for asserting the originality and genuineness of the substance. That assertion rests solely upon a vague traditional confidence in the author of Acts, which is shown to be without any solid foundation. The form of this Epistle clearly professes to be as genuine as the substance, and if the original language was Greek, there is absolutely no reason why the original letter should have been altered. The similarity of the construction to that of the prologue to the third Gospel, in which the personal style of the writer may be supposed to have been most unreservedly shown, has long been admitted:—

LUKE. I.	ACTS XV.
1. ἐπειδὴ περ πολλοὶ ἐπεχείρησαν ἀνατάξασθαι.....	24. ἐπειδὴ ἠκούσαμεν ὅτι τινὲς ἐτάραξαν.....
3. ἔδοξε καί μοι, παρηκολουθηκότι πᾶσιν ἀκριβῶς, καθεξῆς σοι γράψαι.	25. ἔδοξεν ἡμῖν γενομένοις ὁμοθυμαδόν, ἄνδρας πέμψαι.

A more detailed linguistic examination of the Epistle, however, confirms the conclusion already stated.<sup>5</sup>

Turning now from the letter to the spirit of this decree, we must endeavour to form some idea of its purport and bearing. The first point which should be made clear is, that the question raised before the Council solely affected the Gentile converts, and that the conditions contained in the decree were imposed upon that branch of the Church alone. No change whatever in the

<sup>1</sup> *Apostelg.*, p. 316.

<sup>2</sup> *Apostelg.*, p. 345.

<sup>3</sup> *Paul. in d. Apg.*, p. 227; comp. Reiche, *Comm. in Ep. Jac.*, 1833, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Ib.*, p. 227 f.; cf. Grotius, *Annot. in N. T. ad Act. Ap.*, xv. 23, who takes *χαίρειν* to be the rendering of the Hebrew salutation of Peace.

<sup>5</sup> The linguistic analysis will be found in the complete edition, vol. iii., p. 260 f.



position of Jewish Christians was contemplated; they were left as before, subject to the Mosaic law. This is very apparent in the reference which is made long after to the decree, ch. xxi. 20 f., 25, when the desire is expressed to Paul by James, who proposed the decree, and the elders of Jerusalem, that he should prove to the many thousands of believing Jews, all zealous of the law, that he did not teach the Jews who were among the Gentiles apostasy from Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs. Paul, who is likewise represented in the Acts as circumcising with his own hand, after the decision of the Council had been adopted, Timothy the son of a Greek, whose mother was a Jewess, consents to give the Jews of Jerusalem the required proof. We have already shown, at the commencement of this section, that nothing was further from the minds of the Jewish Christians than the supposition that the obligation to observe the Mosaic law was weakened by the adoption of Christianity; and the representation in the Acts is certainly so far correct that it does not pretend that Jewish Christians either desired or sanctioned any relaxation of Mosaic observances on the part of believing Jews. This cannot be too distinctly remembered in considering the history of primitive Christianity. The initiatory rite was essential to full participation in the Covenant. It was left for Paul to preach the abrogation of the law and the abandonment of circumcision. If the speech of Peter seems to suggest the abrogation of the law even for Jews, it is only in a way which shows that the author had no clear historical fact to relate, and merely desired to ascribe, vaguely and indefinitely, Pauline sentiments to the Apostle of the circumcision. No remark is made upon these strangely liberal expressions of Peter, and neither the proposition of James nor the speech in which he states it takes the slightest notice of them. The conduct of Peter at Antioch and the influence exercised by James through his emissaries restore us to historical ground. Whether the author intended to represent that the object of the conditions of the decree was to admit the Gentile Christians to full communion with the Jewish, or merely to the subordinate position of Proselytes of the Gate, is uncertain, but it is not necessary to discuss the point.

There is not the slightest external evidence that such a decree ever existed, and the more closely the details are examined the more evident does it become that it has no historical consistency. How, and upon what principle, were these singular conditions selected? Their heterogeneous character is at once apparent, but not so the reason for a combination which is neither limited to Jewish customs nor sufficiently representative of moral duties. It has been argued, on the one hand, that the prohibitions of the



apostolic decree are simply those, reduced to a necessary minimum, which were enforced in the case of heathen converts to Judaism, who did not join themselves fully to the people of the Covenant by submitting to circumcision, but were admitted to imperfect communion as Proselytes of the Gate. The conditions named, however, do not fully represent the rules framed for such cases, and many critics consider that the conditions imposed, although they may have been influenced by the Noachian prescriptions, were rather moral duties which it was, from special circumstances, thought expedient to specify. We shall presently refer to some of these conditions; but bearing in mind the views which were dominant amongst primitive Christians, and more especially, as is obvious, amongst the Christians of Jerusalem, where this decree is supposed to have been unanimously adopted—bearing in mind the teaching which is said to have led to the Council, the episode at Antioch, and the systematic Judaistic opposition which retarded the work of Paul and subsequently affected his reputation, it may be instructive to point out not only the vagueness which exists as to the position which it was intended that the Gentiles should acquire, as the effect of this decree, but also its singular and total inefficiency. An apologetic writer, having of course in his mind the fact that there is no trace of the operation of the decree, speaks of its conditions as follows: "The miscellaneous character of these prohibitions showed that, taken as a whole, they had no binding force independently of the circumstances which dictated them. They were a temporary expedient framed to meet a temporary emergency. Their object was the avoidance of offence in mixed communities of Jew and Gentile converts. Beyond this recognised aim and general understanding implied therein, the limits of their application were not defined."<sup>1</sup> In fact, the immunity granted to the Gentiles was thus practically almost unconditional.

It is obvious that every consideration which represents the decree as more completely emancipating Gentile Christians from Mosaic obligations, and admitting them into free communion with believers amongst the Jews, places it in more emphatic contradiction to historical facts and the statements of the Apostle Paul. The unanimous adoption of such a measure in Jerusalem, on the one hand, and, on the other, the episode at Antioch, the fear of Peter, the silence of Paul, and the attitude of James, become perfectly inconceivable. If, on the contrary, the conditions were seriously imposed and really meant anything, a number of difficulties spring up of which we shall presently speak. That the prohibitions, in the opinion of the author of the Acts, constituted

<sup>1</sup> Lightfoot, *Ep. to the Gal.*, p. 296.



a positive and binding obligation can scarcely be doubted by anyone who considers the terms in which they are laid down. If they are represented as a concession, they are nevertheless recognised as a "burden," and they are distinctly stated to be the obligations which "it seemed good to the Holy Spirit" as well as to the Council to impose. The qualification, that the restrictive clauses had no binding force "independently of the circumstances which dictated them," in so far as it has any meaning beyond the unnecessary declaration that the decree was only applicable to the class for whom it was framed, seems to be inadmissible. The circumstance which dictated the decree was the counter-teaching of Jewish Christians, that it was necessary that the Gentile converts should be circumcised and keep the law of Moses. The restrictive clauses are simply represented as those which it was deemed right to impose; and, as they are stated without qualification, it is holding the decision of the "Holy Spirit" and of the Church somewhat cheap to treat them as mere local and temporary expedients. This is evidently not the view of the author of the Acts. Would it have been the view of anyone else if it were not that, so far as any external trace of the decree is concerned, it is an absolute myth? The prevalence of practices to which the four prohibitions point is quite sufficiently attested to show that, little as there is any ground for considering that such a decree was framed in such a manner, the restrictive clauses are put forth as necessary and permanently binding. The very doubt which exists as to whether the prohibitions were not intended to represent the conditions imposed on Proselytes of the Gate shows their close analogy to them, and it cannot be reasonably asserted that the early Christians regarded those conditions either as obsolete or indifferent. The decree is clearly intended to set forth the terms upon which Gentile Christians were to be admitted into communion, and undoubtedly is to be taken as applicable not merely to a few districts, but to the Gentiles in general.

The account which Paul gives of his visit not only ignores any such decree, but excludes it. In the first place, taking into account the Apostle's character and the spirit of his Epistle, it is impossible to suppose that Paul had any intention of submitting, as to higher authority, the Gospel which he preached, for the judgment of the elder Apostles and of the Church of Jerusalem. Nothing short of this is involved in the account in the Acts, and in the form of the decree which promulgates, in an authoritative manner, restrictive clauses which "seemed good to the Holy Spirit" and to the Council. The temper of the man is well shown in Paul's indignant letter to the Galatians. He receives his Gospel, not from men, but by direct revelation from Jesus Christ; and so far is he from submission of the kind implied that he



says: "But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any Gospel other than that which we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so say I now again: If any man preach any Gospel to you other than that ye received, let him be accursed."<sup>1</sup> That the Apostle here refers to his own peculiar teaching, and does so in contradistinction to the Gospel preached by the Judaisers, is evident from the preceding words: "I marvel that ye are so soon removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different Gospel; which is not another, only there are some that trouble you, and desire to pervert the Gospel of Christ."<sup>2</sup> Passing from this, however, to the restrictive clauses in general, how is it possible that Paul could state, as the result of his visit, that the "pillar" Apostles "communicated nothing" after hearing his Gospel, if the four conditions of this decree had thus been authoritatively "communicated"? On the contrary, Paul distinctly adds that, in acknowledging his mission, but one condition had been attached: "Only that we should remember the poor; which very thing I also was forward to do." As one condition is here mentioned, why not the others, had any been actually imposed? It is argued that the remembrance of the poor of Jerusalem which is thus inculcated was a recommendation personally made to Paul and Barnabas; but it is clear that the Apostle's words refer to the result of his communication of his Gospel, and to the understanding under which his mission to the Gentiles was tolerated.

We have already pointed out how extraordinary it is that such a decision of the Council should not have been referred to in describing his visit, and the more we go into details the more striking and inexplicable, except in one way, is such silence. In relating the struggle regarding the circumcision of Titus, for instance, and stating that he did not yield, no, not for an hour, to the demands made on the subject, is it conceivable that, if the exemption of all Gentile Christians from the initiatory rite had been unanimously conceded, Paul would not have added to his statement about Titus, that not only he himself had not been compelled to give way in this instance, but that his representations had even convinced those who had been Apostles before him, and secured the unanimous adoption of his own views on the point? The whole of this Epistle is a vehement and intensely earnest denunciation of those Judaisers who were pressing the necessity of the initiatory rite upon the Galatian converts.<sup>3</sup> Is it possible that

<sup>1</sup> Gal. i. 8, 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.*, i. 6, 7.

<sup>3</sup> "Turning from Antioch to Galatia, we meet with Judaic teachers who urged circumcision on the Gentile converts, and, as the best means of weakening the authority of St. Paul, asserted for the Apostles of the Circumcision the exclusive right of dictating to the Church" (Lightfoot, *Ep. to the Gal.*, p. 353).



the Apostle could have left totally unmentioned the fact that the Apostles and the very Church of Jerusalem had actually declared circumcision to be unnecessary? It would not have accorded with Paul's character, it is said, to have appealed to the authority of the elder Apostles or of the Church in a matter in which his own apostolic authority and teaching were in question. In that case, how can it be supposed that he ever went at all up to Jerusalem to the Apostles and elders about this question? If he was not too proud to lay aside his apostolic dignity and, representing the Christians of Antioch, to submit the case to the Council at Jerusalem, and subsequently to deliver its decree to various communities, is it consistent with reason or common sense to assert that he was too proud to recall the decision of that Council to the Christians of Galatia? It must, we think, be obvious that, if such an explanation of Paul's total silence as to the decree be at all valid, it is absolutely fatal to the account of Paul's visit in the Acts. This reasoning is not confined to the Epistle to the Galatians, but, as Paley points out, applies to the other Epistles of Paul, in all of which the same silence is preserved.

