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THE MAKING
OF THE NEW
TESTAMENT

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Содержание

PART I	5
CHAPTER I	5
CHAPTER II	13
PART II	20
CHAPTER III	20
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	24

The Making of the New Testament

PART I CANONIZATION AND CRITICISM

CHAPTER I INSPIRATION AND CANONIZATION

The New Testament presents the paradox of a literature born of protest against the tyranny of a canon, yet ultimately canonized itself through an increasing demand for external authority. This paradox is full of significance. We must examine it more closely.

The work of Jesus was a consistent effort to set religion free from the deadening system of the scribes. He was conscious of a direct, divine authority. The broken lights of former inspiration are lost in the full dawn of God's presence to His soul.

So with Paul. The key to Paul's thought is his revolt against legalism. It had been part of his servitude to persecute the sect which claimed to know another Way besides the "way"¹ of the scribes. These Christians signalized their faith by the rite of baptism, and gloried in the sense of endowment with "the Spirit." Saul was profoundly conscious of the yoke; only he had not dreamed that his own deliverance could come from such a quarter. But contact with victims of the type of Stephen, men "filled with the Spirit," conscious of the very "power from God" for lack of which his soul was fainting, could not but have some effect. It came suddenly, overwhelmingly. The real issue, as Saul saw it, both before and after his conversion, was Law *versus* Grace. In seeking "justification" by favour of Jesus these Christians were opening a new and living way to acceptance with God. Traitorous and apostate as the attempt must seem while the way of the Law still gave promise of success, to souls sinking like Saul's deeper and deeper into the despairing consciousness of "the weakness of the flesh" forgiveness in the name of Jesus might prove to be light and life from God. The despised sect of 'sinners' whom he had been persecuting expressed the essence of their faith in the doctrine that the gift of the Spirit of Jesus had made them sons and heirs of God. If the converted Paul in turn is uplifted – "energized," as he terms it – even beyond his fellow-Christians, by the sense of present inspiration, it is no more than we should expect.

Paul's conversion to the new faith – or at least his persistent satisfaction in it – will be inexplicable unless we appreciate the logic of his recognition in it of an inherent opposition to the growing demands of legalism. Jesus had, in truth, led a revolt against mere book-religion. His chief opponents were the scribes, the devotees and exponents of a sacred scripture, the Law. "Law" and "Prophets," the one prescribing the conditions of the expected transcendental Kingdom, the other illustrating their application and guaranteeing their promise, constituted the canon of the synagogue. Judaism had become a religion of written authority. Jesus set over against this a direct relation to the living Father in heaven, ever presently revealed to the filial spirit. The Sermon on the Mount makes the doing of this Father's will something quite other than servitude to written precepts interpreted by official authority and imposed under penalty. It is to be self-discipline in the Father's spirit of disinterested goodness, as revealed in everyday experience.

¹ *Tarik*, i. e. "way," is still the Arabic term for a sect, and the Rabbinic term for legal requirement is *halacha*, i. e. "walk."

Even the reward of this self-discipline, the Kingdom, Jesus did not conceive quite as the scribes. To them obedience in this world procured a "share in the world to come." To Him the reward was more a matter of being than of getting. The Kingdom was an heir-apparency; and, therefore, present as well as future. It was "within" and "among" men as well as before them. They should seek to "be sons and daughters of the Highest," taking for granted that all other good things would be "added." So Jesus made religion live again. It became spiritual, inward, personal, actual.

After John the Baptist's ministry to what we should call the 'unchurched' masses, Jesus took up their cause. He became the "friend" and champion of the "little ones," the "publicans and sinners," the mixed 'people of the land' in populous, half-heathen, Galilee. The burdens imposed by the scribes in the name of 'Scripture' were accepted with alacrity by the typical Pharisee unaffected by Pauline misgivings of 'moral inability.' To "fulfil all righteousness" was to the Pharisee untainted by Hellenism a pride and delight. To the "lost sheep of Israel" whom Jesus addressed, remote from temple and synagogue, this "righteousness" had proved (equally as to Paul, though on very different grounds) "a yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear." Jesus "had compassion on the multitude." To them he "spoke with authority"; and yet "not as the scribes" but as "a prophet." When challenged by the scribes for his authority he referred to "the baptism of John," and asked whether John's commission was "from heaven, or of men." They admitted that John was "a prophet." Those who give utterance after this manner to the simple, sincere conviction of the soul, voicing its instinctive aspiration toward "the things that be of God," are conscious that they speak not of themselves.

Jesus, it is true, was no iconoclast. He took pains to make clear that if he superseded what they of old time had taught as righteousness, it was in the interest of a higher, a "righteousness of God." If he disregarded fasts and sabbaths, it was to put substance for form, end for means. "Judgment, mercy, and good faith" should count more than tithes from "mint and anise and cummin." He echoed what John the Baptist had taught of repentance and forgiveness. Hope should no longer be based on birth, or prerogative, or ritual form, but on the mercy of a God who demands that we forgive if we would be forgiven. Such had been, however, the message not of John only, but of all the prophets before him: "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." Jesus taught this higher, inward, righteousness; but not merely as John had done. John had said: Repent, for the wrath of God is at hand. Jesus said: Repent, for the forgiveness of God is open. The Father's heart yearns over the wayward sons. Jesus preached the nearness of the Kingdom as "glad tidings to the poor"; and among these "poor" were included even aliens who put "faith" in the God of Abraham.

The new Way started from the same Scripture as that of the scribes, but it tended in an opposite direction. Theirs had been gradually developing in definiteness and authority since the time of Ezra; yes, since Josiah had made formal covenant, after the discovery of "the book of the Law" in the temple, pledging himself and his people to obedience. As with many ancient peoples, the codification of the ancient law had been followed by its canonization, and as the national life had waned the religious significance of the Law had increased. It was now declared to express the complete will of God, for an ideal people of God, in a renovated universe, whose centre was to be a new and glorified Jerusalem. The Exile interrupted for a time the process of formal development; but in the ecclesiastical reconstruction which followed in Ezra's time "the book of the Law" had become all the more supreme; the scribe took the place of the civil officer, the synagogue became local sanctuary and court-house in one, the nation became a church, Israel became 'the people of the book.'

Legal requirement calls for the incentive of reward. We need not wonder, then, that the canon of the Law was soon supplemented by that of the writings of the Prophets, historical and hortatory. The former were considered to interpret the Law by showing its application in practice, the latter were valued for their predictive element. Law and Prophets were supplemented by Psalms, and elements from the later literature having application to the religious system. The most influential were the "apocalypses," or "revelations" of the transcendental Kingdom and of the conditions and mode of its coming. Scripture had thus become an embodiment of Israel's religion. It set forth the national law,

civil, criminal, or religious; and the national hope, the Kingdom of God. Its custodian and interpreter was the 'scribe,' lawyer and cleric in one. The scribe held "the key of knowledge"; to him it was given to 'bind and loose,' 'open and shut.' Any preacher who presumed to prescribe a righteousness apart from 'the yoke of the Law,' or to promise forgiveness of sins on other authority, must reckon with the scribes. He would be regarded as seeking to 'take the Kingdom by violence.'

Jesus' martyrdom was effected through the priests, the temple authorities; but at the instigation of the scribes and Pharisees. His adherents were soon after driven out from orthodox Judaism and subjected to persecution. This persecution, however, soon found its natural leadership, not among the Sadducean temple-priesthood, but among the devotees of the Law. It was "in the synagogues." From having been quasi-political it became distinctly religious. This persecution by the Pharisees is on the whole less surprising than the fact that so many of the Jewish believers should have continued to regard themselves as consistent Pharisees, and even been so regarded by their fellow-Jews. In reality Jewish Christians as a rule could see no incompatibility between average synagogue religion and their acceptance of Jesus as the man supernaturally attested in the resurrection as destined to return bringing the glory of the Kingdom. Jesus' idea of 'righteousness' did not seem to them irreconcilable with the legalism of the scribes; still less had they felt the subtle difference between his promise "Ye shall be sons and daughters of the Highest" and the apocalyptic dreams which they shared with their fellow-Jews. Saul the persecutor and Paul the apostle were more logical. In Gal. ii. 15-21 we have Paul's own statement of the essential issue as it still appeared to his clear mind. Average synagogue religion still left room for a more fatherly relation of God to the individual, in spite of the gradual encroachment of the legalistic system of the scribes. Men not sensitive to inconsistency could find room within the synagogue for the 'paternal theism' of Jesus, even if this must more and more be placed under the head of 'uncovenanted mercies.' To Paul, however, the dilemma is absolute. One must trust either to "law" or "grace." Partial reliance on the one is to just that extent negation of faith in the other. The system of written precept permits no exception, tolerates no divided allegiance. If the canon of written law be the God-given condition of the messianic promise, then no man can aspire to share in the hope of Israel who does not submit unreservedly to its yoke. Conversely, faith is not faith if one seek to supplement it by the merit of "works of law."

