

# JEREMY BENTHAM

NOT PAUL, BUT  
JESUS

Jeremy Bentham  
**Not Paul, But Jesus**

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# Jeremy Bentham

## Not Paul, But Jesus

### EDITOR'S PREFACE

Jeremy Bentham, an eminent English judicial or jural philosopher, was born in London, February 15, 1748, and died at Westminster, his residence for six years previously, June 6, 1832. His grandfather was a London Attorney; his father, who followed the same profession, was a shrewd man of business, and added considerably to his patrimony by land speculations. These London Benthams were probably an offshoot from an ancient York family of the same name, which boasted a Bishopric among its members; but our author did not trouble himself to trace his genealogy beyond the pawnbroker. His mother, Alicia Groove, was the daughter of an Andover shopkeeper. Jeremy, the eldest, and for nine years the only child of this marriage, was for the first sixteen years of his life exceedingly puny, small and feeble. At the same time, he exhibited a remarkable precocity which greatly stimulated the pride and affection of his father. At five years of age he acquired a knowledge of musical notes and learned to play the violin. At four or earlier, having previously learned to write, he was initiated into Latin grammar, and in his seventh year entered Westminster School. Meanwhile, he was taught French by a private master at home and at seven read *Telemaque*, a book which strongly impressed him. Learning to dance was a much more serious undertaking, as he was so weak in his legs.

Young as he was, he acquired distinction at Westminster as a fabricator of Latin and Greek verses, the great end and aim of the instruction given there.

When twelve years old, he was entered as a Commoner at Queen's College, Oxford, where he spent the next three years. Though very uncomfortable at Oxford, he went through the exercises of the College with credit and even with some distinction. Some Latin verses of his, on the accession of George III, attracted a great deal of attention as the production of one so young. Into all of the disputations which formed a part of the College exercises, he entered with zeal and much satisfaction; yet he never felt at home in the University because of its historical monotony, and of all of which he retained the most unfavorable recollections.

In 1763, while not yet sixteen, he took the degree of A.B. Shortly after this he began his course of Law in Lincoln's Inn, and journeyed back and forth to Oxford to hear Blackstone's Lectures. These lectures were published and read throughout the realm of England and particularly in the American Colonies. These were criticised by the whole school of Cromwell, Milton and such followers as Priestly and others in England and many in the Colonies in America. Young Bentham returned to London and attended as a student the Court of the King's Bench, then presided over by Mansfield, of whom he continued for some years a great admirer.

Among the advocates, Dunning's clearness, directness and precision most impressed him. He took the degree of A.M. at the age of 18, the youngest graduate that had been known at the Universities; and in 1772 he was admitted to the Bar.

Young Bentham had breathed from infancy, at home, at school, at college and in the Courts, an atmosphere conservative and submissive to authority, yet in the progress of his law studies, he found a striking contrast between the structural imperialism of the British Empire as expounded by Blackstone and others of his day, and the philosophical social state discussed by Aristotle, Plato, Aurelius, the struggling patriots of France, and the new brotherhood, then agitating the colonies of America.

His father had hoped to see him Lord-Chancellor, and took great pains to push him forward. But having perceived a shocking contrast between the law as it was under the Church imperial structure

and such as he conceived it ought to be, he gradually abandoned the position of a submissive and admiring student and assumed a position among the school of reformers and afterwards the role of sharp critic and indignant denouncer.

He heroically suffered privations for several years in Lincoln's Inn garret, but persevered in study. He devoted some of his time to the study of science. The writings of Hume, Helvetius and others led him to adopt utility as the basis of Morals and Legislation. There had developed two distinct parties in England: The Radicals and Imperialists. The Radicals contended that the foundation of Legislation was that utility which produced the greatest happiness to the greatest number.

Blackstone and the Ecclesiastics had adopted the theory of Locke, that the foundation of Legislation was a kind of covenant of mankind to conform to the laws of God and Nature, as interpreted by hereditarily self-constituted rulers.

Bentham contended that this was only a vague and uncertain collection of words well adapted to the promotion of rule by dogmatic opinions of the Lords and King and Ecclesiastics in combination well calculated to deprive the people of the benefits of popular government. He conceived the idea of codifying the laws so as to define them in terms of the greatest good to the greatest number, and devoted a large share of the balance of his life to this work.

In 1775 he published a small book in defense of the policy of Lord North toward the Colonies, but for fear of prosecution it was issued by one John Lind and extensively read. A little later he published a book entitled "A Fragment on Government." This created a great deal of attention. Readers variously ascribed the book to Mansfield, to Camden and to Dunning. The impatient pride of Bentham's father betrayed this secret. It was variously interpreted as a philosophical Treatise and a Critical Personal Attack upon the Government. But he persevered in the advocacy of his principals of Morals and Government. He hoped also to be appointed Secretary of the Commission sent out by Lord North to propose terms to the revolted American Colonies. But as King George III had contracted a dislike to him, he was disappointed in his plan of Conference with the Colonies. His writings were, however, more appreciated in France. He was openly espoused as a philosopher and reformer by D'Alimbert, Castillux, Brissat and others. But in the meantime some such men as Lord Shelbourne, Mills and others became his friends and admirers, and encouraged him to persevere with his philosophical Code of laws, largely gleaned from the ancient philosophers of liberty and equality which had been smothered and superseded by military and Church imperialism.