Moreover, the apologetic explanation altogether fails upon other grounds. Without appealing to the decree as an authority, we must feel sure that the Apostle would at least have made use of it as a logical refutation of his adversaries. The man who did not hesitate to attack Peter openly for inconsistency, and charge him with hypocrisy, would not have hesitated to cite the decree as evidence, and still less to fling it in the faces of those Judaisers who, so short a time after that decree is supposed to have been promulgated, preached the necessity of circumcision and Mosaic observances in direct opposition to its terms, whilst claiming to represent the views of the very Apostles and Church which had framed it. Paul, who never denies the validity of their claim, would most certainly have taunted them with gross inconsistency and retorted that the Church of Jerusalem, the Apostles, and the Judaisers who now troubled him and preached circumcision and the Mosaic law had, four or five years previously, declared, as the deliberate decision of the Holy Spirit and the Council, that they were no longer binding on the Gentile converts. By such a reference "the discussion would have been foreclosed." None of the reasons which are suggested to explain the undeniable fact that there is no mention of the decree can really bear examination, and that fact remains supported by a great many powerful considerations, leading to the very simple explanation which reconciles all difficulties, that the narrative of the Acts is not authentic.

We arrive at the very same results when we examine the Apostle's references to the practices which the conditions of the decree were



intended to control. Instead of recognising the authority of the decree or enforcing its prescriptions, he does not even allow us to infer its existence, and he teaches disregard at least of some of its restrictions. The decree enjoins the Gentile Christians to abstain from meats offered to idols. Paul tells the Corinthians to eat whatever meat is sold in the shambles without asking questions for conscience sake, for an idol is nothing in the world, "neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we eat not are we the worse."<sup>1</sup> It is not conceivable that the Apostle could so completely have ignored the prohibition of the decree if he had actually submitted the question to the Apostles, and himself so distinctly acquiesced in their decision as to distribute the document amongst the various communities whom he subsequently visited. To argue that the decree was only intended to have force in Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia, to which, as the locality in which the difficulty had arisen which had originally led to the Council, the decree was, in the first instance, addressed, is highly arbitrary; but when, proceeding further, Apologists<sup>2</sup> draw a distinction between those churches "which had already been founded, and which had felt the pressure of Jewish prejudice (Acts xvi. 4)," and "brotherhoods afterwards formed and lying beyond the reach of such influences," as a reason why no notice of the decree is taken in the case of the Corinthians and Romans, the special pleading ignores very palpable facts. "Jewish prejudices" are represented in the Acts of the Apostles themselves as being more than usually strong in Corinth. There was a Jewish synagogue there, augmented probably by the Jews expelled from Rome under Claudius,<sup>3</sup> and their violence against Paul finally obliged him to leave the place.<sup>4</sup> Living in the midst of an idolatrous city, and much exposed to the temptations of sacrificial feasts, we might naturally expect excessive rigour against participation, on the one hand, and perhaps too great indifference, on the other; and this we actually find to have been the case. It is in consequence of questions respecting meats offered to idols that Paul writes to the Corinthians, and, whilst treating the matter in itself as one of perfect indifference, merely inculcates consideration for weak consciences.<sup>5</sup> It is clear that there was a decided feeling against the practice; it is clear that strong Jewish prejudices existed in the Jewish colony at Corinth, and wherever there were Jews the eating of meats offered to idols was an abomination. The sin of Israel at Baalpeor<sup>6</sup> lived in the memory of the people, and abstinence from such pollution<sup>7</sup> was considered a duty. If the existence of such "Jewish prejudices" was a reason for

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. viii. 4 f., x. 25 f.    <sup>2</sup> Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Ep. to the Gal.*, p. 126 f.

<sup>3</sup> Acts' xviii. 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Ib.*, xviii. 6, 12 f.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. viii. 1-13, x. 23 f.

<sup>6</sup> Numb. xxv. 2 f.; Psalm cvi. 28.

<sup>7</sup> Dan. i. 8 f.



publishing the decree, we have, in fact, more definite evidence of them in Corinth than we have in Antioch, for, apart from this specific mention of the subject of eating sacrificial meats, the two Apostolic letters abundantly show the existence and activity of Judaistic parties there, which opposed the work of Paul, and desired to force Mosaic observances upon his converts. It is impossible to admit that, supposing such a decree to have been promulgated as the mind of the Holy Spirit, there could be any reason why it should have been unknown at Corinth so short a time after it was adopted. When, therefore, we find the Apostle not only ignoring it, but actually declaring that to be a matter of indifference, abstinence from which it had just seemed good to the Holy Spirit to enjoin, the only reasonable conclusion is that Paul himself was totally ignorant of the existence of any decree containing such a prohibition. There is much difference of opinion as to the nature of the *πορνεία* referred to in the decree, and we need not discuss it; but in all the Apostle's homilies upon the subject there is the same total absence of all allusion to the decision of the Council.

Nowhere can any practical result from the operation of the decree be pointed out, nor any trace even of its existence. The assertions and conjectures, by which those who maintain the authenticity of the narrative in the Acts seek to explain the extraordinary absence of all external evidence of the decree, labour under the disadvantage of all attempts to account for the total failure of effects from a supposed cause, the existence of which is in reality only assumed. It is customary to reply to the objection that there is no mention of the decree in the Epistles of Paul, or in any other contemporary writing, that this is a mere argument *a silentio*. Is it not, however, difficult to imagine any other argument, from contemporary sources, regarding what is affirmed to have had no existence, than that from silence? Do Apologists absolutely demand that, with prophetic anticipation of future controversies, the Apostle Paul should obligingly have left on record that there actually was no Council such as a writer would subsequently describe, and that the decree which he would put forward as the result of that Council must not be accepted as genuine? It is natural to expect that, when writing of the very visit in question, and dealing with subjects and discussions in which, whether in the shape of historical allusion, appeal to authority, taunt for inconsistency, or assertion of his own influence, some allusion to the decree would have been highly appropriate, if not necessary, the Apostle Paul should at least have given some hint of its existence. His not doing so constitutes strong presumptive evidence against the authenticity of the decree, and all the more so as no more positive evidence than silence could possibly be forthcoming of the non-existence of



that which never existed. The supposed decree of the Council of Jerusalem cannot on any ground be accepted as a historical fact.

We may now return to such further consideration of the statements of the Epistle as may seem necessary for the object of our inquiry. No mention is made by the Apostle of any official mission on the subject of circumcision, and the discussion of that question arises in a merely incidental manner from the presence of Titus, an uncircumcised Gentile Christian. There has been much discussion as to whether Titus actually was circumcised or not, and there can be little doubt that the omission of the negative οὐκ οὐδέ from Gal. ii. 5 has been in some cases influenced by the desire to bring the Apostle's conduct upon this occasion into harmony with the account, in Acts xvi. 3, of his circumcising Timothy. We shall not require to enter into any controversy on the point, for the great majority of critics are agreed that the Apostle intended to say that Titus was not circumcised, although the contrary is affirmed by a few writers. It is obvious from the whole of the Apostle's narrative that great pressure was exerted to induce Titus to submit, and that Paul, if he did not yield even for an hour the required subjection, had a long and severe struggle to maintain his position. Even when relating the circumstances in his letter to the Galatians, the recollection of his contest profoundly stirs the Apostle's indignation; his utterance becomes vehement, but cannot keep pace with his impetuous thoughts; and the result is a narrative in broken and abrupt sentences, whose very incompleteness is eloquent, and betrays the irritation which has not even yet entirely subsided. How does this accord with the whole tone of the account in the Acts? It is customary with Apologists to insert so much between the lines of that narrative, partly from imagination and partly from the statements of the Epistle, that they almost convince themselves and others that such additions are actually suggested by the author of the Acts himself. If we take the account of the Acts without such transmutations, it is certain that not only is there not the slightest indication of any struggle regarding the circumcision of Titus, "in which St. Paul maintained at one time almost single-handed the cause of Gentile freedom,"<sup>1</sup> but no suggestion that there had ever been any hesitation on the part of the leading Apostles and the mass of the Church regarding the point at issue. The impression given by the author of the Acts is undeniably one of unbroken and undisturbed harmony: of a Council in which the elder Apostles were of one mind with Paul, and warmly agreed with him that the Gentiles should be delivered from the yoke of the Mosaic law and

<sup>1</sup> Lightfoot, *Galatians*, p. 106.



from the necessity of undergoing the initiatory rite. What is there in such an account to justify in any degree the irritation displayed by Paul at the mere recollection of this visit, or to merit the ironical terms with which he speaks of the "pillar" Apostles?

We may now consider the part which the Apostles must have taken in the dispute regarding the circumcision of Titus. Is it possible to suppose that, if the circumcision of Paul's follower had only been demanded by certain of the sect of the Pharisees who believed, unsupported by the rest, there could ever have been any considerable struggle on the point? Is it possible, further, to suppose that, if Paul had received the cordial support of James and the leading Apostles in his refusal to concede the circumcision of Titus, such a contest could have been more than momentary and trifling? Is it possible that the Apostle Paul could have spoken of "certain of the sect of the Pharisees who believed" in such terms as: "to whom we yielded by the submission (*εἰξάμεν τῇ ὑποταγῇ*), no, not for an hour";<sup>1</sup> or that he could have used this expression if those who pressed the demand upon him had not been in a position of authority, which naturally suggested a subjection which Paul upon this occasion persistently refused? It is not possible. Of course many writers who seek to reconcile the two narratives, and some of whom substitute, for the plain statements of the Acts and of the Apostle, an account which is not consistent with either, suppose that the demand for the circumcision of Titus proceeded solely from the "false brethren," although some of them suppose that at least these false brethren may have thought they had reason to hope for the support of the elder Apostles.<sup>2</sup> It is almost too clear for dispute that the desire that Titus should be circumcised was shared or pressed by the elder Apostles. According to the showing of the Acts, nothing could be more natural than the fact that James and the elders of Jerusalem who, so long after (xxi. 20 f.), advised Paul to prove his continued observance of the law, and that he did not teach the Jews to abandon circumcision, should on this occasion have pressed him to circumcise Titus. The conduct of Peter at Antioch, and the constant opposition which Paul met with from emissaries of James and of the Apostles of the Circumcision upon the very point of Gentile circumcision, all support the inevitable conclusion, that the pressure upon Paul in the matter of Titus was not only not resisted by the Apostles, but proceeded in no small degree from them.

<sup>1</sup> Gal. ii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Wieseler (*Chron. ap. Zeit.*, p. 194) conjectures the meaning of Paul to be that, but for the false brethren, he would actually have circumcised Titus, and thus have been consistent with the principles which he maintained by the circumcision of Timothy, xvi. 3.



This is further shown by the remainder of Paul's account of his visit and by the tone of his remarks regarding the principal Apostles, as well as by the historical data which we possess of his subsequent career. We need not repeat that the representation in the Acts both of the Council and of the whole intercourse between Paul and the Apostles is one of "unbroken unity."<sup>1</sup> The struggle about Titus and the quarrel with Peter at Antioch are altogether omitted, and the Apostolic letter speaks merely of "our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men that have given up their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>2</sup> The language of Paul is not so pacific and complimentary. Immediately after his statement that he had "yielded by the submission, no, not for an hour," Paul continues: "But from those who seem to be something (ἀπὸ δὲ τῶν δοκούντων εἶναί τι)—whatsoever they were it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth not man's person—for to me those who seem (οἱ δοκοῦντες) (to be something) communicated nothing, but, on the contrary, etc., and when they knew the grace that was given to me, James and Cephas and John, who seem to be pillars (οἱ δοκοῦντες στῦλοι εἶναι), gave to me and Barnabas right hands of fellowship that we (should go) unto the Gentiles," etc.<sup>3</sup> The tone and language of this passage are certainly depreciatory of the elder Apostles, and, indeed, it is difficult to understand how any one could fail to perceive and admit the fact. It is argued by some, who recognise the irony of the term οἱ δοκοῦντες applied to the Apostles, that the disparagement which is so transparent in the form οἱ δοκοῦντες εἶναί τι, "those who seem to be something," is softened again in the new turn which is given to it in verse 9, οἱ δοκοῦντες στῦλοι εἶναι, "these who seem to be pillars," in which, it is said, "the Apostle expresses the real greatness and high authority of the twelve in their separate field of labour."<sup>4</sup> It seems to us that this interpretation cannot be sustained. Paul is ringing the changes on οἱ δοκοῦντες, and contrasting with the position they assumed, and the estimation in which they were held, his own experience of them and their inability to add anything to him. "Those who seem to be something," he commences, but immediately interrupts himself, after having thus indicated the persons whom he meant, with the more direct protest of irritated independence: "whatsoever they were it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth not man's person." These δοκοῦντες communicated nothing to him, but, on the contrary, when they knew the grace given to him, "those who seem to be pillars" gave him hands of fellowship, but nothing more, and they went their different ways, he to the Gentiles and

<sup>1</sup> Jowett, *The Eps. of St. Paul*, i., p. 330.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xv. 25 f.