From this point of view the Jew who seeks forgiveness of sins by baptism "into the name of Jesus" must be considered an apostate from the Law. He acknowledges thereby that he is following another Way, a way of "grace," a short-cut, as it were, to a share in Israel's messianic inheritance by the "favour" of a pretended Messiah. The same Paul who after his conversion maintains (Gal. ii. 21) that to seek "justification" through the Law makes the grace of God of none effect, must conversely have held before conversion that to seek it by "grace" of Jesus made the Law of none effect. Even at the time of writing the axiom still held: No resistance to the yoke of the Law, no persecution (Gal. v. 11).

It is true, then, that the legalistic system of prescription and reward had developed – could develop – only at the expense of the less mechanical, more fatherly, religion of a Hosea or an Isaiah. Even scribes had admitted that the law of love was "much more than all whole burnt-offering and sacrifice." And the movement of the Baptist and of Jesus had really been of the nature of a reaction toward this older, simpler faith. The sudden revolt in Paul's own mind against the scribal system might not have occurred in the mind of a Pharisee unfamiliar with Greek ideas. But to some extent Paul's experience of the conflict of flesh and spirit, a 'moral inability' to meet the Law's demands *was* a typical Christian experience, as Paul felt it to be. To him it became the basis of an independent gospel. To him the Cross and the Spirit imparted from the risen Messiah were tokens from God that the dispensation of Law is ended and a dispensation of Grace and Son ship begun. Without this Pauline gospel *about* Jesus Christianity could never have become more than a sect of reformed Judaism.

The teaching and martyrdom of Jesus had thus served to bring out a deep and real antithesis. Only, men who had not passed like Paul from the extreme of trust in legalism to a corresponding extremity of despair might be pardoned for some insensibility to this inconsistency. We can appreciate

that James and Peter might honestly hold themselves still under obligation of the written law, even while we admit Paul's logic that any man who had once "sought to be justified in Christ" could not turn back in any degree to legal observance without being "self-condemned."

Christianity may be said to have attained self-consciousness as a new religion in the great argument directed by Paul along the lines of his own gospel against Peter and the older apostles. Its victory as a universal religion of 'grace' over the limitations of Judaism was due to the common doctrine of 'the Spirit.' This was the one point of agreement, the one hope of ultimate concord among the contending parties. All were agreed that endowment with 'the Spirit' marks the Christian. It was in truth the great inheritance from Jesus shared by all in common. And Peter and James admitted that to deny that uncircumcized Gentiles had received the Spirit was to "contend against God."

After Paul's death ecclesiastical development took mostly the road of the synagogue. The sense of the presence and authority of 'the Spirit' grew weaker, the authority of the letter stronger. From the outset even the Pauline churches, in ritual, order, observance, had followed instinctively this pattern. All continued, as a matter of course, to use the synagogue's sacred writings. Paul himself, spite of his protest against "the letter," could make no headway against his opponents, save by argument from 'Scripture.' He had found in it anticipations and predictions of his own Christian faith; but by an exegesis often only little less forced and fantastic than that of the rabbinic schools in which he had been trained. This was a necessity of the times. The reasoning, fallacious as it seems to-day, had appealed to and strengthened Paul's own faith, and was probably effective with others, even if the faith really rested on other grounds than the reasoning by which it was defended. The results of this biblicism were not all salutary. The claims of written authority were loosened rather than broken. Paul himself had found room enough within these defences for the religion of the Spirit; but a generation was coming with less of the sense of present inspiration. Dependence on past authority would be increased in this new generation in direct proportion to its sense of the superior 'inspiration' of the generation which had gone before. Paul is unhampered by even "the scriptures of the prophets" because in his view these take all their authority and meaning from "the Lord, the Spirit." Hence "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Only the remembered "word of the Lord" has authority for Paul beyond his own, even when he thinks that he also has the Spirit. With that exception past revelation is for Paul subordinate to present. But Paul's immediate disciple, the author of Hebrews, is already on a lower plane. This writer looks back to a threefold source of authority: God had spoken in former ages "by the prophets" and to the present "by a Son," but he looks also to an apostolic authority higher than his own: The word "was confirmed unto us by them that heard, God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Ghost." Similarly the author of the Pastoral Epistles (90-100?) holds the "pattern of sound words" heard from Paul as a "sacred deposit," which is "guarded," rather than revealed, "by the Holy Spirit." The "sound words" in question are defined to be "the words of our Lord Jesus Christ." These, taken together with "the doctrine which is according to godliness," fix the standard of orthodoxy. To "Jude" (100-110?) the faith is something "once for all delivered to the saints." His message is: "Remember, beloved, the words spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ." Authority increases, the sense of the revealing Spirit decreases.

It is long before the sense of present inspiration, both in word and work is lost; still longer before the recorded precepts of Jesus, the exhortations and directions of apostles, the visions of "prophets," come to take their place alongside the Bible of the synagogue as "writings of the new covenant." Melito of Sardis (c. 170) is the first to use this expression, and even in his case it does not bear the sense of a canon with definite limits. Tertullian (200-210) is the first to place a definite "New Testament" over against the Old. We must glance at some of the intermediate steps to appreciate this gradual process of canonization.

At first there is no other 'Scripture' than the synagogue's. Clement of Rome (95) still uses only the Law and the Prophets (including certain apocrypha now lost) as his Bible. He refers to the precepts

of Jesus (quoted as in Acts xx. 35 from oral tradition), with the same sense as Paul of their paramount authority, and bids the Corinthians whom he addresses give heed to what the blessed Apostle Paul had written to them "in the beginning of the gospel service," to warn them against factiousness. Nor has Clement yet lost the sense of direct inspiration; for he attaches to his own epistle, written in behalf of the church at Rome, the same superhuman authority claimed in Acts xv. 28 for the letter sent by the church at Jerusalem. If the Corinthians disregard the "words spoken by God through us" they will "incur no slight transgression and danger," for these warnings of a sister church are uttered in the name and by inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Still, Clement does not dream of comparing his authority, even when he writes as agent of the church, with that of "the oracles of the teaching of God," the "sacred Scriptures," the "Scriptures which are true, which were given through the Holy Ghost, wherein is written nothing unrighteous or counterfeit." He does not even rank his own authority with that of "the good apostles, Peter and Paul."

Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, transported to Rome for martyrdom in 110-117, employs a brief stay among the churches of Asia to exhort them to resist the encroachments of heresy by consolidation of church organization, discipline, strict obedience to the bishop. Ignatius, too, still feels the afflatus. His message, he declares with emphasis, was revealed to him, together with the occasion for it, directly from heaven. It was "the voice of God and not only of a man" when he cried out among the Philadelphians: "Give heed to the bishop, and the presbytery and deacons." Yet Ignatius cannot enjoin the Romans as Peter and Paul did. They were "apostles." He is "a convict." His inspiration, however undoubted, is of a lower order.

Hermas, a 'prophet' of the same Roman church as Clement, though a generation later, is still so conscious of the superhuman character of his "Visions," "Parables," and "Mandates" that he gives them out for circulation as inspired messages of the Spirit; and this not for Rome alone. Clement, then apparently still living, and "the one to whom this duty is committed," is to send them "to foreign cities." In point of fact the *Shepherd* of Hermas long held a place for many churches as part of the New Testament canon. Yet less than a generation after Hermas, the claim to exercise the gift of prophecy in the church was looked upon as dangerous if not heretical.

In the nature of the case it was really impossible that the original sense of endowment with "the Spirit" should survive. Not only did the rapidly growing reverence for the apostles and the Lord open a chasm separating "the word of wisdom and the word of power" given to that age, from the slighter contemporary claims of miracle and revelation; the very growth and wide dissemination of the gospel message made standardization imperative. Before the middle of the second century Gnostic schism had swept nearly half the church into the vortex of speculative heresy. Marcion at Rome (c. 140) carried Pauline anti-legalism to the extreme of an entire rejection of the Old Testament. Judaism and all its works and ways were to be repudiated. The very God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was declared other than, and ignorant of, the "heavenly Father" of Jesus. Against such vagaries there must be some historic standard. Even Marcion himself looked to the past, however recent, as the source of light, and since some written standard must be found, it was he, the heretic, who gave to Christianity its first canon of Christian writings. The Marcionite churches did away with the public reading of the Law and the Prophets, and could only put in their place "Gospel" and "Apostle." Not that Epistles, Gospels, and even 'Revelations' were not also in use among the orthodox; but they are not yet referred to as 'Scripture.' Even gospels are treated merely as aids to the memory in transmitting the teaching of the Lord. This teaching itself is but the authoritative interpretation of Law and Prophets, and is in turn interpreted by the writings of the apostles.