In 1785 he took an extensive tour across the Alps and while at Kricov on the Dou, he wrote his letters on Usury. These were printed in London, which were now welcomed by the people largely on account of his reputation in France as a philosopher of popular government. In the meantime, Paley had printed a treatise on the Principle of applying utility to morals and legislation. He determined to print his views in French and address them to that people then struggling for liberal government.

He revised his sheets on his favorite penal Code and published them under the title of "An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation." The Principles enunciated in this treatise attracted the attention of the liberals in France, as well as England and America. Mirabeau and other French publishers spread his reputation far and wide.

Meanwhile, Bentham with the idea of aiding the deliberations of the States General of France, and encouraged by the liberals on both continents, and especially such men as Franklin, Jefferson and others, printed a "Draft of a Code for the organization of a Judicial Establishment in France," for which services the National Assembly conferred on him the Citizenship of France by a decree, August 23, 1792, in which his name was included with those of Priestly, Paine, Wilberforce, Clarkson, Mackintosh, Anacharsis, Cloutz, Washington, Klopstock, Kosiosco, and several others.

In the meantime, in his travels, he conceived an extensive plan of Prison reform which he strenuously urged the Crown Officers and the English Parliament to adopt. After several years of strenuous labors and the expenditure of a large part of the patrimony left him by his father, the enterprise was thwarted by the refusal of the King to concur with Parliament in the enterprise. This

scheme is fully set forth in the histories of the reign of George III. But to avoid persecution under the drastic penal Codes of England, Bentham boasted that he was a man of no party but a man of all countries and a fraternal unit of the human race, he had come to occupy at home the position of a party chief.

He espoused with characteristic zeal and enthusiasm the ideas of the radicals, who, in spite of themselves, were ranked as a political party. He went, indeed, the whole length, not merely republicanism, but on many points of ancient democracy including Universal Suffrage and the Emancipation of all Colonies.

No matter how adroitly the Contention was managed, the Imperialists insisted that it was merely resurrecting the historic struggle of the days of Cromwell and his "bare bones." The Church establishment by way of the Lords and Bishops and Bishop Lords was the real foundation of the Crown rule in all its ramifications. This superstructure was protected by all forms of penal laws against "lese" Majesty and even the appearance of Church Creed heresy. The Radicals always confronted by Crown detectives were compelled to be very wary in their attacks upon this that they called imperial idolatry and were compelled to move by indirect and flank attacks.

The upheaval by Martin Luther in the reign of Henry VIII at the Council of Trent and others over the Divine authenticity of the Athanasian Creed never abated among the humanitarians of England or France. But in the presence of criminal inquisitions too barbarous to mention, the Radicals were handicapped and were compelled to work strategically and by pits and mines beneath the superstructure of Church imperialism. The Church structure as established in Europe is by common consent based upon the hypothesis of Divinity in the life, works, and dogmas of one Saul of Tarsus, or as denominated Paul, or the canonized St. Paul. The substantial Creed might well be denominated Paulism. Hence the legendary Paul has been one of the points of attack by the rationalists of the centuries.

While many of the contemporaries of Bentham both in England, America and the Continent denied the verity of the whole Mosaic cosmogony and historiology, yet Bentham seemed to ignore this task as superserviceable and unimportant. He and his school of Radicals were devoted to the life works and teachings of Jesus. Jesus was the idol of his school and he heartily espoused the task of eliminating Paul as the nemesis of Jesus and his Apostles, and a character invented and staged by imperialists to subordinate the toiling classes to the production of resources to subserve their personal luxuries.

Bentham began writing a philosophic analysis of the Church's pretensions concerning the divine agency of Paul. After several years of examination and study, and while he was writing his famous treatise entitled "The Rational of Judicial Evidence" afterwards collected and published by Mill, he finished the manuscript criticisms of Paul and entitled them "Not Paul but Jesus."

For fear of prosecution for direct heresy or denunciation of the Creed of the Church, he evaded the use of his own name as writer of the Criticism and used the name of Conyers Middleton, a Cambridge Divine, who by his writings had created a great deal of disturbance. He had been convicted twice for heresy. He had been dead fifty years when Bentham introduced him in the first lines in the Introduction to his Criticisms herein published (See Introduction). Bentham, no doubt, intended to evade prosecution, as it will be seen that his name does not appear in the book, and yet at the same time used the name most obnoxious to the Church in all its history.

In 1729 Middleton published his "Letter from Rome" in which he boldly essayed to demonstrate that the then religion of the Roman Church was derived from their heathen ancestral idolaters. He published other works on the uses of miracles and prophecy. But Bentham's "Not Paul but Jesus" did not long remain anonymous. It was read extensively in France and America. But this treatise formed a part of the labor of his life, which was to promote the theory of the social state based upon "The greatest good to the greatest number, and subordinate the whole to rational calculations of utility." These views he continually urged in the form of Codification so as to eliminate all pretensions of

hierarchical control by historical divine prophets, the faithful souls and agents of Kings and princes. In the meantime, he was indefatigable in his attacks upon the English System of Jurisprudence, which was being operated in America as a kind of paternal inheritance. Dumont, in 1811, compiled from the manuscripts of Bentham a complete code which was readily adopted in France, because it conformed so closely to the old Roman procedure which was held tenaciously in France.

In the meantime, by importunity of Lord Brougham and others, and particularly of his friends in America, such as Adams, Franklin and others, he wrote to Madison offering his services to draw up a complete code of laws for the United States. Mr. Madison caused these ideas to be spread broadcast by pamphlets as pamphleteering was much in vogue for such purposes in those days. But on account of our dual form of government, and as the code would apply to the States separately, the scheme as a whole failed. But some of the Governors, especially those of Pennsylvania, Virginia and New Hampshire, got hold of the manuscripts and many of the provisions were adopted and still obtain.