<sup>3</sup> Gal. ii. 6, 9.

<sup>4</sup> Jowett, *The Eps. of St. Paul*, i., p. 331.



they to the circumcision. If the expression οἱ δοκ. στῦλοι εἶναι be true, as well as ironically used, it cannot be construed into a declaration of respect, but forms part of a passage whose tone throughout is proudly depreciatory. This is followed by such words as "hypocrisy" (ὑπόκρισις) and "condemned" (κατεγνωσμένος) applied to the conduct of Peter at Antioch, as well as the mention of the emissaries of James as the cause of that dispute, which add meaning to the irony. This is not the only occasion on which Paul betrays a certain bitterness against the elder Apostles. In his second letter to the Corinthians, xi. 5, he says, "For I reckon that I am not a whit behind the over much Apostles" (τῶν ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων), and again, xii. 11, "For in nothing was I behind the over much Apostles" (τῶν ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων); and the whole of the vehement passage in which these references are set shows the intensity of the feeling which called them forth. To say that the expressions in the Galatian Epistle and here are "depreciatory, not indeed of the twelve themselves, but of the extravagant and exclusive claims set up for them by the Judaisers,"<sup>1</sup> is an extremely arbitrary distinction. They are directly applied to the Apostles, and οἱ δοκοῦντες εἶναί τι cannot be taken as irony against those who over-estimated them, but against the δοκοῦντες themselves. Paul's blows generally go straight to their mark.

Meyer argues that the designation of the Apostles as οἱ δοκοῦντες is purely historical, and cannot be taken as ironical, inasmuch as it would be inconsistent to suppose that Paul could adopt a depreciatory tone when he is relating his recognition as a colleague by the elder Apostles;<sup>2</sup> and others consider that verses 8, 9, 10 contain evidence of mutual respect and recognition between Paul and the Twelve. Even if this were so it could not do away with the actual irony of the expressions; but do the facts support such a statement? We have seen that, in spite of the picture of unbroken unity drawn by the author of the Acts and the liberal sentiments regarding the Gentiles which he puts into the mouth of Peter and of James, Paul had a severe and protracted struggle to undergo in order to avoid circumcising Titus. We have already stated the grounds upon which it seems certain that the pressure upon that occasion came as well from the elder Apostles as the "false brethren," and critics who do not go so far as to make this positive affirmation, at least recognise the passive, and, therefore, to a large extent, compliant, attitude which the Apostles must have held. It is after narrating some of the particulars of this struggle that Paul uses the terms of depreciation which we have

<sup>1</sup> Lightfoot, *Galatians*, p. 107.

<sup>2</sup> *Kr. Ex. H'buch üb. d. Br. an die Gal.*, 63 f.



been discussing ; and, having added, "for to me those who seem (to be something) communicated nothing," he says, "*but, on the contrary*, when they saw that I have been entrusted with the Gospel of the uncircumcision, even as Peter with that of the circumcision (for he that wrought for Peter unto the Apostleship of the circumcision wrought also for me unto the Gentiles) ; and when they knew the grace that was given unto me, James and Cephas and John, who seem to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas right hands of fellowship, that we (should go) unto the Gentiles, and they unto the circumcision—only that we should remember the poor ; which very thing I also was forward to do." It will be observed that, after saying they "communicated nothing" to him, the Apostle adds, in opposition, "*but, on the contrary*" (ἀλλὰ τοῦναντίον). In what did this opposition consist ? Apparently in this—that, instead of strengthening the hands of Paul, they left him to labour alone. They said : "Take your own course ; preach the Gospel of the uncircumcision to Gentiles, and we will preach the Gospel of the circumcision to Jews."<sup>1</sup> In fact, when Paul returned to Jerusalem for the second time after fourteen years, he found the elder Apostles not one whit advanced towards his own universalism ; they retained their former Jewish prejudices, and remained, as before, Apostles of the circumcision. Notwithstanding the strong Pauline sentiments put into Peter's mouth by the author of the Acts, and his claim to have been so long before selected by God that by his mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the Gospel and believe, Paul singles out Peter as specially entrusted with the Gospel of the circumcision ; and, in the end, after Paul has exerted all his influence, Peter and the rest remain unmoved, and allow Paul to go to the Gentiles, while they confine their ministry, as before, to the Jews. The success of Paul's work amongst the heathen was too palpable a fact to be ignored ; but there is no reason to believe that the conversion of the Gentiles, upon his terms, was more than tolerated at that time, or the Gentile Christians admitted to more than such imperfect communion with the Jewish Christians as that of Proselytes of the Gate in relation to Judaism. This is shown by the conduct of Peter at Antioch after the supposed Council, and of the Jews with him, and even of Barnabas, through fear of the emissaries of James, whose arrival certainly could not have produced a separation between Jewish and Gentile Christians had the latter been recognised as in full communion.

The "hands of fellowship" clearly was a mere passive permission of Paul's mission to the Gentiles, but no positive and hearty approval of it testified by active support. It must, we think, be

<sup>1</sup> Jowett, *The Eps. of St. Paul*, i. 240 f.



evident to any one who attentively considers the passage we are examining, that there is no question in it of a recognition of the Apostolate of Paul. The elder Apostles consent to his mission to the Gentiles, whilst they themselves go to the circumcision; but there is not a syllable which indicates that Paul's claim to the title of Apostle was ever either acknowledged or discussed. It is not probable that Paul would have submitted such a point to their consideration. It is difficult to see how the elder Apostles could well have done less than they did, and the extent of their fellowship seems to have simply amounted to toleration of what they could not prevent. The pressure for the circumcision of the Gentile converts was an attempt to coerce, and to suppress the peculiar principle of the Gospel of uncircumcision; and, though that effort failed through the determined resistance of Paul, it is clear, from the final resolve to limit their preaching to the circumcision, that the elder Apostles in no way abandoned their view of the necessity of the initiatory rite. The episode at Antioch is a practical illustration of this statement. Hilgenfeld ably remarks: "When we consider that Peter was afraid of the circumcised Christians, there can be no doubt *that James, at the head of the primitive community, made the attempt to force heathen Christians to adopt the substance of Jewish legitimacy, by breaking off ecclesiastical community with them.*"<sup>1</sup> The Gentile Christians were virtually excommunicated on the arrival of the emissaries of James, or at least treated as mere Proselytes of the Gate; and the pressure upon the Galatian converts of the necessity of circumcision by similar Judaising emissaries, which called forth the vehement and invaluable Epistle before us, is quite in accordance with the circumstances of this visit. The separation agreed upon between Paul and the elder Apostles was not in any sense geographical, but purely ethnological. It was no mere division of labour,<sup>2</sup> no suitable apportionment of work. The elder Apostles determined, like their Master before them, to confine their ministry to Jews, whilst Paul, if he pleased, might go to the Gentiles; and the fact that Peter subsequently goes to Antioch, as well as many other circumstances, shows that no mere separation of localities, but a selection of race, was intended. If there had not been this absolute difference of purpose, any separation would have been unnecessary, and all the Apostles would have preached one Gospel indifferently to all who had ears to hear it; such strange inequality in the partition of the work could never have existed: that Paul should go unaided to the gigantic task of converting the

<sup>1</sup> *Zeitschr. wiss. Th.*, 1858, p. 90.

<sup>2</sup> "They would sanction but not share his mission to the Gentiles" (Jowett, *The Eps. of St. Paul*, i. 236).



heathen, while the Twelve reserved themselves for the small but privileged people. All that we have said at the beginning of this section of the nature of primitive Christianity, and of the views prevalent amongst the disciples at the death of their Master, is verified by this attitude of the Three during the famous visit of the Apostle of the Gentiles to Jerusalem, and Paul's account is precisely in accordance with all that historical probability and reason, unwarped by the ideal representations of the Acts, prepare us to expect. The more deeply we go into the statements of Paul the more is this apparent, and the more palpable does the inauthenticity of the narrative of the Council appear.

The words of Paul in describing the final understanding are very remarkable, and require further consideration. The decision that they should go to the circumcision and Paul to the Gentiles is based upon the recognition of a different Gospel entrusted to him, the Gospel of the uncircumcision, as the Gospel of the circumcision is entrusted to Peter. It will be remembered that Paul states that, on going up to Jerusalem upon this occasion, he communicated to them the Gospel which he preached among the Gentiles, and it is probable that he made the journey more especially for this purpose. It appears from the account that this Gospel was not only new to them, but was distinctly different from that of the elder Apostles. If Paul preached the same Gospel as the rest, what necessity could there have been for communicating it at all? What doubt that by any means he might be running, or had run, in vain? He knew perfectly well that he preached a different Gospel from the Apostles of the Circumcision, and his anxiety probably was to secure an amicable recognition of the Gentile converts, whom he had taught to consider circumcision unnecessary and the obligation of the law removed. Of course there was much that was fundamentally the same in the two Gospels, starting as they both did with the recognition of Jesus as the Messiah; but their points of divergence were very marked and striking, and more especially in directions where the prejudices of the Apostles of the circumcision were the strongest. Avoiding all debatable ground, it is clear that the Gospel of the uncircumcision, which proclaimed the abrogation of the law and the inutility of the initiatory rite, must have been profoundly repugnant to Jews, who still preached the obligation of circumcision and the observance of the law. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law,"<sup>1</sup> said the Gospel of the uncircumcision. "Behold, I, Paul, say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing.....For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but faith working through love."<sup>2</sup> "For neither circumcision is anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."<sup>3</sup> The teaching

<sup>1</sup> Gal. iii. 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.*, v. 2, 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.*, vi. 15.



which was specially designated the Gospel of the circumcision, in contradistinction to this Gospel of the uncircumcision, held very different language. There is no gainsaying the main fact—and that fact, certified by Paul himself and substantiated by a host of collateral circumstances, is more conclusive than all conciliatory apologetic reasoning—that, at the date of this visit to Jerusalem (c. A.D. 50–52), the Three, after hearing all that Paul had to say, allowed him to go alone to the Gentiles, but themselves would have no part in the mission, and turned as before to the circumcision.