Marcion's 'Gospel' consisted of our Luke, expurgated according to his own ideas. His 'Apostle' contained the Epistles of Paul minus the Pastoral Epistles and a series of passages cancelled out from the rest as Jewish interpolations. This was the first Christian Bible distinct from 'the Scriptures' of the synagogue.

Indirectly the growth of Gnostic heresy contributed still more to the increasing authority of apostolic and quasi-apostolic writings. One of its earliest and most obnoxious forms was called 'Doketism,' from its exaggeration of Paulinism into a complete repudiation of the historic Jesus, whose earthly career was stigmatized as mere 'phantasm' (*dokesis*). Doketism is known to us not only through description by orthodox opponents, but by a few writings of its own. It is the type of heresy antagonized in the Johannine Epistles (c. 100) and in those of Ignatius (110-117). Now Ignatius, as we have seen, relied mainly on church organization and discipline. The Pastoral Epistles (90-100), while they emphasize also "the form of healthful words, even the words of our Lord Jesus" take, on the whole, a similar direction. But 1st John, which relies far less than the Pastoral Epistles or Ignatius on mere church organization, is also driven back upon the life and teaching of Jesus as the historic standard. It *does*, therefore, make formal appeal to the sacred tradition in both its elements, but with a difference characteristic of the Pauline spirit. The redeeming life and death of Jesus are viewed as a manifestation of "the life, even the eternal life (of the Logos) which was with the Father and was manifested unto us" (the historic body of believers). Again Jesus' one "new commandment," the law of love, is the epitome of all righteousness.

In his doctrine of Scripture as in many other respects the Johannine writer shows a breadth and catholicity of mind which almost anticipates the development of later ages. His task was in fact the adjustment of the developed Pauline gospel to a type of Christianity more nearly akin to synagogue tradition. This type had grown up under the name of Peter. On the question of the standard of written authority 'John'² leaves room for the freedom of the Spirit so splendidly set forth in the teaching and example of Jesus and Paul, while he resists the erratic licence of "those that would lead you astray." The result is a doctrine of historic authority in general, and of that of the Scriptures in particular, sharply differentiated from the Jewish, and deserving in every respect to be treated as the basis of the Christian. In a great chapter of his Gospel (John v.), wherein Jesus debates with the scribes the question of His own authority, the dialogue closes with a denunciation of them because they search the Scriptures with the idea that in them they have eternal life, that is, they treat them as a code of precepts, obedience to which will be thus rewarded. On the contrary, says Jesus, the Scriptures only "bear witness" to the life that is present in Himself as the incarnate, eternal, Word; "but ye will not come unto me that ye might have life."

In seeking the life behind the literature as the real revelation, the Johannine writer makes the essential distinction between Jewish and Christian doctrine. He stands between Paul, whose peculiar view was based on an exceptional personal experience, and the modern investigator, who can but treat all literary monuments and records of religious movements objectively, as data for the history and psychology of religion. If the student be devoutly minded the Scriptures will be to him, too, however conditioned by the idiosyncrasies of temporal environment and individual character, manifestations of "the life, even the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested unto us."

But the Johannine writer was far deeper and more 'spiritual'³ than the trend of his age. Ignatius' friend and contemporary, Polycarp, "the father of the Christians" of Asia, in his Epistle to the Philippians (110-117) urges avoidance of the false teachers who "pervert the sayings of the Lord to their own lusts, denying the (bodily) resurrection and judgment." But he has no better remedy than to "turn (probably in a somewhat mechanical way) to the tradition handed down from the beginning" and to study "the Epistles of Paul." The former process is in full application in Polycarp's later colleague, Papias of Hierapolis (c. 145?), who publishes a little volume entitled *Interpretation of the Sayings of the Lord*. It is based on carefully authenticated traditions of the 'apostles and elders,' especially a certain contemporary "Elder John" who speaks for the Jerusalem succession. According to Papias

² In using traditional names and titles such as "Luke," "John," "Matthew," "James," no assumption is made as to authenticity. The designation is employed for convenience irrespective of its critical accuracy or inaccuracy.

³ The Fourth Gospel is thus characterized by Clement of Alexandria, meaning that it had a deep symbolic sense.

our two Greek Gospels of Matthew and Mark represent two apostolic sources, the one an Aramaic compilation of the Precepts of Jesus by Matthew, the other anecdotes of his "sayings and doings" collated from the preaching of Peter.

Grateful as we must be for Papias' efforts to authenticate evangelic tradition, since they are corroborated in their main results by all other ancient tradition as well as by critical study of the documents, it is noticeable how they stand in line with the tendencies of the age. Eusebius (325) characterizes the reign of Trajan (98-117) as a period when many undertook to disseminate in writing "the divine Gospels." One of our own evangelists, whose work must probably be referred to the beginning of this period, but is not mentioned by 'the Elder,' alludes to the same phenomenon. The apostles were gone. Hence to Luke⁴ the question of "order" was a perplexity, as the Elder observes that it had already been to Mark. Soon after Luke and Papias comes Basilides with his *Exegetics*, probably based on Luke (120?), and Marcion (140), both engaged from their own point of view with the current questions of Jesus' teaching and ministry.

Thus, at the beginning of the second century, the elements necessary to the formation of a New Testament canon were all at hand. They included the tradition of the teaching and work of Jesus, the letters of apostles and church leaders revered as given by authority of the Spirit and the visions and revelations of 'prophets.' Not only the elements were present, the irresistible pressure of the times was certain to force them into crystallization. The wonder is not that the canon should have been formed, but that it should have been delayed so long.

For there were also resistant factors. Phrygia, the scene of Paul's first great missionary conquests, the immemorial home of religious enthusiasm, became the seat, about the middle of the second century, of a movement of protest against the church policy of consolidation and standardization. Montanus arose to maintain the persistence in the church of the gift of prophecy, tracing the succession in both the male and female line back to Silas the companion of Paul and the prophesying daughters of Philip the Evangelist. The 'Phrygians,' as they were called, naturally made much of the writings current in Asia Minor, especially the book of 'prophecy' attributed to 'John.' Theoretically indeed the church was unwilling to acknowledge the disappearance of this gift. To Hermas (130-140) and the *Teaching of the Twelve* (120-130) it is still a "sin against the Spirit" to interrupt or oppose a prophet during his ecstatic utterance. On the other hand, the *Teaching* reiterates the apostolic warnings to "try the spirits," with prohibitions of specific excesses of the order. Moreover by the time of Montanus and the 'Phrygians' theoretical recognition of revelation through the prophets was rapidly giving way before the practical dangers inseparable from 'revelations' of this enthusiastic character, of which any member of the church, man or woman, ignorant or learned, lay or cleric, might be the recipient. The strict regulative control imposed by both Paul and John⁵ upon this type of spiritual gift (1st Thess. v. 20 f.; 1st Cor. xii. 3; xv. 29 f. 32; cf. 1st John iv. 1) was found to be doubly necessary in face of the disintegrating tendencies of the post-apostolic age, and after long debate and much protest the movement of Montanus was at last decreed heretical at Rome, though Irenæus (186) interceded for it, and Tertullian (210) became a convert.

The history of this movement in the formative period of the New Testament canon explains why the "revelations of the prophets" obtained but scant recognition as compared with the "word of the Lord" and the "commandment of the apostles." Last of the three, in order of rank (1st Cor. xii. 28; Eph. iv. 11), last also to be codified in written form, we need not be surprised that our present New Testament retains but a single one of the once current books of 'prophecy.' For a time the *Shepherd* of Hermas and the *Apocalypse of Peter* rivalled the claims to canonicity of our own Revelation of John, but were soon dropped. Our own Apocalypse has suffered more opposition than any other New Testament writing, being still excluded from the canon in some branches of the church. Its precarious

⁴ See Footnote 3

⁵ See Footnote 3

place at the end of the canon which we moderns have inherited from Athanasius (*ob.* 373) was due, in fact, far less to its author's vigorous assertions of authority as an inspired "prophet" (i. 1-3; xxii. 6-9, 18 *f.*) than to the claims to apostolicity put forward in the preface and appendix. For until the third century no one dreamed of understanding the "John" of Rev. i. 4, 9 and xxii. 8 otherwise than as the Apostle. Eusebius accordingly (325) is uncertain only as to whether the book should be classed in his first group of "accepted" writings, along with the Gospels and Pauline Epistles, or in the third as "spurious." If written by "some other John than the Apostle" he would not even honour it with a place in his second group of "disputed" books, along with Hebrews, James, Jude, and 2nd Peter.