In the meantime, Mr. Mill had collected his manuscripts on "The Rationale of Judicial Evidence" and published them in 5 vols. They shortly became a part of the libraries of the lawyers and statesmen of England, and especially in the United States. His manuscripts on "Not Paul but Jesus" were extensively read and universally admitted to be rational and sound in point of rational jural demonstration. During this time, Thomas Jefferson had been writing on the same subject and after reading the prints of Bentham, he abandoned the part directed to the criticism of Paul, but he arranged chronologically all of the verses from the four gospels that pertain to the career of Jesus, omitting, however, every verse or paragraph that to his mind was ambiguous or controversial, and every statement of fact that would not have been admitted as evidence in a Court of Justice. The original copy of what is denominated as "Jefferson Bible," is now preserved in the National Museum at Washington. It was purchased by the Government as a memento of the author of the Declaration of Independence.

This "The Thomas Jefferson Bible" has lately been republished by David McKay, 604 S. Washington Sq., Philadelphia. The treatise "Not Paul but Jesus" was published in 1825. The printing art was not as well advanced as at present, and the division of subjects for discussion and correlation were not arranged strictly methodically, so the Editor has rearranged some of the titles with a view to improve the order of sequence. With this change, every word has been preserved.

It will all the time be borne in mind that the examination is Judicial and the Character Paul had to be staged from many points of view and examination. Jeremy Bentham has revolved him in the limelight of inquisition with a thoroughness that commands the attention of all thoughtful readers. With this view the Editor hopes to be justified in its republication by the reading and inquiring public.

*J. J. Crandall.*

## INTRODUCTION

Illustrious, in the church of Jesus in general, and in the church of England in particular, is the name of Conyers Middleton. Signal was, and is, the service rendered by him to the religion of Jesus. By that bold, though reverend, hand, it now stands cleared of many a heap of pernicious rubbish, with which it had been incumbered and defiled, by the unhallowed labours of a succession of writers, who, – without personal intercourse with the founder, any more than we have now, – have, from the mere circumstance of the comparative vicinity of their days to those in which he lived, derived the exclusive possession of the imposing title of *Fathers of the Church*, or, in one word, *The Fathers*.

So able, so effectual, has been this clearance, that, as it has been observed by the Edinburgh Reviewers, – speaking of course of protestants, and more particularly of English protestants, – till one unexpected exception, which it mentions, had presented itself, they had thought that in no man's opinion were those writers any "longer to be regarded as guides, either in faith or morals."

One step further was still wanting. One thorn still remained, to be plucked out of the side of this so much injured religion, – and that was, the addition made to it by *Saul of Tarsus*: by that *Saul*, who, under the name of *Paul*, has, – as will be seen, without warrant from, and even in the teeth of, the history of Jesus, as delivered by his companions and biographers the four evangelists, – been dignified with the title of *his* apostle: his *apostle*, that is to say, his *emissary*: his *emissary*, that is to say, *sent out* by him: sent out, by that Jesus, whose immediate disciples he so long persecuted and destroyed, and whose person, – unless dreaming of a person after his death, or professing to have dreamt of him, is seeing him, – he never saw.

In the course of the ensuing examination, the subject of *miracles* has come, unavoidably, under consideration. On this delicate ground, it has been matter of no small comfort to the author, to behold precursors, among divines of different persuasions, whose reputation for piety has not been diminished by the spirit of critical inquiry which accompanies it. Such were Mede, Sykes, and others, whose ingenious labours were, in the case called that of the *daemoniacs*, employed in the endeavor to remove the supernatural character, from what, in their eyes, was no more than a natural appearance. On the success of these their labours, any judgment would here be irrelevant. Not altogether so the observation, that in no instance does it appear to him that any such latitude of interpretation has been employed, as that which, on that occasion, was found necessary for the conversion of *devils* into *diseases*.

The *dissentions* which, at all times, have had place among persons professing the religion of Jesus, are but too notorious. The *mischiefs*, produced by these dissentions, are no less so. These dissentions, and these mischiefs – in what have they had their source? In certain words. These words, of whom have they been the words? Of Jesus? No: this has not been so much as pretended. Of Paul, and of Paul alone: he giving them all along not as the words of Jesus, but as his own only: – he all along preaching (as will be seen) in declared opposition to the eleven who were undisputedly the apostles of Jesus: thus, of Paul only have they been the words.

That, by these words, and, consequently, by him whose words they were and are, all the mischiefs, which have been imputed to *the religion of Jesus*, have been produced, – in so far as the dissentions, from which these mischiefs flowed, have had these words for their subjects, – cannot be denied. But, moreover, in these same words, that is to say, in the doctrines delivered by them, cannot but be to be found the origin, and the cause, of no small part – perhaps of the greatest part – of the *opposition*, which *that religion, with its benevolent system of morals*, has hitherto experienced. If this be so, then, by the clearing it of this incumbrance, not only as yet unexampled purity, but additional extent, may not unreasonably be expected to be given to it.

It was by the frequent recurrence of these observations, that the author of these pages was led to the inquiry, whether the religion of Paul, – as contained in the writings ascribed to Paul, and with a

degree of propriety which the author sees no reason to dispute, – whether the religion of Paul has any just title to be considered as forming a part of the religion of Jesus. The result was in the negative. The considerations, by which this result was produced, will form the matter of the ensuing pages.