There is another point to which we must very briefly refer. The statements of Paul show that, antecedent to this visit to Jerusalem, Paul had been the active Apostle of the Gentiles, preaching his Gospel of the uncircumcision, and that subsequently he returned to the same field of labour. If we examine the narrative of the Acts, we do not find him represented in any special manner as the Apostle of the Gentiles; but, on the contrary, whilst Peter claims the honour of having been selected that by his voice the Gentiles should hear the word of the Gospel and believe, Paul is everywhere described as going to the Jews, and only when his teaching is rejected by them does he turn to the Gentiles. It is true that Ananias is represented as being told by the Lord that Paul is a chosen vessel “to bear my name both before Gentiles and kings, and the sons of Israel”;<sup>1</sup> and Paul subsequently recounts how the Lord had said to himself, “Go, for I will send thee far hence unto Gentiles.”<sup>2</sup> The author of the Acts, however, everywhere conveys the impression that Paul very reluctantly fulfils this mission, and that if he had but been successful amongst the Jews he never would have gone to the Gentiles at all. Immediately after his conversion, he preaches in the synagogues at Damascus and confounds the Jews,<sup>3</sup> as he again does during his visit to Jerusalem.<sup>4</sup> When the Holy Spirit desires the Church at Antioch to separate Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto he has called them, they continue to announce the word of God “in the synagogues of the Jews,”<sup>5</sup> and in narrating the conversion of the Roman proconsul at Paphos it is said that it is Sergius Paulus himself who calls for Barnabas and Saul, and seeks to hear the word of God.<sup>6</sup> When they came to Antioch in Pisidia they go into the synagogue of the Jews<sup>7</sup> as usual, and it is only after the Jews reject them that Paul and Barnabas are described as saying: “It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you: seeing that ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.”<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ix. 15 f.<sup>2</sup> xxii. 21; cf. xxvi. 17 f.<sup>3</sup> ix. 20, 22.<sup>4</sup> ix. 28 f.<sup>5</sup> xiii. 5.<sup>6</sup> xiii. 7.<sup>7</sup> xiii. 14 f., 42 f.<sup>8</sup> xiii. 46.



In Iconium, to which they next proceed, however, they go into the synagogue of the Jews,<sup>1</sup> and later it is stated that Paul, on arriving at Thessalonica, "as his custom was," went into the synagogue of the Jews, and for three Sabbaths discoursed to them.<sup>2</sup> At Corinth it was only when the Jews opposed him and blasphemed that Paul is represented as saying: "Your blood be upon your own head; I will henceforth, with a pure conscience, go unto the Gentiles." It is impossible to distinguish from this narrative any difference between the ministry of Paul and that of the other Apostles. They all address themselves mainly and primarily to the Jews, although, if Gentiles desire to eat of "the crumbs which fall from the children's bread," they are not rejected. Even the Pharisees stirred heaven and earth to make proselytes. In no sense can the Paul of the Acts be considered specially an Apostle of the Gentiles, and the statement of the Epistle to the Galatians<sup>3</sup> has no significance, if interpreted by the historical work.

Apologists usually reply to this objection that the practice of Paul in the Acts is in accordance with his own words in the Epistle to the Romans, i. 16, in which it is asserted he recognises the right of the Jews to precedence. In the authorised version this passage is rendered as follows: "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."<sup>4</sup> (δύναμις γὰρ Θεοῦ ἐστὶν εἰς σωτηρίαν παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι, Ἰουδαίῳ τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἑλληνι.) As a matter of fact, we may here at once state that the word πρῶτον, "first," is not found in Codices B and G, and that it is omitted from the Latin rendering of the verse quoted by Tertullian.<sup>5</sup> That the word upon which the controversy turns should not be found in so important a MS. as the *Vatican Codex*, or in so ancient a version as Tertullian's, is very significant; but, proceeding at once to the sense of the sentence, we must briefly state the reasons which seem to us conclusively to show that the usual reading is erroneous. The passage is an emphatic statement of the principles of Paul. He declares that he is not ashamed of the Gospel, and he immediately states the reason: "for it is a power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth."<sup>6</sup> He is not ashamed of the Gospel, because he recognises its universality; for, in opposition to the exclusiveness of Judaism, he maintains that all are "sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.....There is neither Jew nor Greek

<sup>1</sup> xiv. 1 f.

<sup>2</sup> xvii. 1 f. Cf. 10 f., 17 f.; xviii. 4 f., 19, 28; xix. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Gal. ii. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Rom. ii. 9, 10. The oldest MSS. and versions omit the τοῦ χριστοῦ of the Authorised Version, which most editors, therefore, reject.

<sup>5</sup> *Adv. Marc.*, vi. 13.

<sup>6</sup> Rom. i. 16.



.....for ye are all one man in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise."<sup>1</sup> "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but faith working through love."<sup>2</sup> The reason which he gives is that which lies at the basis of the whole of his special teaching; but we are asked to believe that, after so clear and comprehensive a declaration, he at once adds the extraordinary qualification: Ἰουδαίῳ τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἑλληνι, rendered "to the Jew first and also to the Greek." What is the meaning of such a limitation? If the Gospel be a power of God unto salvation "to everyone that believeth" (παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι), in what manner can it possibly be so "to the Jew first"? Can it be maintained that there are comparative degrees in salvation? "Salvation" is obviously an absolute term. If saved at all, the Jew cannot be more saved than the Greek. If, on the other hand, the expression be interpreted as an assertion that the Jew has a right of precedence, either in the offer or the attainment of salvation, before the Greek, the manner of its realisation is almost equally inconceivable, and a host of difficulties, especially in view of the specific Pauline teaching, immediately present themselves. There can be no doubt that the Judaistic view distinctly was that Israel must first be saved before the heathen could obtain any part in the Messianic kingdom, and we have shown that this idea dominated primitive Christianity; and inseparable from this was the belief that the only way to a participation in its benefits lay through Judaism. The heathen could only obtain admission into the family of Israel, and become partakers in the covenant, by submitting to the initiatory rite. It was palpably under the influence of this view, and with a conviction that the Messianic kingdom was primarily destined for the children of Israel, that the elder Apostles, even after the date of Paul's second visit to Jerusalem, continued to confine their ministry "to the circumcision." Paul's view was very different. He recognised and maintained the universality of the Gospel, and, in resolving to go to the heathen, he practically repudiated the very theory of Jewish preference which he is here supposed to advance. If the Gospel, instead of being a power of God to salvation to every man who believed, was for the Jew first, the Apostolate of the Gentiles was a mere delusion and a snare. What could be the advantage of so urgently offering salvation to the Greek, if the gift, instead of being "for every one that believeth," was a mere prospective benefit, inoperative until the Jew had first been saved? "Salvation to the Jew first and also to the Greek," if it have any significance whatever of the kind argued—involving either a prior claim to the offer of salvation or

<sup>1</sup> Gal. iii. 26 f.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.*, v. 6.



precedence in its distribution—so completely destroys all the present interest in it of the Gentile, that the Gospel must to him have lost all power. To suppose that such an expression simply means that the Gospel must first be preached to the Jews in any town to which the Apostle might come, before it could legitimately be proclaimed to the Gentiles of that town, is childish. We have no reason to suppose that Paul held the deputy Sergius Paulus, who desired to hear the word of God and believed, in suspense until the Jews of Paphos had rejected it. The cases of the Ethiopian eunuch and Cornelius throw no light upon any claim of the Jew to priority in salvation. Indeed, not to waste time in showing the utter incongruity of the ordinary interpretation, we venture to affirm that there is not a single explanation, which maintains a priority assigned to the Jew in any way justifying the reference to this text, which is capable of supporting the slightest investigation. If we linguistically examine the expression Ἰουδαίῳ τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἑλληνι, we arrive at the same conclusion, that πρῶτον is an interpolation, for we must maintain that πρῶτον with τε and καὶ must be applied equally both to “Jew” and “Greek,” and cannot rightly be appropriated to the Jew only, as implying a preference over the Greek. The sense, therefore, can only be properly and intelligibly given by disregarding πρῶτον and simply translating the words, “both to Jew and Greek.”<sup>1</sup> This was the rendering of the ancient Latin version quoted by Tertullian in his work against Marcion: “*Itaque et hic, cum dicit: Non enim me pudet evangelii, virtus enim dei est in salutem omni credenti, Judæo et Græco, quia justitia dei in eo revelatur ex fide in fidem.*”<sup>2</sup> We are not left without further examples of the very same expression, and an examination of the context will amply demonstrate that Paul used it in no other sense. In the very next chapter the Apostle twice uses the same words. After condemning the hasty and unrighteous judgment of man, he says: “For we know that the judgment of God is according to truth.....who will render to every one according to his works; to them who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honour and incorruption, eternal life: but unto them that act out of factious spirit and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, anger, and wrath: affliction and distress upon every soul of man that worketh evil, both of Jew and of Greek (Ἰουδαίου τε

<sup>1</sup> Beelen rightly interprets this passage in his Commentary on the Romans: “*Sensus ergo est: Evangelii doctrinam non erubesco; est hæc enim (γὰρ) Dei salvifica quedam vis cuicumque qui credit (παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι. Dativus commodi), sive Judæus sit, sive Gentilis*” (Comment. in Epist. S. Pauli ad Romanos, 1854, p. 23). So also Lipsius, *Protestanten Bibel*, 1874, p. 494. Lachmann puts the word πρῶτον between brackets.

<sup>2</sup> *Adv. Marc.* v. 13.



(*πρῶτον*) καὶ Ἑλληνας, A. V. "of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile"); but glory and honour and peace to every one that worketh good, both to Jew and to Greek (*Ἰουδαίῳ τε (πρῶτον) καὶ Ἑλληνι*, A. V. "to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile"). For there is no respect of persons with God."<sup>1</sup> How is it possible that, if the Apostle had intended to assert a priority of any kind accorded to the Jew before the Gentile, he could at the same time have added, "For there is no respect of persons with God"? If salvation be "to the Jew first," there is very distinctly respect of persons with God. The very opposite, however, is repeatedly and emphatically asserted by Paul in this very epistle. "For there is no difference between Jew and Greek" (*οὐ γάρ ἐστιν διαστολὴ Ἰουδαίου τε καὶ Ἑλληνας*), he says, "for the same Lord of all is rich unto all them that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."<sup>2</sup> Here we have the phrase without *πρῶτον*. Nothing could be more clear and explicit. The precedence of the Jew is directly excluded. At the end of the second chapter, moreover, he explains his idea of a Jew: "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outwardly in flesh, but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart, in spirit not letter."<sup>3</sup> If anything further were required to prove that the Apostle does not by the expression, *Ἰουδαίῳ τε (πρῶτον) καὶ Ἑλληνι*, intend to indicate any priority accorded to the Jew, it is supplied by the commencement of the third chapter. "What, then, is the advantage of the Jew? or what the profit of circumcision?" It is obvious that, if the Apostle had just said that the Gospel was the power of God unto salvation, "to Jew first and also to Greek," he had stated a very marked advantage to the Jew, and that such an inquiry as the above would have been wholly unnecessary. The answer which he gives to his own question, however, completes our certainty. "Much every way," he replies; but in explaining what the "much" advantage was, we hear no more of "to Jew first": "Much every way: for first indeed they were entrusted with the oracles of God."<sup>4</sup> And, after a few words, he proceeds: "What then? are we better? Not at all; for we before brought the charge that both Jews and Greeks (*Ἰουδαίους τε καὶ Ἑλλήνας*) are all under sin."<sup>5</sup> Here, again, there is no *πρῶτον*. There can be no doubt in the mind of anyone who understands what Paul's teaching was, and what he means by claiming the special title of "Apostle to the Gentiles," that in going "to the heathen" after his visit to Jerusalem, as before it, there was no purpose in his

<sup>1</sup> Rom. ii. 2, 6-11.<sup>2</sup> *Ib.*, x. 12, 13.<sup>3</sup> *Ib.*, ii. 28.<sup>4</sup> *Ib.*, iii. 1.<sup>5</sup> *Ib.*, iii. 9.



mind to preach to the Jews first, and only on being rejected by them to turn to the Gentiles, as the Acts would have us suppose; but that the principle which regulated his proclamation of the Gospel was that which we have already quoted: "For there is no difference between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord of all is rich unto all them that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."<sup>1</sup>