Thus at the end of the second century, while there was still much dispute (destined indeed to continue for centuries) as to the *limits* of the New Testament canon, there had in fact come to be a real canonical New Testament set over against the Old, as of equal, or even greater authority. The "word of the Lord," the "commandment of the apostles," and at last even the "revelations of the prophets," had successively ceased as living realities, and become crystallized into written form. They had been codified and canonized. The church had travelled the beaten track of the synagogue, and all the more rapidly from the example set before it. None of the early canons (*i. e.* lists of writings permitted to be read in the churches) coincides exactly, it is true, with the New Testament current among ourselves. The list of Athanasius is the first to give just our books. The Roman list of the Muratorian fragment (185-200) omits Hebrews, James and 2nd Peter, and gives at least a partial sanction to the *Apocalypse of Peter*. The lists of Origen (*ob.* 251) and Eusebius (325) vary as respects both inclusion and exclusion. All early authorities express a doubtful judgment regarding the outer fringe of minor writings such as James, Jude, 2nd Peter, 2nd and 3rd John. Even those of larger content, such as Hebrews and Revelation, if their apostolicity was questioned, remained subjects of dispute. But already by a. d. 200 the time had long since passed when any of the thirteen epistles bearing the name of Paul could be deemed open to question. Marcion's exclusion of the three Pastorals had been forgotten. Dispute of the four-gospel canon could still be tolerated; but not for long. Irenæus (186) has no patience with "those wretched men" who cannot see that in the nature of the case there should be neither more nor less than this number. But he explicitly refers to those who disputed "that aspect of the gospel which is called John's." There were, in fact, opponents of Montanism at Rome, who under the lead of Gaius had denied the authenticity of all the writings attributed to John, including the Gospel itself. But even those of the orthodox who were willing enough to reject Revelation, with its now unfashionable eschatology, agreed that Gaius' attack upon the fourth Gospel was too radical. The small body who continued for a few generations to resist the inclusion of any of the Johannine writings in the canon remained without influence, and were ultimately forgotten. The 'catholic'⁶ church had repudiated heresy, standardized the faith, and confined its recognized historic expression to a 'canon' of New Testament Scripture.

⁶ Catholic is here used in its etymological sense of "general" or universal. We shall have occasion to apply the term in a more limited sense hereafter.

CHAPTER II

THE REACTION TO CRITICISM

The consolidated 'catholic' church of the third century might seem, so far as its doctrine of Scripture was concerned, to have retraced its steps to a standpoint corresponding completely to that of the synagogue. Only, the paradox still held that the very writings canonized were those supremely adapted to evoke a spirit of resistance to the despotism of either priest or scribe. The Protestant Reformation was a revolt against the former, and it is noticeable how large a part was played by the New Testament doctrine of the 'Spirit' in this struggle of spiritual democracy against hierocratic tyranny. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians became Luther's Palladium.

But the post-Reformation dogmatists took fright at their own freedom. The prediction of the Romanists that repudiation of traditional authority in its ecclesiastical embodiment would result in internecine schism and conflict seemed on the point of being realized. The theological system-makers, like their predecessors of the post-apostolic age, could see no way out but to throw all their weight on a past inspiration assumed to be without error. The canonical books were declared to furnish an infallible rule of faith and practice.

It was in the sincere desire to meet the requirements of this theory that the science of criticism grew up. In the earlier days it did not venture for the most part beyond what is known as 'textual' criticism. For a doctrine of inerrancy is manifestly unserviceable until errors of transmission have been eliminated. Textual criticism set itself to this task, asking the question: As between the various readings found in different New Testament manuscripts, which is original? Unfortunately, to meet the logical requirement the critic, if not backed like those of Rome by a papal guarantee, must himself be infallible. The inevitable result of this attempt, begun in the sincerest spirit of apologetics, was to prove that an infallible text is hopelessly unattainable. Textual criticism is indispensable; but as the servant of apologetics it is foredoomed to failure.

The variation of the manuscripts was not the only obstacle to biblical infallibility. To say nothing of differences of interpretation there was the question of the canon. Either the decision of the 'catholic' church must be accepted as infallible, or scholarship must undertake a 'criticism of the canon' to defend the current list of "inspired" books. A 'higher' criticism became necessary if only to vindicate the church's choice on historical grounds. Roman Catholics like Simon, whose *Critical History* of the Biblical books appeared in 1689-1695, could reopen the question with impunity. Those who based their authority on the infallibility of Scripture alone could not meet the challenge otherwise than as Michælis did in his *Introduction to the Divine Writings of the New Testament* (1750-1780). Michælis undertook a historical inquiry into the circumstances of origin of each of the canonical books, with the object of proving each to be in reality what tradition declared. The twenty-seven commonly accepted were supposed to have been either written by apostles, or at least so superintended and guaranteed by them, as to cover all with the ægis of an infallibility not conceded to the post-apostolic age. Scholarship in the harness of apologetics again found its task impracticable. Michælis himself confessed it "difficult" to prove authenticity in cases like that of the Epistle of Jude. Conceive the task as the scientific vindication of a verdict rendered centuries before on unknown grounds, but now deprived of official authority, and it becomes inevitably hopeless. Can it be expected that doctors will not disagree on the authenticity or pseudonymity of 2nd Peter, who always have disagreed on this and similar questions, and have just admitted failure to agree in the matter of text?

For half a century criticism seemed lost in the slough of mere controversy over the (assumed) infallible text, and the (assumed) infallible canon. Apologists fought merely on the defensive, endeavouring to prove that men whose fallibility was admitted had nevertheless pronounced an infallible verdict on the most difficult subjects of literary and historical inquiry. Critics had an easy task in showing that the church's theory of inspiration and canonicity was incorrect; but made no

progress toward a constructive explanation of the religious, or even the historical, significance of the literature. Real progress was made only when criticism left off the attempt either to establish or disestablish a 'received' text, or an 'authorized' canon, and became simply an instrument in the hand of the historian, as he seeks to trace to their origins the ideas the church enshrined in her literature because she found them effective in her growth.

For the great awakening in which New Testament criticism 'found itself' as a genuine and indispensable branch of the history of religion, we are largely indebted to the eminent church historian, Ferdinand Christian Baur (*ob.* 1860). Baur gathered up the fragmentary results of a generation of mere negation, a war of independence against the tyranny of dogmatic tradition, and sought to place the New Testament writings in their true setting of primitive church history. His particular views have been superseded. Subsequent study has disproved many of his inferences, and brought from friend and foe far-reaching modifications to his general theory. But, consciously or not, Baur, in making criticism the hand-maid of history, was working in the interest of that constructive, Christian, doctrine of inspired Scripture which an ancient and nameless teacher of the church had described as "witness" to the Life, "even the eternal life, which was with the Father," and is in man, and has been manifested in the origin and historical development of our religion.

The Reformation had been a revolt against the despotism of the priest; this was a revolt against the despotism of the scribe.

Baur gave scant – too scant – consideration to early tradition, making his results unduly negative. None of the New Testament books are dated; few besides the Pauline Epistles embody even an author's name; and these few, 1st and 2nd Peter, James, Jude and Revelation, were (1st Peter alone excepted) just those which even the canon-makers had classified as doubtful, or spurious. Not even a Calvin would support the authenticity of 2nd Peter, a Luther had denied the value of James and Revelation. It had been an easy task for 'criticism of the canon' to show that those who determined its content had not been actuated by considerations of pure science. Those books secured admission which were most widely current as ancient and trustworthy, and whose orthodoxy met the standards of the time. Those were disputed, or rejected, which were less widely current, or unorthodox, or could establish no direct relation to an apostle. It was proper for the critic, once his aim had become not apologetic but historical, to drop once for all the question whether the canon-makers' selection – made not for scientific, but for religious purposes – is good, bad or indifferent. The time had come for him to apply the available evidence to his own scientific question: What relation do these several writings bear to the development of Christianity? It remained to be seen whether he could offer constructive evidence more convincing than tradition.