If, by cutting off a source of useless privations and groundless terrors, comfort and *inward peace* should be restored or secured; – if, by cutting off a source of bitter animosity, – good-will, and peace from *without*, should be restored or secured; – if, by the removal of an incongruous appendage, acceptance should be obtained for what is good in the religion commonly ascribed to Jesus; – obtained at the hands of any man, much more of many, to whom at present it is an object of aversion; – if, in any one of these several ways, much more if in all of them, the labours of the author should be crowned with success, – good service will, so far, and on all hands, be allowed to have been rendered to mankind.

Whosoever, putting aside all prepossessions, feels strong enough in mind, to look steadily at the originals, and from *them* to take his conceptions of the matter, not from the discourses of others, – whosoever has this command over himself, will recognise, if the author does not much deceive himself, that by the two persons in question, as represented in the two sources of information – the Gospels and Paul's Epistles, – two quite different, if not opposite, religions are inculcated: and that, in the religion of Jesus may be found all the *good* that has ever been the result of the compound so incongruously and unhappily made, – in the religion of Paul, all the *mischief*, which, in such disastrous abundance, has so indisputably flowed from it.

1. That Paul had no such commission as he professed to have; – 2. that his enterprize was a scheme of personal ambition, and nothing more; – 3. that his system of doctrine is fraught with mischief in a variety of shapes, and, in so far as it departs from, or adds to, those of Jesus, with good in none; – and that it has no warrant, in anything that, as far as appears from any of the four gospels, was ever said or done by Jesus; – such are the conclusions, which the author of these pages has found himself compelled to deduce, from those materials with which history has furnished us. The grounds of these conclusions he proceeds to submit to the consideration of his readers.

## PLAN OF THE WORK

The work may be conceived as divided into five parts.

1. In Part the first, the five different, and in many respects discordant, accounts given of Paul's conversion, which, in these accounts, is of course represented as being not only *outward* but *inward*, are confronted, and, so far as regards inward conversion, shown to be, all of them, untrue: and, immediately after, the state of things, which produced, accompanied, and immediately followed, his outward conversion, – together with the time and manner in which that change was declared, – is brought to view. This part occupies the first two chapters.

2. Part the Second is employed in showing, – that, from the first commencement, of the intercourse, which, upon the tokens given of his outward conversion, took place at Jerusalem between him and the apostles, Acts 9:27, to the time when, – in consequence of the interposition of the Roman commander, to save him from the unanimous indignation of the whole people, more particularly of the disciples of the apostles, – he was conveyed from thence under guard to Rome, a space, according to the commonly received computation, not less than six and twenty years, (Acts 21 and 23), no supernatural commission from Jesus, nor any inward conversion, was, – either by those distinguished servants and companions of Jesus, or by their disciples at Jerusalem, – believed to have place in his instance. This part occupies eight chapters: to wit, from the 3d to the 10th inclusive.

3. In Part the Third, in further proof of the insincerity of his character, – in addition to an oath proved to be false, are brought to view two unquestionably false assertions: – each having for its subject a matter of prime importance, – each deliberate and having in view a particular purpose: the one, a false account of the number of the witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus; 1 Cor. 15:6; the other, a prediction of the end of the world before the death of persons then living; 1 Thes. 4, 15, 16, 17. This part occupies Chapters 11 and 12.

4. Part the Fourth is employed in showing, – that no proof, of his alleged supernatural commission from the Almighty, is deducible, from any account we have, of any of those scenes, in which he is commonly regarded as having exercised a power of working miracles. For, that not only he himself never made exercise of any such power, – on any of those occasions, on which the demand for it, for the purpose of overcoming the disbelief entertained of his story by the Apostles, was extreme, – but, neither on those, nor any other occasions, did he ever take upon himself to make reference, to so much as any one instance of any such proof of special authority from the Almighty, as having been exhibited by him on any other occasion: that, for the belief in any such gift, we have no other ground, than the relations contained in the history called "*The Acts of the Apostles*," or, for shortness, *The Acts*: and that such throughout is, – on the one hand, the nature of the occurrence itself, on the other hand, the character of the representation given of it, – that, to a disbelief in the exercise of any such supernatural power, it is not necessary that any such imputation as that of downright and wilful falsehood should be cast upon the author of that narrative: the occurrences in question being, mostly, if not entirely, such as lie within the ordinary course of nature, – but, upon which, either by the fancy, or by the artifice of the narrator, a sort of supernatural colouring has been superinduced. For this purpose, these supposed miracles are, each of them, separately brought to view and examined. This part occupies the 13th chapter.

5. Part the Fifth is employed in showing, that, – even if, on all these several occasions, the exercise of a power of producing supernatural effects had, by unequivocal statements, been ascribed to Paul by the author of the Acts, – such testimony, independently of the virtual contradiction given to it by the above-mentioned circumstantial evidence, – could not, with any propriety, be regarded as affording adequate proof – either of the fact of Paul's having received a divine commission, and thereby, having become, inwardly as well as outwardly, a convert to the religion of Jesus – either of that radical fact, or so much as of any one of the alleged achievements, which, upon the face of

the accounts in question, are wont to present themselves as miraculous: for that, in the first place, it is only by error that the history in question has been ascribed to Saint Luke: it being, in respect of the account given of the circumstances accompanying the ascension of Jesus, inconsistent with the account given in the gospel of Saint Luke, when compared with Acts 1:3 to 12, – and as to those attendant on the death of Judas, inconsistent with the account in Saint Matthew 27:3 to 10 and Acts 1:16 to 20: and moreover, such being the whole complexion of his narrative, as to render it incapable of giving any tolerably adequate support to any statement whereby the exercise of supernatural power is asserted. This part occupies Chapter 14.