Still more incongruous is the statement of the Acts that Paul took Timothy and circumcised him because of the Jews. According to this narrative, shortly after the supposed Council of Jerusalem, at which it was decided that circumcision of Gentile converts was unnecessary; immediately after Paul had, in spite of great pressure, refused to allow Titus to be circumcised; and after it had been agreed between the Apostle of the Gentiles and James and Cephas and John that, while they should go to the circumcision, he, on the contrary, should go to the heathen, Paul actually took and circumcised Timothy. Apologists, whilst generally admitting the apparent contradiction, do not consider that this act involves any real inconsistency, and find reasons which, they affirm, sufficiently justify it. Some of these we shall presently examine, but we may at once say that no apologetic arguments seem to us capable of resisting the conclusion arrived at by many independent critics, that the statement of the Acts with regard to Timothy is opposed to all that we know of Paul's views, and that for unassailable reasons it must be pronounced unhistorical. The author of the Acts says: "And he (Paul) came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, son of a believing Jewish woman, but of a Greek father; who was well reported of by the brethren in Lystra and Iconium. Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those places (*καὶ λαβὼν περιέτεμεν αὐτὸν διὰ τοὺς Ἰουδαίους τοὺς ὄντας ἐν τοῖς τόποις ἐκείνοις*); for they all knew that his father was a Greek (*ᾗδειςαν γὰρ ἅπαντες ὅτι Ἕλλην ὁ πατὴρ αὐτοῦ ὑπῆρχεν*)."<sup>2</sup> The principal arguments of those who maintain the truth and consistency of this narrative briefly are: Paul resisted the circumcision of Titus because he was a Greek, and because the subject then actually under consideration was the immunity from the Jewish rite of Gentile Christians, which would have been prejudiced had he yielded the point. On the other hand, Timothy was the son of a Jewish mother, and, whilst there was no principle here in question, Paul circumcised the companion whom he had chosen to accompany him in his missionary journey, both as a recognition of his Jewish

<sup>1</sup> Rom. x. 12, 13.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xvi. 1-3.



origin and to avoid offence to the Jews whom they should encounter in the course of their ministry, as well as to secure for him access to the synagogues which they must visit: Paul in this instance, according to all Apologists, putting in practice his own declaration (1 Cor. ix. 19-20): "For being free from all men, I made myself servant unto all that I might gain the more; and unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain Jews."

It must be borne in mind that the author who chronicles the supposed circumcision of Timothy makes no allusion to the refusal of Paul to permit Titus to be circumcised; an omission which is not only singular in itself, but significant when we find him, immediately after, narrating so singular a concession of which the Apostle makes no mention. Of course it is clear that Paul could not have consented to the circumcision of Titus, and we have only to consider in what manner the case of Timothy differed so as to support the views of those who hold that Paul, who would not yield to the pressure brought to bear upon him in the case of Titus, might, quite consistently, so short a time after, circumcise Timothy with his own hand. It is true that the necessity of circumcision for Gentile Christians came prominently into question, during Paul's visit to Jerusalem, from the presence of his uncircumcised follower Titus, and no doubt the abrogation of the rite must have formed a striking part of the exposition of his Gospel, which Paul tells us he made upon this occasion; but it is equally certain that the necessity of circumcision long continued to be pressed by the Judaistic party in the Church. It cannot fairly be argued that, at any time, Paul could afford to relax his determined and consistent attitude as the advocate for the universality of Christianity and the abrogation of a rite, insistence upon which, he had been the first to recognise, would have been fatal to the spread of Christianity. To maintain that he could safely make such a concession of his principles and himself circumcise Timothy, simply because at that precise moment there was no active debate upon the point, is inadmissible; for his Epistles abundantly prove that the topic, if it ever momentarily subsided into stubborn silence, was continually being revived with renewed bitterness. Pauline views could never have prevailed if he had been willing to sacrifice them for the sake of conciliation whenever they were not actively attacked.

The difference of the occasion cannot be admitted as a valid reason; let us, therefore, see whether any difference in the persons and circumstances removes the contradiction. It is argued that such a difference exists in the fact that, whilst Titus was altogether a Gentile, Timothy, on the side of his mother at least, was a Jew; and Thiersch, following a passage quoted by Wetstein, states that,



according to Talmudic prescriptions, the validity of mixed marriages between a Jewess and a Gentile was only recognised upon the condition that the children should be brought up in the religion of the mother. In this case, he argues, Paul merely carried out the requirement of the Jewish law by circumcising Timothy, which others had omitted to do, and thus secured his admission to the Jewish synagogues to which much of his ministry was directed, but from which he would have been excluded had the rite not been performed.<sup>1</sup> Even Meyer, however, in reference to this point, replies that Paul could scarcely be influenced by the Talmudic canon, because Timothy was already a Christian and beyond Judaism.<sup>2</sup> Besides, in point of fact, by such a marriage the Jewess had forfeited Jewish privileges. Timothy, in the eyes of the Mosaic law, was not a Jew, and held, in reality, no better position than the Greek Titus. He had evidently been brought up as a Gentile, and the only question which could arise in regard to him was whether he must first become a Jew before he could be fully recognised as a Christian. The supposition that the circumcision of Timothy, the son of a Greek, after he had actually become a Christian without having passed through Judaism, could secure for him free access to the synagogues of the Jews, may show how exceedingly slight at that time was the difference between the Jew and the Christian, but it also suggests the serious doubt whether the object of the concession, in the mind of the author of the Acts, was not rather to conciliate the Judaic Christians than to represent the act as one of policy towards the unbelieving Jews. The statement of the Acts is that Paul circumcised Timothy "because of the Jews which were in those places ; for they all knew that his father was a Greek." If the reason which we are discussing were correct, the expression would more probably have been, "for they knew that his mother was a Jewess." The Greek father might, and probably did, object to the circumcision of his son, but that was no special reason why Paul should circumcise him. On the other hand, the fact that the Jews knew that his father was a Greek made the action attributed to Paul a concession which the author of the Acts thus represented in its most conciliatory light. The circumcision of Timothy was clearly declared unnecessary by the apostolic decree, for the attempt to show that he was legitimately regarded as a Jew utterly fails. It is obvious that, according to Pauline doctrine, there could be no obligation for anyone who adopted Christianity to undergo this initiatory rite.

<sup>1</sup> *Die Kirche im ap. Z.*, 138. Ewald similarly argues that Paul circumcised Timothy to remove the stigma attaching to him as the child of such a mixed marriage (*Gesch. V. Isr.*, vi. 445 ; *Jahrb. Bibl. Wiss.*, 1857-58, ix., p. 64).

<sup>2</sup> *Apostelg.*, p. 354.



It is impossible reasonably to maintain that any case has been made out to explain why Timothy, who had grown into manhood without being circumcised, and had become a Christian whilst uncircumcised, should at that late period be circumcised. Beyond the reference to a Talmudic prescription, in fact, which, even if he knew it, could not possibly have been recognised by Paul as authoritative, there has not been a serious attempt made to show that the case of Timothy presents exceptional features reconciling the contradiction otherwise admitted as apparent.

The whole apologetic argument, in fact, sinks into one of mere expediency: Timothy, the son of a Jewess and of a Greek, and thus having a certain affinity both to Jews and Gentiles, would become a much more efficient assistant to Paul if he were circumcised and thus had access to the Jewish synagogues; therefore Paul, who himself became as a Jew that he might win the Jews, demanded the same sacrifice from his follower. But can this argument bear any scrutiny by the light of Paul's own writings? It cannot. Paul openly claims to be the Apostle of the Gentiles, and just before the period at which he is supposed to circumcise Timothy he parts from the elder Apostles with the understanding that he is to go to the Gentiles who are freed from circumcision. It is a singular commencement of his mission, to circumcise the son of a Greek father after he had become a Christian. Such supposed considerations about access to synagogues and conciliation of the Jews would seem more suitable to a missionary to the circumcision than to the Apostle of the Gentiles. It must be apparent to all that in going more specially to the Gentiles, as he avowedly was, the alleged expediency of circumcising Timothy falls to the ground, and, on the contrary, that such an act would have compromised his whole Gospel. Paul's characteristic teaching was the inutility of circumcision, and upon this point he sustained the incessant attacks of the emissaries of James and the Judaistic party without yielding or compromise. What could have been more ill-advised under such circumstances than the circumcision with his own hands of a convert who, if the son of a Jewess, was likewise the son of a Greek, and had remained uncircumcised until he had actually embraced that faith which, Paul taught, superseded circumcision? The Apostle who declared: "Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing,"<sup>1</sup> could not have circumcised the Christian Timothy; and if any utterance of Paul more distinctly and explicitly applicable to the present case be required, it is aptly supplied by the following: "Was any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Hath any man been called in

<sup>1</sup> Gal. v. 2.



uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised.....Let each abide in the same calling wherein he was called."<sup>1</sup>

Apologists quote very glibly the saying of Paul, "Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain Jews," as sufficiently justifying the act which we are considering; but it is neither applicable to the case, nor is the passage susceptible of such interpretation. The special object of Paul at that time, according to his own showing,<sup>2</sup> was not to gain Jews, but to gain Gentiles; and the circumcision of Timothy would certainly not have tended to gain Gentiles. If we quote the whole passage from which the above is extracted, the sense at once becomes clear and different from that assigned to it: "For being free from all men, I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more; and unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain Jews; to them under law, as under law, not being myself under law, that I might gain them under law; to them without law, as without law—not being without law to God, but under law to Christ—that I might gain them without law; to the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak; I am become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some. And all things I do for the Gospel's sake, that I may become a partaker thereof with them."<sup>3</sup> It is clear that a man who could become "all things to all men," in the sense of yielding any point of principle, must be considered without principle at all, and no one could maintain that Paul was apt to concede principles. Judged by his own statements, indeed, his character was the very reverse of this. There is no shade of conciliation when he declares: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach any Gospel unto you other than that we preached unto you, let him be accursed.....For am I now making men my friends, or God? or am I seeking to please men? If I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ."<sup>4</sup> The Gospel of which he speaks, and which he protests "is not after men," but received "through a revelation of Jesus Christ,"<sup>5</sup> is that Gospel which Paul preached among the Gentiles, and which proclaimed the abrogation of the law and of circumcision. Paul might in one sense say that "circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God";<sup>6</sup> but such a statement, simply intended to express that there was neither merit in the one nor in the other, clearly does not apply to the case before us, and no way lessens the force of the words we have quoted above: "If ye be circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing." In Paul such a concession would have been in the highest degree a sacrifice of principle, and one which he not only

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 18, 20.

<sup>4</sup> Gal. i. 8, 10.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. ii. 9.

<sup>5</sup> *Ib.*, i. 11, 12.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 19-23.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 19.



refused to make in the case of Titus, "that the truth of the Gospel might abide," but equally maintained in the face of the pillar Apostles, when he left them and returned to the Gentiles whilst they went back to the circumcision. Paul's idea of being "all things to all men" is illustrated by his rebuke to Peter—once more to refer to the scene at Antioch. Peter apparently practised a little of that conciliation which Apologists, defending the unknown author of the Acts at the expense of Paul, consider to be the sense of the Apostle's words. Paul repudiated such an inference, by withstanding Peter to the face as condemned, and guilty of hypocrisy. Paul became all things to all men by considering their feelings, and exhibiting charity and forbearance, in matters indifferent. He was careful not to make his liberty a stumbling block to the weak. "If food maketh my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh for ever lest I make my brother to offend."<sup>1</sup> Self-abnegation in the use of enlightened liberty, however, is a very different thing from the concession of a rite, which it was the purpose of his whole Gospel to discredit, and the labour of his life to resist. Once more we repeat that the narrative of the Acts regarding the circumcision of Timothy is contradictory to the character and teaching of Paul as ascertained from his Epistles, and, like so many other portions of that work which we have already examined, must be rejected as unhistorical.