The latest date to which an undated, or disputed, writing can be assigned is that when the marks of its employment by others, or influence upon them, become undeniable. This is termed the 'external' evidence. The earliest date, conversely, is that to which we are brought down by references in the book itself to antecedent and current events, and writings, or by undeniable marks of their influence. This is termed the 'internal' evidence. Counting tradition as part of the external evidence, modern scientific criticism is able to fix within a few decades the origin of all the New Testament writings, without incurring opposition even from the apologist. No scholar now dreams of adopting any other method of proof, whatever his doctrinal proclivities. The overwhelming majority are agreed that the period covered, from the earliest Pauline Epistles to the latest brief fulminations against Gnostic Doketism and denial of 'resurrection and judgment,' is included in the century from a. d. 50 to 150.

Baur's conception of the course of events in this momentous century has been described as a theory of historical progress by fusion of opposites in a higher unity. The Hegelian scheme of thesis, antithesis and synthesis had in fact some justification in the recognized phenomena of the development of Christianity. It had sprung from Judaism, overcoming the particularism of that still nationalistic faith by the sense of its mission to the world at large. The conflict acknowledged in all the sources and most vividly reflected in the great Epistles of Paul to the Galatians, Corinthians

and Romans, a conflict between those who conceived Christianity as a universal religion, and those who looked upon it as only a reformed, spiritualized and perfected Judaism, was the characteristic phenomenon of the first or apostolic age. It was the struggle of the infant faith against its swaddling bands. The critical historian is compelled to estimate all later, anonymous, accounts of this development in the light of the confessedly earlier, and indubitably authentic records, the four great Epistles of Paul; for these simply reflect the actual conditions, and are not affected by the later disposition to idealize the story. Thesis and antithesis were therefore really in evidence at the beginnings.

Equal unanimity prevailed as to the close of the period in question. In a. d. 150 to 200, Christianity was solidifying into the 'catholic' church, rejecting extremes of doctrine on both sides, formulating its 'rule of faith,' determining its canon, centralizing administrative control. It had thrown off as heretical upon the extreme left Marcion and the Gnostics, who either repudiated the Jewish scriptures altogether, or interpreted them with more than Pauline freedom. On the extreme right it had renounced the unprogressive Ebionites of Palestine, still unreconciled to Paul, and insistent on submission to the Law for Jew and Gentile, as the condition of a 'share in the world to come.' What could be imagined as to the course of events in the intervening century of obscurity? Must it not have witnessed a progressive divergence of the extremes of Paulinists and Judaizers, coincidently with a rapprochement of the moderates from the side of Peter and that of Paul respectively? Baur's outline seemed thus to describe adequately the main course of events. He relied upon internal evidence to determine the dates of the disputed writings and their relation to it. But 'criticism of the canon' in Baur's own, and in the preceding generation, had come to include among the writings of doubtful date and authenticity not only those disputed in antiquity, and the anonymous narrative books, but also 1st Peter and the minor Epistles of Paul. Nothing strictly apostolic was left save the four great Epistles of Paul.

The theory of Baur and the Tübingen school (for so his followers came to be designated) was broadly conceived and ably advocated. In two vital respects it has had permanent influence. (1) Criticism, as already noted, has ceased to be mere debate about text and canon, and concerns itself to-day primarily with the history of Christian ideas as embodied in its primitive literature. Its problem is to relate the New Testament writings, together with all other cognate material, to the history of the developing religion from its earliest traceable form in the greater Pauline Epistles to where it emerges into the full light of day toward the close of the second century. (2) Again, Baur's outline of the process through which the nascent faith attained to full self-consciousness as a world-religion required correction rather than disproof. It was a grievous mistake to identify Peter, James, and John with those whom Paul bitterly denounces as Judaizing "false brethren," "super extra apostles," "ministers of Satan." It was a perversion of internal evidence to reject as post-Pauline the Epistles of the later period such as Philippians and Colossians, on the ground that Paul himself did not live to participate in the second crisis, the defence of his doctrine against perversion on the side of mystical, Hellenistic theosophy. The great Epistles written under the name of Paul from the period of his captivity are innocent of reference to the developed Gnostic systems of the second century. They antagonize only an incipient tendency in this direction.

But while the transition of a. d. 50-150 was both deeper and more complex than Baur conceived, the transfer of the gospel during that century from Jewish to Gentile soil is really the great outstanding fact, against which as a background the literature must be read; and the initial stage of the process is marked by the controversy of Paul with the Galilean apostles. What we must call, in distinction from Paulinism, 'apostolic' Christianity is well represented in the Book of Acts. Paul's writings show that he felt himself and his churches to represent an independent type of Christianity in all respects equal to the 'apostolic,' the problem being unification of the two. Now it is axiomatic that the investigator must proceed from the relatively known and determinable to the unknown and disputable. Accordingly it is in reality from the Epistolary literature of the church, in particular the greater Pauline Epistles,

that he must take his start. As a source for our understanding of the development of the life of the church the Literature of the Apostle, directly participant in the conflicts and issues of the times, even if in its later elements of doubtful or pseudonymous authorship, takes precedence as a whole over the Literature of the Catechist, with its later and more or less idealized narration, exemplified in the Book of Acts.

Modern criticism acknowledges, then, its indebtedness to the Tübingen school for a clearer definition of both its task and method, by concentrating attention upon the contrast between the Petrine and the Pauline conception of 'the gospel.' Still it must be admitted that most of the inferences first drawn have since been overthrown. In their chronological scheme of the New Testament writings the Tübingen critics under-estimated the force of the external evidences (including early tradition) and misinterpreted the internal. New discovery and more careful study of literary relations have inverted Baur's views as to dates of the Johannine writings. Four of these (the Gospel and three Epistles) are anonymous. Baur's date for these has been forced back by no less than half a century. The fifth (Revelation) bears the name of John, but was hotly disputed as pseudonymous in the second century, and even by its supporters was dated so late as "the end of the reign of Domitian" (95). The Tübingen school placed Revelation thirty years earlier, and attributed it to the Apostle. Modern criticism emphatically reverts to the ancient date, and regards the book as pseudonymous, or as written by "some other John."

Again the relative dates of the Synoptic writings (Matthew, Mark, Luke-Acts) were inverted by the Tübingen critics, primarily through wrong application of their theory of doctrinal development; secondarily, and as a consequence, through misinterpretation of the intricate literary relationships. Present-day criticism considers it established that Mark is the oldest of the three, taken up by each of the other two. There is almost equal unanimity in regarding the discourse material common to Matthew and Luke and variously combined by each with Mark, as independently drawn by them from the book of the "Precepts of the Lord," reported by Papias to have been compiled by Matthew "in the Hebrew (*i. e.* Aramaic) tongue." Tübingen gospel criticism is thus almost entirely set aside, in favour of the so-called 'Two-document' theory.

So with the Pauline Epistles of the second period. Doubt still clings to Ephesians. It had been treated by some as pseudo-Pauline even before the time of Baur; but Baur's own followers soon receded from his extreme application of his theory to the internal evidence of Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. It became evident that Paul's "gospel" included something more than the mere antithesis of Law and Grace. He had other opponents than the Judaizers, and had to defend his doctrine against perversion by Grecizing mystics as well as against opposition by Pharisaic legalists.

Two generations of research and controversy have greatly advanced the cause of constructive criticism. Hand in hand with a more accurate dating of the literature, secured through more impartial judgment of both the external and internal evidence, there has gone a reconstruction of our conception of the course of events. The tendencies in the early church were not two only, but four; corresponding, perhaps, to those rebuked by Paul at Corinth, which called themselves by the names respectively of Peter, of Paul, of Apollos and of Christ. It seems probable from the bitterness with which in 2nd Cor. x. 7 Paul denounces the man who says, "I am of Christ," that this party-cry was employed in the sense of following the example of Jesus as respects obedience to the Law (for even Paul acknowledged that Christ had been "made a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God"). If so, the Corinthian "Christ-party" may be identified with those "ministers of the circumcision" who denied both the apostleship and the gospel of Paul. At all events those "of Cephas" were relatively harmless. They may be identified with the so-called 'weak' of Romans, for whose scruples on the score of 'pollutions of idols' Paul demands such consideration both at Corinth and at Rome. His own adherents both at Corinth (those 'of Paul') and at Rome (the 'strong') are to follow his example not merely in recognizing that: "No idol is anything in the world," that "there is nothing unclean of itself," and that "all things are lawful." It is to be followed also in recognizing the limitations of this liberty. Limits are imposed

among other things by the scruples of others, so that Paul himself becomes "as under the Law" when among Jews, though "as without the Law" among the Gentiles. The "weak" are to be resisted only when the admission of themselves or their claims would lead to "doubtful disputations," or to a rebuilding of walls of separation that had been torn down through faith in Christ. Galatians sounds the battle-cry of endangered liberty. Corinthians (and Romans in still higher degree) shows the magnanimity of the victor.