In Part the Sixth, to give additional correctness and completeness, to the conception supposed to be conveyed, of the character of Paul and his attendant historiographer, jointly and severally considered, – a conjunct view is given of *five* reports of his five trials, as reported in the Acts. This part has been added since the publication of the above-mentioned Summary View. It occupies Chapter 15 of the present work.

Chapter XVI. and last, winds up the whole, with some general observations on the self-declared oppositeness of Paul's Gospel, as he calls it, to that of the Apostles: together with an indication of a real Antichrist, in compensation for the fabulous one, created by Paul, and nursed by the episcopal authors and editors of the Church of England, translators of the Bible: and by Chapter 12 of the present work, the imaginary Antichrist is, it is hoped, strangled.

At the time of the publication of the Summary View, – for the more complete and satisfactory demonstration of the relative insufficiency of the narrative in question, a short but critical sketch was, as herein stated, intended to be given, of the parts not before noticed of the *History of the Church*, – from the ascension of Jesus, being the period at which that narrative commences, to that at which it terminates, – to wit, about two years after the arrival of Paul at Rome, Acts 28: the history – to wit, as deducible from the materials which, in that same narrative, are brought to view: the duration of the period being, according to commonly received computations, about 28 or 30 years<sup>1</sup>: the author of "*The Acts*" himself, – if he is to be believed, – an eyewitness, during a considerable portion of the time, to the several occurrences which he relates.

On this occasion, and for this purpose, – the history in question had been sifted, in the same manner and on the same principles, as any profane history, in which, in a series of occurrences mostly natural, a few, wearing a supernatural appearance, are, here and there, interspersed: as, for instance, in Livy's, and even in Tacitus's Roman History: on the one hand, the authority not being regarded as affording a sufficient foundation, for a belief in the supernatural parts of the narrative; nor, on the other hand, the sort of countenance, given to the supernatural parts, as affording a sufficient reason, for the disbelief of those, which have nothing in them that is unconformable to the universally experienced course of nature.

In respect of *doctrine*, the conclusion is – that no point of doctrine, which has no other authority than that of Paul's writings for its support, can justly be regarded as belonging to the religion of Jesus, – any more than if, at this time of day, it were broached by any man now living: that thus, in so far as he is seen to have *added* anything to the religion of Jesus, he is seen to set himself *above* it and *against* it: that, therefore, if this be true, it rests with every professor of the religion of Jesus, to settle with himself, to which of the two religions, that of Jesus and that of Paul, he will adhere: and, accordingly, either to say, *Not Jesus but Paul*, – or, in the words of the title to this work, *Not Paul but Jesus*.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> To prevent, if possible, an embarrassment, which might otherwise be liable to have place on the part of the reader, – and therewith, the idea of inconsistency, as having place here and there in the work, – the following indication may be found to have its use. A cloud of uncertainty, to the length of one or two years, hangs over the duration of the period embraced by this work: namely, that between the point of time at which the conversion of Paul is stated to have taken place, and the point of time at which the history, intitled *The Acts of the Apostles*, as therein declared, concludes: – a point of time, posterior by two years to that of his arrival at Rome.

<sup>2</sup> For making the requisite separation, between the two religions of Jesus and the religion of Paul, – an instrument, alike commodious

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and unexceptionable, has – for these many years, though, assuredly, not with any such view, – been presented to all hands, by Doctor *Gastrell*, an English and Church of England Bishop: namely, in a well-known work, intituled *The Christian Institutes*: date of the 14th Edition, 1808. It is composed of a collection of points of faith and morality, and under each are quoted the several texts, in the New Testament, which are regarded by the author as affording grounds for the positions indicated. If then, anywhere, in his composition of the ground, passages, one or more, from this or that Epistle of Paul, are employed, – unaccompanied with any passage, extracted from any of the four Gospels, – the reader may, without much danger of error, venture to conclude, that it is to the religion of Paul alone, that the point of doctrine thus supported appertains, and not to the religion of Jesus. As to any of the Epistles, which bear the name of any of the real Apostles of Jesus, – a corresponding question may perhaps be here suggesting itself. But, with regard to the design of the present work, scarcely will they be found relevant. For, when compared with the sayings of Jesus as repeated in the four Gospels, scarcely will they be found exhibiting any additional points of doctrine: never, pregnant with any of those dissensions, which, from the writings of Paul, have issued in such disastrous abundance. Only lest they should be thought to have been overlooked, is any mention here made, of those documents, which, how much soever on other accounts entitled to regard, may, with reference to the question between the religion of Jesus and the religion of Paul, be, as above, and without impropriety, stated as irrelevant.

## TABLE I

### OUTWARD CONVERSION

*Showing at one view, under the head of Paul's Conversion, the different accounts from which the inference is drawn that the Conversion was outward only, not inward.*

## VISION I. ACTS ACCOUNT

### Ch. ix. 1-9

1. – But Saul, yet breathing threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the High Priest, and asked of him letters to Damascus unto the synagogues, that if he found any that were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, it came to pass that he drew nigh unto Damascus: and suddenly there shone around about him a light out of heaven: and he fell upon the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks: (1) but rise, and enter into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. And the men that journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing the voice, – but beholding no man. And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw nothing; (old version "no man") and they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and did neither eat nor drink.