We have already tested the narrative of the author of the Acts by the statements of Paul in the first two chapters of the Galatians at such length that, although the subject is far from exhausted, we must not proceed further. We think that there can be no doubt that the *rôle* assigned to the Apostle Paul in Acts xv. is unhistorical, and it is unnecessary for us to point out the reasons which led the writer to present him in such subdued colours. We must, however, before finally leaving the subject, very briefly point out a few circumstances which throw a singular light upon the relations which actually existed between Paul and the elder Apostles, and tend to show their real, if covert, antagonism to the Gospel of the uncircumcision. We may at the outset remark, in reference to an objection frequently made—that Paul does not distinctly refer to the Apostles as opposing his teaching, and does not personally attack them—that such a course would have been suicidal in the Apostle of the Gentiles, whilst on the other hand it could not but have hindered the acceptance of his Gospel, for which he was ever ready to endure so much. The man who wrote, "If it be possible, as much as dependeth on you be at peace with all men,"<sup>2</sup> could well be silent in such a cause. Paul, in venturing to preach the Gospel of the uncircumcision, laboured under the singular

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. viii. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. xiii. 18.



disadvantage of not having, like the Twelve, been an immediate disciple of the Master. He had been "as the one born out of due time,"<sup>1</sup> and although he claimed that his Gospel had not been taught to him by man, but had been received by direct revelation from Jesus, there can be no doubt that his apostolic position was constantly assailed. The countenance of the elder Apostles, even if merely tacit, was of great importance to the success of his work; and he felt this so much that, as he himself states, he went up to Jerusalem to communicate to them the Gospel which he preached among the Gentiles, "lest by any means I might be running or did run in vain."<sup>2</sup> Any open breach between them would have frustrated his labours. Had Paul been in recognised enmity with the Twelve who had been selected as his special disciples by the Master, and been repudiated and denounced by them, it is obvious that his position would have been a precarious one. He had no desire for schism. His Gospel, besides, was merely a development of that of the elder Apostles; and, however much they might resent his doctrine of the abrogation of the law and of the inutility of circumcision, they could still regard his Gentile converts as at least in some sort Proselytes of the Gate. With every inducement to preserve peace if by any means possible, and to suppress every expression of disagreement with the Twelve, it is not surprising that we find so little direct reference to the elder Apostles in his epistles. During his visit to Jerusalem he did not succeed in converting them to his views. They still limited their ministry to the circumcision, and he had to be content with a tacit consent to his work amongst the heathen. But although we have no open utterance of his irritation, the suppressed impatience of his spirit, even at the recollection of the incidents of his visit, betrays itself in abrupt sentences, unfinished expressions, and grammar which breaks down in the struggle of repressed emotion. We have already said enough regarding his ironical references to those "who seem to be something," to the "overmuch Apostles," and we need not again point to the altercation between Paul and Cephas at Antioch, and the strong language used by the former.

Nothing is more certain than the fact that, during his whole career, the Apostle Paul had to contend with systematic opposition from the Judaic Christian party; and the only point regarding which there is any difference of opinion is the share in this taken by the Twelve. As we cannot reasonably expect to find any plain statement of this in the writings of the Apostle, we are forced to take advantage of such indications as can be discovered. Upon one point we are not left in doubt. The withdrawal of Peter and the others at Antioch from communion with the Gentile Christians, and, consequently, from the side of Paul, was owing to the arrival

<sup>1</sup> Gal. ii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> I Cor. xv. 8.



of certain men from James, for the Apostle expressly states so. No surprise is expressed, however, at the effect produced by these *τινὲς ἀπὸ Ἰακώβου*, and the clear inference is that they represented the views of a naturally antagonistic party—an inference which is in accordance with all that we elsewhere read of James. It is difficult to separate the *τινὲς ἀπὸ Ἰακώβου* from the *τινὲς* of the preceding chapter (i. 7) who “trouble” the Galatians, and “desire to pervert the Gospel of Christ,” asserting the necessity of circumcision, against whom the Epistle is directed. Again we meet with the same vague and cautious designation of Judaistic opponents in his second Epistle to the Corinthians (iii. 1), where “some” (*τινὲς*) bearers of “letters of commendation” (*συστατικῶν ἐπιστολῶν*), from persons unnamed, were attacking the Apostle and endeavouring to discredit his teaching. By whom were these letters written? We cannot, of course, give an authoritative reply, but, we may ask, by whom could letters of commendation possessing an authority which could have weight against that of Paul be written, except by the elder Apostles? We have certain evidence in the first Epistle to the Corinthians that parties had arisen in the Church of Corinth in opposition to Paul. These parties were distinguished, as the Apostle himself states, by the cries, “I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ”<sup>1</sup> (*ἐγὼ μὲν εἰμι Παύλου, ἐγὼ δὲ Ἀπολλώ, ἐγὼ δὲ Κηφᾶ, ἐγὼ δὲ Χριστοῦ*). Whatever differences of opinion there may be as to the precise nature of these parties, there can be no doubt that both the party “of Cephas” and the party “of Christ” held strong Judaistic views, and assailed the teaching of Paul and his Apostolic authority. It is very evident that the persons to whom the Apostle refers in connection with “letters of commendation” were of these parties.

Apologists argue that “in claiming Cephas as the head of their party they had probably neither more nor less ground than their rivals, who sheltered themselves under the names of Apollos and of Paul.”<sup>2</sup> It is obvious, however, that, in a Church founded by Paul, there could have been no party created with the necessity to take his name as their watchword, except as a reply to another party which, having intruded itself, attacked him, and forced those who maintained the views of their own Apostle to raise such a counter cry. The parties “of Cephas” and “of Christ” were manifestly aggressive, intruding themselves, as the Apostle complains, into “other men’s labours”;<sup>3</sup> and this, in some manner, seems to point to that convention between the Apostle and the

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. i. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Lightfoot, *St. Paul’s Ep. to the Galatians*, 1874, p. 355.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. x. 13 f.



Three—that he should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcision—which, barely more than passive neutrality at the beginning, soon became covertly antagonistic. The fact that the party “of Paul” was not an organised body, so to say, directed by the Apostle as a party leader, in no way renders it probable that the party of Cephas, which carried on active and offensive measures, had not much more ground in claiming Cephas as their head. One point is indisputable, that no party ever claims any man as its leader who is not clearly associated with the views it maintains. The party “of Cephas,” representing Judaistic views, opposing the teaching of Paul and joining in denying his Apostolic claims, certainly would not have taken Peter’s name as their watch-cry if he had been known to hold and express such Pauline sentiments as are put into his mouth in the Acts, or had not, on the contrary, been intimately identified with Judaistic principles. Religious parties may very probably mistake the delicate details of a leader’s teaching, but they can scarcely be wrong in regard to his general principles. If Peter had been so unfortunate as to be flagrantly misunderstood by his followers, and, whilst this party preached in his name Judaistic doctrines and anti-Pauline opinions, the Apostle himself advocated the abrogation of the law as a burden which the Jews themselves were not able to bear, and actively shared Pauline convictions, is it possible to suppose that Paul would not have pointed out the absurdity of such a party claiming such a leader?

The fact is, however, that Paul never denies the claim of those who shelter themselves under the names of Peter and James, never questions their veracity, and never adopts the simple and natural course of stating that, in advancing these names, they are impostors or mistaken. On the contrary, upon all occasions he evidently admits, by his silence, the validity of the claim. We are not left to mere inference that the adopted head actually shared the views of the party. Paul himself distinguishes Peter as the leader of the party of the circumcision in a passage in his letter to the Galatians already frequently referred to,<sup>1</sup> and the episode at Antioch confirms the description, and leaves no doubt that Peter’s permanent practice was to force the Gentiles to Judaize. For reasons which we have already stated, Paul could not but have desired to preserve peace, or even the semblance of it, with the elder Apostles, for the Gospel’s sake; and he, therefore, wisely leaves them as much as possible out of the question and deals with their disciples. It is obvious that policy must have dictated such a course. By ignoring the leaders and attacking their followers, he suppressed the chief strength of his opponents

<sup>1</sup> Gal. ii. 7 f.



and kept out of sight the most formidable argument against himself—the concurrence with them of the elder Apostles. On the one hand, the Epistles of Paul bear no evidence of any active sympathy and co-operation with his views and work on the part of the elder Apostles. On the other, Paul is everywhere assailed by Judaistic adversaries who oppose his Gospel and deny his Apostleship, and who claim as their leaders the elder Apostles.

If, even without pressing expressions to their extreme and probable point, we take the contrast drawn between his own Gospel and that of the circumcision, the reality of the antagonism must be apparent. "For we are not as the many (*οἱ πολλοὶ*<sup>1</sup>) which adulterate the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as of God, before God, speak we in Christ."<sup>2</sup> Later on in the letter, after referring to the intrusion of the opposite party into the circle of his labours, Paul declares that his impatience and anxiety proceed from godly jealousy at the possible effect of the Judaistic intruders upon the Corinthians. "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, your thoughts should be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus whom we did not preach, or if ye receive another spirit which ye received not, or another Gospel which ye did not accept, ye bear well with him. For I think I am not a whit behind the overmuch Apostles (*τῶν ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων*)."<sup>3</sup> This reference to the elder Apostles gives point to much of the Epistle that is ambiguous, and more especially when the Judaistic nature of the opposition is so clearly indicated a few verses further on: "Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they Abraham's seed? so am I. Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool), I am more; in labours more abundantly, in prisons exceedingly, in deaths often," etc.<sup>4</sup>

It is argued that the Twelve had not sufficient authority over their followers to prevent such interference with Paul, and that the relation of the Apostle to the Twelve was: "Separation, not opposition, antagonism of the followers rather than of the leaders, personal antipathy of the Judaisers to St Paul, rather than of St. Paul to the Twelve."<sup>5</sup> It is not difficult to believe that the antipathy of Paul to the Judaisers was less than that felt by them

<sup>1</sup> Although this reading is supported by the oldest MSS. such as A, B, C, K, N, and others, the reading *οἱ λοιποί*, "the rest," stands in D, E, F, G, I, and a large number of other codices, and is defended by many critics as the original, which they argue was altered to *οἱ πολλοί*, to soften the apparent hardness of such an expression, which would seem to imply that Paul declared himself the sole true exponent of the Gospel.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. ii. 17.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.*, xi. 2-5; cf. Gal. i. 6 f.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. xi. 22 f.

<sup>5</sup> Jowett, *The Eps. of St. Paul*, 1855, i., pp. 326, 339.



towards him. The superiority of the man must have rendered him somewhat callous to such dislike.<sup>1</sup> But the mitigated form of difference between Paul and the Twelve here assumed, although still very different from the representations of the Acts, cannot be established, but, on the contrary, must be much widened before it can justly be taken as that existing between Paul and the elder Apostles. We do not go so far as to say that there was open enmity between them, or active antagonism of any distinct character on the part of the Twelve to the Apostle of the Gentiles; but there is every reason to believe that they not only disliked his teaching, but endeavoured to counteract it by their own ministry of the circumcision. They not only did not restrain the opposition of their followers, but they abetted them in their counter-assertion of Judaistic views. Had the Twelve felt any cordial friendship for Paul, and exhibited any active desire for the success of his ministry of the uncircumcision, it is quite impossible that his work could have been so continuously and vexatiously impeded by the persecution of the Jewish Christian party. The Apostles may not have possessed sufficient influence or authority entirely to control the action of adherents, but it would be folly to suppose that, if unanimity of views had prevailed between them and Paul, and a firm and consistent support had been extended to him, such systematic resistance as he everywhere encountered from the party professing to be led by the "pillar" Apostles could have been seriously maintained, or that he could have been left alone and unaided to struggle against it. If the relations between Paul and the Twelve had been such as are intimated in the Acts of the Apostles, his Epistles must have presented undoubted evidence of the fact. Both negatively and positively they testify the absence of all support, and the existence of antagonistic influence on the part of the elder Apostles; and external evidence fully confirms the impression which the Epistles produce.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> We do not think it worth while to refer to the argument that the collections made by Paul for the poor of Jerusalem, etc., in times of distress prove the unanimity which prevailed between them. Charity is not a matter of doctrine, and the Good Samaritan does not put the suffering man through his catechism before he relieves his wants.