Whether it be possible to identify those "of Apollos" at Corinth with the beginnings of that Hellenistic perversion of the Pauline gospel into a mystical theosophy which afterwards passed into Gnosticism may be left an open question. At least we have come to see that the conditions of the church's growth were far more complex than Baur imagined. In particular it is necessary to distinguish four different attitudes on the single question of the obligation of the Law. There were (1) Judaizers who insisted on complete submission to the Law as the condition of salvation, for both Jews and Gentiles; (2) imitators of Cephas, who considered believers of Jewish birth to be "under the Law," but asked of Gentiles only such consideration for it as the special conditions seemed to require; (3) Paulinists, who held that neither Jews nor Gentiles are under the law, yet felt that consideration should be shown for the scrupulous when asked not as of right, but as of charity; (4) radicals, who recognized no limits to their freedom save the one new commandment.

But while conflict first broke out over the mere concrete question of Gentile liberty, the real distinction of Paul's gospel from that of the older apostles was far deeper. The question as Tübingen critics conceived it concerned primarily the *extent* of the gospel message, – to how large a circle was it offered? Modern criticism has come to see that the difference was in higher degree a difference of *quality*. Paul's whole message of redemption through the cross and resurrection started from other premises than those of the Galilean apostles, and was conceived in other terms. For this reason it leads over to a new Christology. In short, the transition of Christianity from its Jewish to its Gentile form is not a mere enlargement of its field by the abolition of particularistic barriers. The background we must study for the understanding of it is not so much mere contemporary history as the contemporary history of *religion*. The development from the Petrine gospel broadly characteristic of the Synoptic writings, through the Pauline Epistles to that of the Johannine writings, is a transition from Hebrew to Hellenistic conceptions of what redemption is, and how it is effected. Modern criticism expresses the contrast in its distinction of the gospel of Jesus from the gospel about Jesus.

In the case of both Paul and his predecessors in the faith there is a common starting-point. It was the doctrine that God had raised Jesus from the dead and exalted Him as Christ and Lord to the throne of glory. Its proofs were the ecstatic phenomena of the Spirit, those strange manifestations of 'prophecy,' 'tongues,' and the like in the Christian assembly. The inference from this resurrection faith for an apostle of the Galilean group was that he must "teach all men everywhere to observe all things whatsoever Jesus had commanded." Jesus had been raised up in Israel as the Prophet like unto Moses; His apostle must repeat the remembered word of commandment and the word of promise. He will have an authority derived from the manifestations of signs and wonders. These had accompanied Jesus' own career, and now, by grace of His endowment of His disciples with the Spirit, they will be repeated by their hands. The 'apostolic' gospel is thus primarily historical. The Pauline gospel centres at the other pole of religious conviction. It is primarily psychological. For Paul the immediate effect of the revelation of God's Son "in" him is an irresistible impulse to relate his own soul's experience. The gospel he preaches is not so much what Jesus did or said while on earth, as what God has done, and is still doing, through the "life-giving Spirit" which emanates from the risen Lord. Signs and wonders are tokens of the Spirit, but are of less value, and must vanish before the "abiding" ethical gifts. Both the Pauline and the Petrine gospel start from the common confession of "Jesus as Lord"; but the Christology of the Synoptic literature is an Apotheosis doctrine, falling back on the historical Jesus. That of the Epistles is a doctrine of Incarnation, appealing to the eternal manifestation of God in man. For the former, Jesus was "a prophet mighty in deed and word," raised up by God in

accordance with the promise of Deut. xviii. 18, to turn Israel to repentance. Having fulfilled this mission in rejection and martyrdom Jesus had been exalted to God's "right hand" and "made both Lord and Christ." He there awaits the subjection of all His enemies. In the Pauline gospel the story of Jesus is a drama of the supernal regions, wherein His earthly career as prophet, leader, teacher, sinks to the level of the merest episode. As pre-existent spirit, Jesus had been from the beginning of the creation "in the form of God." As the period of its consummation drew near He took upon Him human form, descended through suffering and death to the lowest depths of the underworld, and by divine power had reascended above all the heavens with their ranks of angelic hierarchies. Whether Paul himself so conceived it or not, the Gentile world had no other moulds of thought wherein to formulate such a Christology than the current myths of Redeemer-gods. The value of the individual *soul* had at last been discovered, and men resorted to the ancient personifications of the forces of nature as deliverers of this new-found *soul* from its weakness and mortality. The influential religions of the time were those of personal redemption by mystic union with a dying and resurrected "Saviour-god," an Osiris, an Adonis, an Attis, a Mithra. Religions of this type were everywhere displacing the old national faiths. The Gentile could not think of "the Christ" primarily as a Son of David who restores the kingdom to Israel, shatters the Gentiles like a potter's vessel and rules them with a rod of iron. If he employed this Old Testament language at all, it had for him a purely symbolical sense. The whole conception was spiritualized. The "enemies" overcome were the spiritual foes of humanity, sin and death; "redemption" was not the deliverance of Israel out of the hand of all their enemies, that (together with all afar off that call upon the name of this merciful God) they may "serve Him in holiness and righteousness all their days." It was the rescue of the sons of Adam out of the bondage to evil Powers incurred through inheritance of Adam's sinful flesh. This had been the tendency already of Jewish apocalypse. The starting-point of Paul's own conceptions was not Israel's bondage in Egypt, but a conception already tinged, like the late book of Jewish philosophy called the Wisdom of Solomon, with the Stoic conception of 'flesh' as prison-house of 'spirit,' already inflamed, like the contemporary Jewish apocalypses of Esdras and Baruch, with lurid visions of a universe rescued by superhuman power from a thralldom of demonic rule. Paul's preaching was made real by his own experience. For if ever there was an evangelist whose message was his own experience, Paul was such. And Paul's experience was not so much that of a Palestinian Jew, as that of a Hellenist, one whose whole idea of 'redemption' has been unconsciously universalized, individualized, and spiritualized, by contact with Greek and Hellenistic thought. Paul and the Galilean apostles were not far apart in their expectations of the future. Both stood gazing up into heaven. But for his authority Paul inevitably looked inwards, the Galilean apostles looked backwards.

It is hopeless at the present stage of acquaintance with the history of religion, particularly the spread of the various 'mysteries' and religions of personal redemption in the early empire, to deny this contrast between the gospel of Paul and the gospel of "the apostles and elders at Jerusalem." It is shortsighted to overlook its significance in the transition of the faith. Whereas the Jewish-Christian had as its principal background the national history, more or less transcendentalized in the forms of apocalypse, Paul's had as its principal background the speculative mythology of the Hellenistic world, more or less adapted to the forms of Judaism. Only ignorance of the function of mythology, especially as then employed to express the aspiration of the soul for purity, life and fellowship with God, can make these mythologically framed religious ideas seem an inappropriate vehicle to convey Paul's sense of the significance of Jesus' message and life of "Son ship." They were at least the best expression those times and that environment could afford of the greater Kingdom God had proclaimed in the resurrection of the Christ, and was bringing to pass through the outpouring of His Spirit.

Modern criticism must therefore recognize that the beginnings of our religion were not a mere enlargement of Judaism by abolition of the barriers of the Law, but a fusion of the two great streams of religious thought distinctive of the Jewish and the Hellenistic world in a higher unity. Alexander's hoped-for "marriage of Europe and Asia" was consummated at last in the field of religion itself.

Denationalized Judaism contributed the social ideal: the messianic hope of a world-wide Kingdom of God. It is the worthy contribution of a highly ethical national religion. Hellenism contributed the individual ideal: personal redemption in mystic union with the life of God. It is a concept derived from the Greek's newly-awakened consciousness of a personality agonizing for deliverance out of the bondage of the material and transitory, alien and degrading to its proper life. The critic who has become a historian of ideas will find his study of the literature of the apostolic and post-apostolic age here widening out into a prospect of unsuspected largeness and significance. He will see as the two great divisions of his subject, (1) the gospel *of* Jesus, represented, as we are told, in the first beginnings of literary development by an Aramaic compilation of the Precepts of the Lord by the Apostle Matthew, circulating possibly even before the great Pauline Epistles among the Palestinian churches; (2) the gospel *about* Jesus, represented in the Pauline Epistles, and these based on their author's personal experience. It is a gospel of God's action "in Christ, reconciling the world." It interprets the personality of Jesus and his experience of the cross and resurrection as manifestations of the divine idea. The interpretation employs Hellenistically coloured forms of thought, and is forced to vindicate itself first against subjection to legalism, afterwards against perversion into an unethical, superstitious theosophy. But surely the doctrine *about* Jesus, interpreting the significance of His person and work as the culmination of redemption through the indwelling of God in men and among men belongs as much to the essence of Christianity as the gospel of love and faith proclaimed *by* Jesus.