## II. PAUL'S FIRST PERSONAL ACCOUNT

### As per Acts xxii. 3-11

I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, at the feet of Gamaliel, instructed according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God, even as ye all are this day: and I persecuted this Way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. As also the High Priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren; and journeyed to Damascus, to bring them also which were there unto Jerusalem in bonds, for to be punished. And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and drew nigh unto Damascus, about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. And they that were with me beheld in deed the light, but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me. And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do. And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus.

### **III. PAUL'S SECOND PERSONAL ACCOUNT**

#### **As per Acts xxvi. 9-20**

I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And this I also did in Jerusalem: and I both shut up many of the saints in prison, having received authority from the Chief Priests, and when they were put to death, I gave my vote against them. And punishing them oftentimes in all the synagogues, I strove to make them blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto foreign cities. Whereupon as I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the Chief Priests, at midday, O, king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them that journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice saying unto me in the Hebrew language, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the goad. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But arise, and stand upon thy feet: for to this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee, to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me. Wherefore, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: but declared both to them of Damascus first, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the country of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance.

## **IV. PAUL'S ALLUSIONS**

### **I. As per Paul to Corinth. i. xv. 8**

And last of all, as unto one born out of due time, he appeared to me, also.

### **II. As per Paul to Gal. i. 12, 15, 16, 17**

12. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ.

15. But when it was the good pleasure of God, who separated me, even from my mother's womb,

16. And called me through his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

17. Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me: but I went away into Arabia; and again I returned unto Damascus.

## **II. VISION 2. – ANANIAS'S**

### **I. Acts Account**

#### **ix. 10-16**

10. Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and the Lord said unto him in a vision, Ananias! And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go to the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one named Saul, a man of Tarsus: for behold, he prayeth: and he hath seen a man named Ananias coming in, and laying his hands on him, that he might receive his sight. But Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard from many of this man, how much evil he did to thy saints at Jerusalem: and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call upon thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will shew him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake.

### **III. ANANIAS'S VISIT TO PAUL**

#### **I. Acts Account**

##### **ix. 17-22**

And Ananias departed, and entered into the house; and laying his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord even Jesus, who appeared unto thee in the way which thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And straightway there fell from his eyes as it were scales, and he received his sight; and he arose and was baptized; and he took food and was strengthened.

And he was certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway in the synagogues he proclaimed Jesus, that he is the Son of God. And all that heard him were amazed, and said, Is not this he that in Jerusalem made havock of them which called on his name? and he had come hither for this intent, that he might bring them bound before the chief priests. But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is the Christ.

#### **II. Paul's Account**

##### **As per Acts xxii. 12-16**

xxii. 12. And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well reported of by all the Jews that dwelt there, came unto me, and standing by me said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And in that very hour I looked up on him. And he said, The God of our fathers hath appointed thee to know his will, and to see the Righteous One, and to hear a voice from his mouth. For thou shalt be a witness for him unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name.

## CHAPTER I

### **Paul's Conversion.**<sup>3</sup> —*Improbability and Discordancy of the Accounts of it*

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<sup>3</sup> Of the word *conversion*, as employed everywhere and in all times in speaking of Paul, commonly called Saint Paul, the import has been found involved in such a cloud, as, on pain of perpetual misconception, it has been found necessary, here at the outset, to clear away. That, from being an ardent and destructive persecutor of the disciples of the departed Jesus, he became their collaborator, and in *that* sense their ally, — preaching, in speech, and by writing, a religion under the name of the religion of Jesus, assuming even the appellation of an *Apostle* of Jesus, — *Apostle*, that is to say, special envoy — (that being the title by which the twelve most confidential servants of Jesus stood distinguished), is altogether out of dispute. That in this sense he became a *convert* to the religion of Jesus, and that in this sense his alleged conversion was real, is accordingly in this work not only admitted, but affirmed. Few points of ancient history seem more satisfactorily attested. In this sense then he was converted beyond dispute. Call this then his *outward conversion*; and say, Paul's *outward conversion* is indubitable. But, that this conversion had for its cause, or consequence, any supernatural intercourse with the Almighty, or any belief in the supernatural character of Jesus himself; this is the position, the erroneousness of which has, in the eyes of the author, been rendered more and more assured, the more closely the circumstances of the case have been looked into. That, in speech and even in action, he was in outward appearance a convert to the religion of Jesus; this is what is admitted: that, inwardly, he was a convert to the religion of Jesus, believing Jesus to be God, or authorized by any supernatural commission from God; this is the position, the negative of which it is the object of the present work to render as evident to the reader, as a close examination has rendered it to the author. The consequence, the practical consequence, follows of itself. In the way of doctrine, whatsoever, being in the Epistles of Paul is not in any one of the Gospels, belongs to Paul, and Paul alone, and forms no part of the religion of Jesus. This is what it seemed necessary to state at the opening; and to this, in the character of a conclusion, the argument will be seen all along to tend.

## SECTION I. LIST OF THESE ACCOUNTS, WITH PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

(See Table I., in which they are confronted.)

In one single work, and that alone, is comprised the whole of the information, in which, in relation to this momentous occurrence, any particulars are at this time of day to be found. This is that historical work, which in our edition of the Bible, has for its title *The Acts of the Apostles*; for shortness, let us say *The Acts*.