<sup>2</sup> "Everywhere in the Epistles of St. Paul and in the Acts of the Apostles we find traces of an opposition between the Jew and the Gentile, the circumcision and the uncircumcision. It is found not only in the Epistle to the Galatians, but in a scarcely less aggravated form in the two Epistles to the Corinthians, softened, indeed, in the Epistle to the Romans, and yet distinctly traceable in the Epistle to the Philippians; the party of the circumcision appearing to triumph in Asia, at the very close of the Apostle's life, in the second Epistle to Timothy. In all these Epistles we have proofs of a reaction to Judaism; but, though they are addressed to Churches chiefly of Gentile origin, never of a reaction to heathenism. Could this have been the case unless within the Church itself there had been a Jewish party urging upon the members



From any point of view which may be taken, the Apocalypse is an important document in connection with this point. If it be accepted as a work of the Apostle John—the preponderance of evidence and critical opinion assigns it to him—this book, of course, possesses the greatest value as an indication of his views. If it be merely regarded as a contemporary writing, it still is most interesting as an illustration of the religious feeling of the period. The question is: Does the Apocalypse contain any reference to the Apostle Paul, or throw light upon the relations between him and the elder Apostles? If it do so, and be the work of one of the *στῦλοι*, nothing obviously could be more instructive. In the messages to the seven churches there are references and denunciations which, in the opinion of many able critics, are directed against the Apostle of the Gentiles and his characteristic teaching. Who but Paul and his followers can be referred to in the Epistle to the Church of Ephesus: "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and that thou canst not bear wicked persons: and didst try them which say they are Apostles and are not, and didst find them liars"?<sup>1</sup> Paul himself informs us not only of his sojourn in Ephesus, where he believed that "a great and effectual door" was opened to him, but adds, "there are many adversaries" (*ἀντικείμενοι πολλοί*).<sup>2</sup> The foremost charge brought against the churches is that they have those that hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the sons of Israel, "to eat things offered unto idols."<sup>3</sup> The teaching of

of the Church the performance of a rite repulsive in itself, if not as necessary to salvation, at any rate as a counsel of perfection, seeking to make them in Jewish language, not merely proselytes of the gate, but proselytes of righteousness? What, if not this, is the reverse side of the Epistles of St. Paul?—that is to say, the motives, object, or basis of teaching of his opponents, who came with 'epistles of commendation' to the Church of Corinth (2 Cor. iii. 1); who profess themselves 'to be Christ's' in a special sense (2 Cor. x. 7); who say they are of Apollos, or Cephas, or Christ (1 Cor. i. 12); or James (Gal. ii. 12); who preach Christ of contention (Phil. i. 15, 17); who deny St. Paul's authority (1 Cor. ix. 1, Gal. iv. 16); who slander his life (1 Cor. ix. 3, 7). We meet these persons at every turn. Are they the same, or different? Are they mere chance opponents, or do they represent to us one spirit, one mission, one determination to root out the Apostle and his doctrine from the Christian Church? Nothing but the fragmentary character of St. Paul's writings could conceal from us the fact that here was a concerted and continuous opposition" (Jowett, *The Eps. of St. Paul*, i., p. 332 f.).

<sup>1</sup> ii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xvi. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Apoc. ii. 14, 20. We do not enter upon the discussion as to the exact interpretation of *πορνεῦσαι*, always associated with the *φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθυστα*, regarding which opinions differ very materially. It is probable that the Apocalypticist connected the eating of things offered to idols with actual idolatrous worship. It is not improbable that the maxim of Paul, "all things are lawful unto me" (*πάντα μοι ἐξεστίν*), 1 Cor. vi. 12, x. 23, may have been abused by his followers; and, in any case, such a sentiment, coupled with Paul's



Paul upon this point is well known, 1 Cor. viii. 1 f., x. 25 f., Rom. xiv. 2 f., and the reference here cannot be mistaken; and when in the Epistle to the Church of Thyatira, after denouncing the teaching "to eat things offered unto idols," the Apocalyptist goes on to encourage those who have not this teaching, "who knew not the depths of Satan (τὰ βάθη τοῦ σατανᾶ),<sup>1</sup> as they say" the expression of Paul himself is taken to denounce his doctrine; for the Apostle, defending himself against the attacks of those parties "of Cephas" and "of Christ" in Corinth, writes: "But God revealed (them) to us through his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, even the depths of God" (τὰ βάθη τοῦ θεοῦ)—"the depths of Satan" rather, retorts the Judaistic author of the Apocalypse. τὰ βάθη does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. Again, in the address to the Churches of Smyrna and Philadelphia, when the writer denounces those "who say that they are Jews, and are not, but a synagogue of Satan,"<sup>2</sup> whom has he in view but those Christians whom Paul had taught to consider circumcision unnecessary and the law abrogated? We find Paul, in the Epistle to the Corinthians, so often quoted, obliged to defend himself against these Judaizing parties upon this very point: "Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they Abraham's seed? so am I."<sup>3</sup> It is manifest that his adversaries had vaunted their own Jewish origin as a title of superiority over the Apostle of the Gentiles.

We have, however, further evidence of the same attack upon Paul regarding this point. Epiphanius points out that the Ebionites denied that Paul was a Jew, and asserted that he was born of a Gentile father and mother, but that, having gone up to Jerusalem, he became a proselyte and submitted to circumcision in the hope of marrying a daughter of the high priest. But afterwards, according to them, enraged at not securing the maiden for his wife, Paul wrote against circumcision and the Sabbath and the law.<sup>4</sup> The Apostle Paul, whose constant labour it was to destroy the particularism of the Jew and raise the Gentile to full, free, and equal participation with him in the benefits of the New Covenant, could not but incur the bitter displeasure of the Apocalyptist, for whom the Gentiles were, as such, the type of all that was common and unclean. In the utterances of the seer of Patmos we seem to hear the expression of all that

teaching and his abandonment of the Law, must have appeared absolute licence to the Judaistic party. We must also pass over the discussion regarding the signification of "Balaam." The Nicolaitans are not only classed as followers of the teaching of Balaam, but as adherents of Paul.

<sup>1</sup> Apoc., ii. 24. This is the reading of **N**, P, and some other codices; A, B, C, read τὰ βάθη.

<sup>2</sup> Apoc., ii. 9, iii. 9. <sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. xi. 22; cf. Philip. iii. 4 f. <sup>4</sup> Hier., xxx. 16.



Judaistic hatred and opposition which pursued the Apostle who laid the axe to the root of Mosaism, and, in his efforts to free Christianity from trammels which, more than any other, retarded its triumphant development, aroused against himself all the virulence of Jewish illiberality and prejudice. The results at which we have arrived might be singularly confirmed by an examination of the writings of the first two centuries, and by observing the attitude assumed towards the Apostle of the Gentiles by such men as Justin Martyr, Papias, Hegesippus, and the author of the *Clementines*; but we have already devoted too much space to this subject, and here we must reluctantly leave it.

The steps by which Christianity was gradually freed from the trammels of Judaism, and became a religion of unlimited range and universal fitness, were clearly not those stated in the Acts of the Apostles. Its emancipation from Mosaism was not effected by any liberal action or enlightened guidance on the part of the elder Apostles. At the death of their Master the Twelve remained closely united to Judaism, and evidently were left without any understanding that Christianity was a new religion which must displace Mosaic institutions, and replace the unbearable yoke of the law by the divine liberty of the Gospel. To the last moment regarding which we have any trustworthy information, the Twelve, as might have been expected, retained all their early religious customs and all their Jewish prejudices. They were simply Jews believing that Jesus was the Messiah; and if the influence of Paul enlarged their views upon some minor points, we have no reason to believe that they ever abandoned their belief in the continued obligation of the law, and the necessity of circumcision for full participation in the benefits of the Covenant. The author of the Acts would have us believe that they required no persuasion, but anticipated Paul in the gospel of uncircumcision.

It is not within the scope of this work to inquire how Paul originally formed his views of Christian universalism. Once formed, it is easy to understand how rapidly they must have been developed and confirmed by experience amongst the Gentiles. Whilst the Twelve still remained in the narrow circle of Judaism and could not be moved beyond the ministry of the circumcision, Paul, in the larger and freer field of the world, must daily have felt more convinced that the abrogation of the law and the abandonment of circumcision were essential to the extension of Christianity amongst the Gentiles. He had no easy task, however, to convince others of this, and he never succeeded in bringing his elder colleagues over to his views. To the end of his life Paul had to contend with bigoted and narrow-minded opposition within the Christian body,



and if his views ultimately triumphed, and the seed which he sowed eventually yielded a rich harvest, he himself did not live to see the day, and the end was attained only by slow and natural changes. The new religion gradually extended beyond the limits of Judaism. Gentile Christians soon outnumbered Jewish believers. The Twelve whose names were the strength of the Judaistic opposition one by one passed away; but, above all, the fall of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Christian community secured the success of Pauline principles and the universalism of Christianity. The Church of Jerusalem could not bear transplanting. In the uncongenial soil of Pella it gradually dwindled away, losing first its influence and, soon after, its nationality. The divided members of the Jewish party, scattered amongst the Gentiles, and deprived of their influential leaders, could not long retard the progress of the liberalism which they still continued to oppose and to misrepresent. In a word, the emancipation of Christianity was not effected by the Twelve, was no work of councils, and no result of dreams; but, receiving its first great impulse from the genius and the energy of Paul, its ultimate achievement was the result of time and natural development.

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We have now patiently considered the "Acts of the Apostles," and although it has in no way been our design exhaustively to examine its contents, we have more than sufficiently done so to enable the reader to understand the true character of the document. The author is unknown, and it is no longer possible to identify him. If he were actually the Luke whom the Church indicates, our results would not be materially affected; but the mere fact that the writer is unknown is obviously fatal to the Acts as a guarantee of miracles. A cycle of supernatural occurrences could scarcely, in the estimation of any rational mind, be established by the statement of an anonymous author, and more especially one who not only does not pretend to have been an eye-witness of most of the miracles, but whose narrative is either uncorroborated by other testimony or inconsistent with itself, and contradicted on many points by contemporary documents.

The phenomena presented by the Acts of the Apostles become perfectly intelligible when we recognise that it is the work of a writer living long after the occurrences related, whose pious imagination furnished the Apostolic age with an elaborate system of supernatural agency, far beyond the conception of any other New Testament writer, by which, according to his view, the proceedings of the Apostles were furthered and directed, and the infant Church miraculously fostered. On examining



other portions of his narrative, we find that they present the features which the miraculous elements rendered antecedently probable. The speeches attributed to different speakers are all cast in the same mould, and betray the composition of one and the same writer. The sentiments expressed are inconsistent with what we know of the various speakers, and when we test the circumstances related by previous or subsequent incidents and by trustworthy documents, it becomes apparent that the narrative is not an impartial statement of facts, but a reproduction of legends or a development of tradition, shaped and coloured according to the purpose or the pious views of the writer.

Our comparison of passages of his two works with the writings of the Jewish historian Josephus seems to us to prove that the date at which the author of the third Synoptic and the Acts of the Apostles composed those works must be set at least at the beginning of the second century, and he is thus so far removed from the events which he chronicles that there is ample room, if not necessity, for the exercise of imagination in narrating the career of the Apostles who are supposed to carry on the work of Jesus after his death. In the third Gospel he had, certainly, the records of earlier writers, to whom he refers in his opening lines, to guide him; and here his exaggeration is not so extreme as it became after he proceeded to relate the course of Christianity, when Peter, James, and John extended their missionary labours, and Paul became the eloquent Apostle of the Gentiles. The Acts of the Apostles, composed with more unfettered imagination, bears none of the marks of sober veracity. The Epistles of Paul enable us to correct his statements and to recognise his zealous, but ineffectual, efforts to harmonise the teaching of the elder Apostles, to whom Christianity was still merely a development of Judaism, with the new and enlarged doctrines of the Apostle of the Uncircumcision, which transformed the Mosaic precepts into a universal religion.