Besides these two principal types of gospel and their subordinate combinations the critical historian may see ultimately emerging a type of 'spiritual' gospel, growing upon Gentile soil, in fact, receiving its first literary expression in the early years of the second century at the very headquarters of the Pauline mission-field. This third type aims to be comprehensive of the other two. It is essentially a gospel about Jesus, though it takes the form for its main literary expression of a gospel preached by Jesus. The fourth evangelist is the true successor of Paul, though the conditions of the age compel him to go beyond the literary form of the Epistle and to construct a Gospel wherein both factors of the sacred tradition shall appear, the words and works, the Precepts and the Saving Ministry of Jesus. But it is in no mechanical or slavish sense that the fourth evangelist appeals to this supreme authority. He lifts the whole message above the level of mere baptized legalism, even while he guards it against the unbridled licence of Gnostic theosophy, applying to this purpose his doctrine of the Incarnate Logos. His basis is psychology as well as history. It is the Life which is the light of men, that life whose source is God, and which permeates and redeems His creation; even "the eternal Life which was with the Father and was manifested to us."

In the critical grouping of our New Testament writings the Gospel and Epistles of John can occupy, then, no lesser place than that of the keystone of the arch.

To sum up: the Literature of the Apostle owed its early development and long continuance among the Pauline churches of Asia Minor and Greece, to the impetus and example of Paul's apostolic authority. The Literature of the Teacher and Prophet, growing up around Jerusalem and its daughter churches at Antioch and Rome, came slowly to surpass in influence the "commandment of the apostles," as the church became more and more exclusively dependent upon it for the "teaching of the Lord." It was the function of the great "theologian" of Ephesus (as he came early to be called), linking the authority of both, to furnish the fundamental basis for the catholic faith.

PART II

THE LITERATURE OF THE APOSTLE

CHAPTER III

PAUL AS MISSIONARY AND DEFENDER OF THE GOSPEL OF GRACE

Most vital of all passages for historical appreciation of the great period of Paul's missionary activity and its literature is the retrospect over his career as apostle to the Gentiles and defender of a gospel "without the yoke of the Law" in Gal. i. – ii. Especially must the contrast be observed between this and the very different account in Acts ix. – xvi.

Galatians aims to counteract the encroachments of certain Judaizing interlopers upon Paul's field, and seems to have been written from Corinth, shortly after his arrival there (c. 50) on the Second Missionary Journey (Acts xv. 36 – xviii. 22). We take "the churches of Galatia" to be those founded by Paul in company with Barnabas on the First Missionary Journey (Acts xiii. – xiv.), and revisited with Silas after a division of the recently evangelized territory whereby Cyprus had been left to Barnabas and Mark (Acts xv. 36 – xvi. 5; cf. Gal. iv. 13).

The retrospect is in two parts: (1) a proof of the divine origin of Paul's apostleship and gospel by the independence of his conversion and missionary career; (2) an account of his defence of his "gospel of uncircumcision" on the two occasions when it had been threatened. Visiting Jerusalem for the second time some fifteen years⁷ after his conversion, he secured from its "pillars," James, Peter, and John, an unqualified, though "private," endorsement. At Antioch subsequently he overcame renewed opposition by public exposure of the inconsistency of Peter, who had been won over by the reactionaries.

Acts reverses Paul's point of view, making his career in the period of unobstructed evangelization one of labour for Jews alone, in complete dependence on the Twelve. It practically excludes the period of opposition by a determination of the Gentile status in an 'Apostolic Council.' Paul is represented as simply acquiescing in this decision.

As described by Paul, the whole earlier period of fifteen years had been occupied by missionary effort for *Gentiles*, first at Damascus, afterwards "in the regions of Syria and Cilicia." It was interrupted only by a journey "to Arabia," and later, three years after his conversion, by a two-weeks' private visit to Peter in Jerusalem. In this period must fall most of the journeys and adventures of 2nd Cor. xi. 23-33. It was practically without contact with Judæa. His "gospel" was what God alone had taught him through an inward manifestation of the risen Jesus.

As described by Luke⁸ the whole period was spent in the evangelization of Greek-speaking *Jews*, principally at Jerusalem. This was Paul's chosen field, worked under direction of "the apostles." Only against his will⁹ was he driven for refuge to Tarsus, whence Barnabas, who had first introduced him to the apostles, brought him to Antioch. There was no Gentile mission until Barnabas and he were by that church made its 'apostles.' This mission was on express direction of "the Spirit" (Acts ix. 19-30; xi. 25 f.; xiii. 1-3; cf. xxii. 10-21). Paul's apostleship to the Gentiles begins, then, according to Luke, with the First Missionary Journey, when in company with (and at first in subordination to)

⁷ Or perhaps thirteen. Gal. ii. 1 may reckon from the conversion (31-33). In both periods (Gal. i. 18, and ii. 1) both termini are counted.

⁸ We apply the name to the writer of Luke-Acts without prejudice to the question of authorship.

⁹ Acts xxii. 10-21 is not quite consistent with xxvi. 15-18; but the general sense is clear.

Barnabas he evangelizes Cyprus and southern Galatia. The two are agents of Antioch, with "letters of commendation" from "the apostles and elders in Jerusalem" (Acts xv. 23-26). Paul is not an apostle of Christ in the same sense as the Twelve (*cf.* Acts i. 21 *f.*). He is a providential "vessel of the Spirit," ordained "by men and through men." His gospel is Peter's unaltered (*cf.* Acts xxvi. 16-23).

There is even wider disparity regarding the period of opposition. Luke slightly postpones its beginning and very greatly antedates its suppression. Moreover, he makes Paul accept a solution which his letters emphatically repudiate.

According to Acts there was no opposition before the First Missionary Journey, for the excellent reason that there had been no Gentile propaganda.¹⁰ There was no opposition after the Council called to consider it (Acts xv.), for the conclusive reason that "the apostles and elders" left nothing to dispute about. As soon as the objections were raised the church in Antioch laid the question before these authorities, sending Paul and Barnabas to testify. On their witness to the grace of God among the Gentiles, Peter (explicitly claiming for himself (!) this special apostleship, Acts xv. 7) proposes unconditional acknowledgment of Gentile liberty, referring to the precedent of Cornelius. In this there was general acquiescence. In fact the matter had really been decided before (Acts xi. 1-18). The only wholly new point was that raised by James in behalf of "the Jews among the Gentiles" (Acts xv. 21; *cf.* xxi. 21). For their sake it is held "necessary" to limit Gentile freedom on four points. They must abstain from three prohibited meats, and from fornication, for these convey the "pollution of idols." The "necessity" lies in the fact that *liberty from the Law is not conceded to Jews*. They will be (involuntarily) defiled if they eat with their Gentile brethren unprotected. "Fornication" is added because (in the words of an ancient Jewish Christian) it "differs from all other sins in that it defiles not only the sinner, but those also *who eat or associate with him*." Paul and Barnabas, according to Luke, gladly accepted these "decrees," and Paul distributed them "for to keep" among his converts in Galatia (!). *Peter* is the apostle to the Gentiles. Antioch and Jerusalem decide the question of their status. The terms of fellowship are those of *James* and Peter.