Of this same occurrence, in this one short work no fewer than three separate accounts are visible; one, in which the story is related by the historian in his own person; two others, in each of which Paul is introduced as giving his own account of it. Of these three accounts, no two will be found agreeing with each other. By the historian, Paul when introduced as speaking in his own person, is represented as contradicting not only the historian's account, but his own account. On each occasion, it should seem, Paul's account is adapted to the occasion. On the first occasion, the historian's account was not exactly adapted to that same first occasion. By the historian's ingenuity, Paul is accordingly represented as giving on that same occasion another and better-adapted account. On the second occasion, neither was the historian's account nor Paul's own account, as given on the former occasion, found suitable to this fresh occasion; on this same fresh occasion, a suitable amendment is accordingly framed.

Here, at the very outset of the inquiry, the distance of time between the point of time on which the occurrence is supposed to have taken place, and the time at which the historian's account of it was penned, are circumstances that present a claim to notice.

The year 35 after the birth of Christ is the year which, according to the received accounts, is assigned to the occurrence. According to these same accounts, the year 63 is the date given to the last occurrence mentioned by the historian, Acts 28: after which occurrence, two years are stated by him as having elapsed, at the time at which the history closes. Here then is an interval of about 30 years, between the time at which the occurrence is stated to have happened, and the time at which these three mutually contradictory accounts of it were framed.

In regard to this radical occurrence in particular, namely Paul's conversion, – for the foundation of this his report, what evidence was it that the reporter had, or could have had in his possession, or at his command? One answer may serve for all; the accounts given of the matter by Paul himself.

With Paul, then, what were this same reporter's means and mode of intercourse? In the year 59, and not before, (such is the inference from his own words) did it fall to his lot to be taken into the train of this self-denominated Apostle. Then it is, that for the first time, in the several accounts given by him of Paul's migrations from place to place, the pronouns *us*, Acts 20:5, and *we* make their appearance. From 34 to 59 years are 25. At the end of this interval came the earliest opportunity, which, for anything that appears, he could have had of hearing from his master's own mouth, whatsoever account, if any, it may have been the pleasure of that same master to give, of an occurrence, in relation to which there existed not among men any other percipient witness.

Having accompanied his master during the whole of his progress from Jerusalem, the historian speaks of himself as being still in his train on his arrival at Rome. Acts xxviii. 16, "And when we came to Rome," &c. It is not precisely stated, nor can it very determinately be inferred, whether at the point of time at which the history closes, the historian was still at that capital; the negative supposition

presents itself as the most probable. Posterior to the closing of the real action of the history, the penning of it will naturally be to be placed.

"Paul, says the Acts xxviii. 30, dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him," &c. When this last verse but one of the history was penning, had the historian been living with Paul, he would naturally have given us to understand as much; instead of *dwelt*, he would have said *has been dwelling*.

By the tokens of carelessness afforded by the omission of so many particulars, which in every work of an historical nature the reader will naturally expect to see specified; such as the name of the historian, the particulars, occasion and manner of his being taken into the company of the illustrious missionary, and the time of that event; – by these tokens, two inferences, how different soever their tendency, seem at once to be suggested. One is, the genuineness of the narrative. A writer, who was conscious that he was not the man he was thus representing himself to be, viz. the companion of the missionary, would hardly have slid in, in so careless a manner, the mention of so material a circumstance. The other is, the slenderness of the author's qualification for the task thus executed by him; the lowness of his station in the scale of trustworthiness, and consequently the smallness of the probative force, with which a mass of evidence thus circumstanced can reasonably be considered as operating, in support of any alleged matter of fact, which, (either by the extraordinariness of its nature, or the temptation which the circumstances of the case afforded for entire fiction or misrepresentation), presents itself as exposed to doubt or controversy.

A supernatural conversion, and the receipt of a supernatural commission for the delivery of a fresh body of doctrine; such are the two events, which, though in their nature so perfectly distinguishable, were according to this narrative combined in one: – the conversion from an unbelieving, cruel, and destructive persecutor of the new fellowship, into a most zealous supporter and coadjutor: the body of doctrine such as if it amounted to anything, could not but have been – what the person in question declared it to be – a supplement to the religion taught by Jesus while in the flesh; – a supplement, containing matter never revealed to, and consequently never taught by, his Apostles.

Now then, of all these supernatural occurrences, which, by the nameless historiographer, are related to have happened to Paul, if anything had really happened to him – on this supposition, (so many as were the different sets of disciples of his, inhabitants of so many mutually distant provinces, no fewer than eight in number); is it in the nature of the case, that in no one instance, in any of his numerous Epistles, he should have felt the necessity of stating and accordingly have stated, to any of these his disciples, the circumstances attending the event of his conversion – an event on which alone all his professions were founded? circumstances to which, as stated in his historian's narrative, could not from their nature have been known to any human being other than himself?

Yet, in no one of all his Epistles, to any one of these his disciples, of any such particular, either in the way of direct assertion, or in the way of allusion, is any trace to be found. Of *revelation*, yes: of *revelation*– this one most momentous indeed, but at the same time most mysterious and uninformative word, repetitions we have in abundance. But of the time and manner of the alleged communication, or of the matter communicated, nothing is anywhere said.

In these considerations may be seen a part, though but a part, of those, on which, in due season, will be seen grounded the inference, – that at no time, in all the personal conferences he had with the Apostles, was any such story told by Paul, as is related by the author of the Acts.