Written by an author who was not an eye-witness of the miracles related; who describes events not as they really occurred, but as his pious imagination supposed they ought to have occurred; who seldom touches history without distorting it by legend, until the original elements can scarcely be distinguished; who puts his own words and sentiments into the mouths of the Apostles and other persons of his narrative; and who represents almost every phase of the Church in the Apostolic age as influenced, or directly produced, by supernatural agency—such a work is of no value as evidence for occurrences which are in contradiction to all experience. The Acts of the Apostles, therefore, is not only an anonymous work, but upon due examination its claims to be



considered sober and veracious history must be emphatically rejected. It cannot strengthen the foundations of supernatural religion, but, on the contrary, by its profuse and indiscriminate use of the miraculous it discredits miracles, and affords a clearer insight into their origin and fictitious character.



## PART V.

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### THE DIRECT EVIDENCE FOR MIRACLES

#### CHAPTER I.

##### THE EPISTLES AND THE APOCALYPSE

TURNING from the Acts of the Apostles to the other works of the New Testament, we shall be able very briefly to dispose of the Catholic Epistles, the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the Apocalypse. The so-called Epistles of James, Jude, and John do not contain any evidence which, even supposing them to be authentic, really bears upon our inquiry into the reality of miracles and Divine Revelation; and the testimony of the Apocalypse affects it quite as little. We have already, in examining the fourth Gospel, had occasion to say a good deal regarding both the so-called Epistles of John and the Apocalypse. It is unnecessary to enter upon a more minute discussion of them here. "Seven books of the New Testament," writes Dr. Westcott, "as is well known, have been received into the Canon on evidence less complete than that by which the others are supported."<sup>1</sup> These are "the Epistles of James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, to the Hebrews, and the Apocalypse." We have already furnished the means of judging of the nature of the evidence upon which some of the other books have been received into the Canon, and, the evidence for most of these being avowedly "less complete," its nature may be conceived. Works which for a long period were classed amongst the Antilegomena, or disputed books, and which only slowly acquired authority as, in the lapse of time, it became more difficult to examine their claims, could not do much to establish the reality of miracles. With regard to the Epistle to the Hebrews, we may remark that we are freed from any need to deal at length with it, not only by the absence of any specific evidence in its contents, but by the following consideration. If the Epistle be not by Paul—and it not only is not his, but does not even pretend to be so—

<sup>1</sup> *On the Canon*, 4th ed., p. 347.



the author is unknown, and therefore the document has no weight as testimony. On the other hand, if assigned to Paul, we shall have sufficient ground in his genuine Epistles for considering the evidence of the Apostle, and it could not add anything even if the Epistle to the Hebrews were included in the number.

The first Epistle of Peter might have required more detailed treatment, but we think that little could be gained by demonstrating that the document is not authentic, or showing that, in any case, the evidence which it could furnish is not of any value. On the other hand, we are averse to protract the argument by any elaboration of mere details which can be avoided. If it could be absolutely proved that the Apostle Peter wrote the Epistle circulating under his name, the evidence for miracles would only be strengthened by the fact that, incidentally, the doctrine of the Resurrection of Jesus is maintained. No historical details are given, and no explanation of the reasons for which the writer believed in it. Nothing more would be proved than the point that Peter himself believed in the Resurrection. It would certainly be a matter of very deep interest if we possessed a narrative written by the Apostle himself, giving minute and accurate details of the phenomena in consequence of which he believed in so miraculous an event; but since this Epistle does nothing more than allow us to infer the personal belief of the writer, unaccompanied by corroborative evidence, we should not gain anything by accepting it as genuine. We are quite willing to assume, without further examination, that the Apostle Peter in some way believed in the Resurrection of his Master. For the argument regarding the reality of that stupendous miracle, upon which we are about to enter, this is tantamount to assuming the authenticity of the Epistle.

Coming to the Epistles of Paul, it will not be necessary to go into the evidence for the various letters in our New Testament which are ascribed to him, nor shall we require to state the grounds upon which the authenticity of many of them is denied. Accepting the Epistles to the Galatians, Corinthians, and Romans in the main as genuine compositions of the Apostle, the question as to the origin of the rest, so far as our inquiry is concerned, has little or no interest. From these four letters we obtain the whole evidence of Paul regarding miracles, and this we now propose carefully to examine. One point in particular demands our fullest attention. It is undeniable that Paul preached the doctrine of the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus and believed in those events. Whilst, therefore, we shall not pass over his supposed testimony for the possession of miraculous powers, we shall chiefly devote our attention to his evidence for the central dogmas of Supernatural Religion, the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus. We



shall not limit our examination to the testimony of Paul, but, as the climax of the historical argument for miracles endeavour to ascertain the exact nature of the evidence upon which belief is claimed for the actual occurrence of those stupendous events. For this our inquiry into the authorship and credibility of the historical books of the New Testament has at length prepared us, and it will be admitted that, in subjecting these asserted miracles to calm and fearless scrutiny—untinged by irreverence or disrespect, if personal earnestness and sincere sympathy with those who believe are any safeguards—the whole theory of Christian miracles will be put to its final test.



## CHAPTER II.

### THE EVIDENCE OF PAUL

It is better, before proceeding to examine the testimony of Paul for the Resurrection, to clear the way by considering his evidence for miracles in general, apart from that specific instance. In an earlier portion of this work<sup>1</sup> the following remark was made: "Throughout the New Testament, patristic literature, and the records of ecclesiastical miracles, although we have narratives of countless wonderful works performed by others than the writer, and abundant assertion of the possession of miraculous power by the Church, there is no instance that we can remember in which a writer claims to have himself performed a miracle."<sup>2</sup> It is asserted that this statement is erroneous, and that Paul does advance this claim. It may be well to quote the moderate words in which a recent able writer states the case, although not with immediate reference to the particular passage which we have quoted: ".....In these undoubted writings St. Paul certainly shows, by incidental allusions, the good faith of which cannot be questioned, that he believed himself to be endowed with the power of working miracles, and that miracles—or what were thought to be such—were actually wrought both by him and by his contemporaries. He reminds the Corinthians that 'the signs of an Apostle were wrought among them.....in signs and wonders and mighty deeds' (ἐν σημείοις καὶ τέρασιν καὶ δυνάμεσιν—the usual words for the higher forms of miracle—2 Cor. xii. 12). He tells the Romans that 'he will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by<sup>3</sup> him to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God' (ἐν δυνάμει σημείων

<sup>1</sup> Complete edition, vol. i., p. 200 f.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Kuenen has made a very similar remark regarding the Old Testament. He says: "When Ezra and Nehemiah relate to us what they themselves did or experienced, there does not appear in their narratives a single departure from the common order of things. On the other hand, these departures are very numerous in the accounts which are separated by a greater or lesser interval from the time to which they refer" (*De Godsdiens van Israël*, 1869, i., p. 22).

<sup>3</sup> These words are printed "in him," but we venture to correct what seems evidently to be a mere misprint, substituting "by" (διὰ), as in the authorised version, to which Dr. Sanday adheres throughout the whole of these passages, even when it does not represent the actual sense of the original.



καὶ τεράτων, ἐν δυνάμει πνεύματος Θεοῦ, Rom. xv. 18, 19). He asks the Galatians whether 'he that ministereth to them the Spirit and worketh miracles (ὁ ἐνεργῶν δυνάμεις) among them doeth it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?' (Gal. iii. 5). In the first Epistle to the Corinthians he goes somewhat elaborately into the exact place in the Christian economy that is to be assigned to the working of miracles and gifts of healing (1 Cor. xii. 10, 28, 29)."<sup>1</sup>

We shall presently examine these passages, but we must first briefly deal with the question whether, taken in any sense, they furnish an instance "in which a writer claims to have himself performed *a miracle*." It must be obvious to any impartial reader that the remark made in the course of our earlier argument precisely distinguished the general "assertion of the possession of miraculous power by the Church," from the explicit claim to have personally performed "a miracle" in the singular. If, therefore, it were even admitted "that St. Paul treats the fact of his working miracles as a matter of course, *to which a passing reference is sufficient*," such "incidental allusions" would not in the least degree contradict the statement made, but, being the only instances producible, would in fact completely justify it. General and vague references of this kind have by no means the force of a definite claim to have performed some particular miracle. They partake too much of that indiscriminate impression of the possession and common exercise of miraculous powers which characterised the "age of miracles" to have any force. The desired instance, which is not forthcoming, and to which alone reference was made, was a case in which, instead of vague expressions, a writer, stating with precision the particulars, related that he himself had, for instance, actually raised some person from the dead. As we then added, even if Apostles had chronicled their miracles, the argument for their reality would not have been much advanced; but it is a curious phenomenon not undeserving of a moment's attention that Apologists can only refer to such general passages, and cannot quote an instance in which a specific miracle is related in detail by the person who is supposed to have performed it. Passing references on a large scale to the exercise of miraculous power, whilst betraying a suspicious familiarity with phenomena of an exceptional nature, offer too much latitude for inaccuracy and imagination to have the weight of an affirmation in which the mind has been sobered by concentration to details. "Signs and wonders," indefinitely alluded to, may seem much more imposing and astonishing.

<sup>1</sup> Sanday, *The Gospels in the Second Century*, 1876, p. 11; cf. Westcott, *On the Canon*, 4th ed., 1874, p. 30; Lightfoot, *Contemp. Rev.*, 1875, p. 854.



than they really are, and it may probably be admitted by everyone that, if we knew the particulars of the occurrences which are thus vaguely indicated, and which may have been considered miraculous in a superstitious age, they might to us possibly appear no miracles at all. General expressions are liable to an exaggeration from which specific allegations are more frequently free. If it be conceded that the Apostle Paul fully believed in the possession by himself and the Church of divine Charismata, the indefinite expression of that belief, in any form, must not be made equivalent to an explicit claim to have performed a certain miracle, the particulars of which are categorically stated.

Passing from this to the more general question, the force of some of these objections will be better understood when we consider the passages in the Epistles which are quoted as expressing Paul's belief in miracles, and endeavour to ascertain his real views: what it is he actually says regarding miracles; and what are the phenomena which are by him considered to be miraculous. We shall not waste time in showing how, partly through the influence of the Septuagint, the words *σημείον*, *τέρας*, and *δύναμις* came to be used in a peculiar manner by New Testament writers to indicate miracles. It may, however, be worth while to pause for a moment to ascertain the sense in which Paul, who wrote before there was a "New Testament" at all, usually employed these words. In the four Epistles of Paul the word *σημείον* occurs six times. In Rom. iv. 11 Abraham is said to have received the "sign (*σημείον*) of circumcision," in which there is nothing miraculous. In 1 Cor. i. 22 it is said: "Since both Jews require signs (*σημεία*)<sup>1</sup> and Greeks seek after wisdom"; and again, 1 Cor. xiv. 22: "Wherefore the tongues are for a sign (*σημείον*) not to the believing, but to the unbelieving," etc. We shall have more to say regarding these passages presently, but just now we merely quote them to show the use of the word. The only other places in which it occurs<sup>2</sup> are those pointed out, and which are the subject of our discussion. In Rom. xv. 19 the word is used in the plural and combined with *τέρας*: "in the power of signs and wonders" (*σημείων καὶ τεράτων*); and in the second passage (2 Cor. xii. 12) it is employed twice, "the signs (*τὰ σημεία*) of the apostle" and the second time again in combination with *τέρας* and *δύναμις*, "both in signs" (*σημείοις*), etc. The word *τέρας* is only twice met with in Paul's writings; that is to say, in Rom. xv. 19 and 2 Cor. xii. 12; and on both occasions, as we

<sup>1</sup> The singular *σημείον* of the authorised version must be abandoned before the almost unanimous testimony of all the older MSS.

<sup>2</sup> In the Epistles which bear the name of Paul it is only to be found in 2 Thess. ii. 9, iii. 17.