Paul has no mention of either Council or 'decrees.' His terms of fellowship positively exclude both. He falls back upon the private Conference, and lays bare a story of agonizing struggle to make effective its recognition of the equality and independence of Gentile Christianity. The struggle is a result of his resistance to emissaries "from James" at Antioch, who had brought over all the Jewish element in that mixed church, including Peter and "even Barnabas" to terms of fellowship acceptable to the Pillars. After the collision at Antioch Paul leaves the "regions of Syria and Cilicia," and transfers the scene of his missionary efforts to the Greek world between the Taurus range and the Adriatic. For the next ten years we see him on the one side conducting an independent mission, proclaiming the doctrine of the Cross as inaugurating a new era, wherein law has been done away, and Jew and Gentile have "access in one Spirit unto the Father." On the other he is defending this gospel of 'grace' against unscrupulous Jewish-Christian traducers, and labouring to reconcile differences between his own followers and those of 'the circumcision' who are not actively hostile, but only have taken 'offence.' Throughout the period, until the arrest in Jerusalem which ends his career as an evangelist, Paul stands alone as champion of unrestricted Gentile liberty and equality. He cannot admit terms of fellowship which imply a continuance of the legal dispensation. Jewish Christians may keep circumcision and the customs if they wish; but may not hold or recommend them as conferring the slightest advantage in God's sight. He will not admit the doctrine of salvation by faith *with* works of law. Jew as well as Gentile must have "died to the Law." There is no "justification" except "by faith *apart* from works of law."¹¹

¹⁰ Cornelius' case (Acts x. – xi. 18) is exceptional, and no propaganda follows. The reading "Greeks" in Acts xi. 20, though required by the sense and therefore adopted by the English translators, is not supported by the textual evidence. Luke has here corrected his source to suit his theory, just as in x. 1 – xi. 18 he passes by the true significance of the story, which really deals with the question of *eating* with Gentiles (xi. 3, 7 *f.*).

¹¹ The assertion has recently been made in very high quarters on the basis of 1st Cor. vii. 18 that Paul also took the "apostolic"

Unless we distinctly apprehend the deep difference, almost casually brought out by this question of the (converted) Jew among Gentiles and his obligation to eat with his Gentile brother, a difference between 'apostolic' Christianity as Luke gives it, and the 'gospel' of Paul, we can have no adequate appreciation of the great Epistles produced during this period of conflict. The basis of Luke's pleasing picture of peace and concord is a fundamentally different conception of the relation of Law and Grace. Paul and Luke both hold that the Mosaic commandments are not binding on *Gentiles*. The point of difference – and Paul's own account of his Conference with the Pillars goes to show that Luke's idea is also theirs; else why need there be a division of 'spheres of influence'? – is Paul's doctrine that the believing Jew *as well as the Gentile* is "dead to the Law." And this doctrine was never accepted south of the Taurus range.

Agreement and union were sure to come, if only by the rapid disappearance from the church after 70 a. d. of the element of the circumcised, and the progressive realization in 'Syria and Cilicia' of the impracticability of the Jerusalem-Antioch plan of requiring Gentiles to make their tables innocuous to the legalist. If only the participation of Paul and Barnabas be excluded from the story of Acts xv. (or better, restored to its proper sequence after Acts xi. 30) we have every reason to accept Luke's account of an Apostolic Council held at Jerusalem not long after "Peter came to Antioch" to settle between the churches of northern and southern Syria the knotty question of the Christian Jew's eating or not eating with Gentiles. It is almost certain that Syria did adopt this *modus vivendi* for "the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia" (Acts xv. 23); for we can trace its gradual obsolescence there. In Revelation (a book of Palestinian origin republished at Ephesus c. 95; cf. Rev. ii. 14, 20, 24) in the *Teaching of the Twelve* (125), and in the 'Western' text of Acts xv. (150?) there is a progressive scaling down of the 'burden.' Gentiles are at last asked to do almost nothing more than Paul had demanded on moral grounds without recognition of the validity of "distinctions of meats." In a. d. 120 the 'burden' is: "Concerning meats, keep what thou art able; however, abstain at all events from things offered to idols, for it is the food of dead gods."

But to take Luke's account of how peace was restored, with its implication that the Pauline gospel as developed in Greek Christendom between the Taurus range and the Adriatic was nothing more than a branch from the parent stock of the 'apostolic' church in "Syria and Cilicia," would be like viewing the history of the United States from the standpoint of a British imperialist of a period of Anglo-Saxon reunion in a. d. 2000, who should omit entirely the American War of Independence, holding that Washington and Franklin after bearing testimony before Parliament accepted for the colonies a plan of settlement prepared by a Liberal Government which reduced to a minimum the obnoxious requirements of the Tories.

The history of this period of the development of the independent 'gospel' of Paul and of his independent churches is so vital, and so confused by generations of well-meaning 'harmonizers,' that we must take time to contrast once more Luke's theory of the process of reunion with Paul's.

In Acts Paul takes precisely the view of Peter and James. He is himself 'under the Law.' He does *not* disregard it even among Gentiles. On the contrary, he sets an example of scrupulous legality to the Jews among the Gentiles, himself 'walking orderly, keeping the Law.' The statement that he "teaches them to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children, nor to obey the customs" is a calumny (!) which he takes public occasion to disprove (Acts xxi. 20-26). Before the Sanhedrin he emphatically declares himself a consistent Pharisee (Acts xxiii. 1, 6); before Felix and Festus, blameless by the standard of Law and Prophets (xxiv. 14-16; xxv. 8); before Agrippa, a strict Pharisee in his conduct hitherto (xxvi. 5, 22 f.). Titus, whose circumcision Paul strenuously resisted, is never mentioned in Acts. Conversely Timothy (a Jew only on his mother's side) Paul "took and circumcised" immediately after the Jerusalem Council "because of the Jews that were in those parts" (Galatia!). His visit with Barnabas to Jerusalem is not occasioned by opposition to Gentile missions, though

it falls between Barnabas' mission from Jerusalem to investigate the alarming reports of Gentile conversions at Antioch, and the First Missionary Journey on which the two take with them Mark, who had accompanied them from Jerusalem. No; according to Luke Gentile missions did not yet exist¹²(!). This visit (that of the Conference, Gal. ii. 1-10) was merely to convey a gift from the Antioch church to that of Jerusalem because of the famine "about that time" (it occurred in 46-47). Conversely the great 'offering of the Gentiles' made at the risk of Paul's life in company with delegates from each province of his field, as a proffer of peace, the enterprise which occupies so large a place in his effort and his letters of this period (1st Cor. xvi. 1-6; 2nd Cor. 8-9; Rom. xv. 15, 16, 25-32), has in Acts no relation to the controversy – for the demonstration of Paul's exemplary legalism in the temple is merely incidental. The gift Paul brought was "alms to my nation" (!) (Acts xxiv. 17). The reader asks in vain what necessitates this dangerous journey. The only motives assigned are a Nazarite vow assumed in Cenchreæ (xviii. 18; xxi. 24), and regard for the Jewish feasts (xx. 16).

The background of history against which the modern reader must place the great letters of Paul of the first period, is manifestly something quite different from the mere unsifted story of Acts. Their real origin is in a profound difference in Paul's idea of 'the gospel' and the necessity of defending the independence of it and of the Gentile churches founded on it. The difference originates in Paul's own religious experience. It found its first expression in his antithesis of Law and Grace, his doctrine that the cross marks the abolition of the economy of Law.

Both in Galatians and everywhere else Paul treats on equal terms with the representatives of the "apostleship of the circumcision." He denounces Peter and "the rest of the Jews," including "even Barnabas," at Antioch, after they have withdrawn from Gentile fellowship in order to preserve their legal 'cleanness,' and the point of the denunciation is that this is inconsistent with *their* (implied) abandonment of the Law as a means of salvation when they "sought to be justified by faith in Christ." This makes their conduct not only inconsistent but cowardly and "hypocritical."

Here is something far deeper than a mere question of policy. Paul's attitude shows that from the beginning he has really been preaching "a different gospel." A gospel *about* Christ in which the central fact is the cross as the token of the abolition of a dispensation of Law wherein Jew and Gentile alike were in a servile relation to God, under angelic (or demonic) "stewards and governors," and the inauguration of a dispensation of Grace, wherein all who have 'faith' and receive in baptism the gift of 'the Spirit,' are thereby adopted to be God's sons. Beside this cosmic drama of the cross and resurrection wherein God reveals his redemptive purpose for the world, the mere inculcation of the easy yoke of Jesus as a new Law, simplifying and supplementing the old by restoring the doctrine of forgiveness for the repentant believer (*cf.* Matt. xxviii. 20; Acts x. 42 *f.*; xiii. 39; xxvi. 22 *f.*) seems only half a gospel.

Paul can never surrender the independence of his God-given message, nor the liberty wherewith Christ has made all believers free in abolishing the economy of law and making them "sons" by the Spirit. And yet he is even more determined to achieve peace and reunion than the apostles 'of the circumcision'; only he has a different plan. Paul and his churches fall back upon the Jerusalem Conference, not upon the 'Apostolic Council.' The Conference is their Magna Carta. Its recognition of Paul's independent gospel and apostleship as no less divine than Peter's is their guarantee of liberty and equality; its request for brotherly aid is their promise of fraternity.

¹² On the reading "Greeks" in Acts xi. 20 see footnote [10](#)

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