On the supposition that the narrative, such as it is, is genuine, – taking it as a whole, a very important source of division, from which it will require to be divided in idea into two parts or periods, here presents itself. Period the first, containing the portion of time *anterior* to the historian's admission into the train of the supposed Apostle: Period the second, containing the portion of time *posterior* to that event: this latter portion continuing, as far as appears, to the time at which the history closes.

In this latest and last-mentioned period are comprised all the several facts, or supposed facts, in relation to which any grounds appear for the supposition that the historian was, in his own person, a percipient witness.

In relation to all the several facts, or supposed facts, anterior to this period, – the best evidence, which, for anything that appears, ever came within his reach, was composed of such statements as, in the course of his service, it may have been the pleasure of the master to make to, or in the hearing of, this his attendant. Whatsoever may be the grounds of suspicion that may be found attaching themselves to evidence passing through such a channel, or issuing from such a source; other evidence will, if taken in the lump, present itself as being in comparison much less trustworthy. All other evidence consists of statements, coming from we know not whom, at we know not what times, on we know not what occasion, each of them with we know not how many reporting witnesses, one after and from another, through so many different and successive channels, between the percipient witness or witnesses, and the last reporting witness or witnesses, from whom the historian received the statement in the way of personal intercourse.

The period of *rumour*, and the period of *observation*– By these two appellations it should seem, may the two periods be not altogether unaptly or uninstrucively distinguished.

With reference to the period of rumour, – whether, it was from Paul's own statement, or from a source still more exposed to suspicion, that the historian's conception was derived, – one consideration presents itself, as requisite to be kept in mind. This is, With what facility, especially in that age, upon an occurrence in itself true, and including nothing that lies without the ordinary course of nature, – a circumstance out of the course of nature, giving to the whole a supernatural, and to use the ordinary word a miraculous, character, may, in and by the narrative, have been superinduced.<sup>4</sup> Fact, for instance, as it *really* was – at the word of command, (suppose) a man, having the appearance of a cripple, stands up erect and walks: untrue circumstances, one or both superinduced by *rumour*– the man had been so from his birth; from his birth down to that same time he had been an inhabitant of that same place.

In the chapter on Paul's supposable miracles, about a dozen occurrences of this description will be found. On each one of these several occasions, the propriety of bearing in mind the above-mentioned consideration, will, it is believed, not appear open to dispute, whatsoever on each several occasion may be the application made of it.

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<sup>4</sup> See Ch. 15. Paul's supposable miracles explained.

## SECTION 2.

### Vision I. – DIALOGUE ON THE ROAD: PAUL HEARS A VOICE, SEES NOTHING

#### I. ACCOUNT. —*As per Acts ix. 1-9*

ix. 1. And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, – and *desired* of him letters to Damascus to the *synagogues*, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. – And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from *heaven*: – and he fell to the earth, and *heard a voice* saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? – And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. – And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. – And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, *hearing a voice* but *seeing no man*. – And Saul arose from the earth; and *when his eyes were opened, he saw no man*; but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. – And he was *three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink*.

#### II. PAUL'S supposed FIRST OR UNSTUDIED ACCOUNT. —*As per Acts xxii. 3-11*

xxii. 3. I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day. – And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. – As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I *received* letters unto the *brethren*, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished. – And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus *about noon*, suddenly there shone from *heaven* a great light round about me. – And I fell unto the ground, and *heard a voice* saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? – And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest. – And they that were with me *saw indeed the light*, and were afraid; but *they heard not* the voice of him that spake to me. – And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do. – And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus.

### III. PAUL'S supposed ORATORICAL OR STUDIED ACCOUNT. —As per Acts xxvi. 9-20

xxvi. 9. I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. – Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death I gave my voice against them. – And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities. – Whereupon as I went to Damascus with *authority* and *commission* from the *chief priests*, – at *midday*, O king, I saw in the way a light from *heaven*, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. – And when we were all fallen to the earth, *I heard* a voice speaking unto me, and saying *in the Hebrew tongue*, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. – But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; – delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee.

On comparing the three accounts of Vision 1st, the particulars will be found referable to twelve heads. Under no more than two of the twelve, will the conformity among them be found entire.

Where disconformity has place it may be clear or not clear of contradiction. Clear it may be of contradiction, when it consists either of mere deficiency or mere redundancy, or of both: deficiency or redundancy, according as it is this or that account, which, on the occasion of the comparison, is taken for the standard.

On the occasion in question, such is the importance of the occurrence, that the proper standard of reference and comparison is that which is most ample: that which, if not strictly speaking complete, wants the least of being so. On the part of the historian, speaking in his own person, omission is in such a case without excuse.

Not so, necessarily, in the case of a person whom the historian speaks of as giving that person's own account of that same occurrence. What may be is, that in the nature of the occasion in which the person is represented as speaking of it, there is so much of suddenness, by reason of impending danger, or urgent pressure, that, of the quantity of time necessary for complete utterance, and even of that necessary for complete and correct recollection, more or less was wanting.

On the occasion of that account of the matter, which is the first of the two on which the historian represents Paul as giving an account of this momentous occurrence, – this justification for want of completeness, or this excuse for want of correctness, might naturally enough have place. For it was while pleading for his life at Jerusalem, before a mixed multitude, no inconsiderable part of which were endeavouring at the destruction of it, that Paul is represented as delivering this first of his two accounts: – call that *the supposed unstudied or unpremeditated account*.

Not so, on the occasion on which he is represented as delivering the second of these same two accounts. On this occasion, it is true, he is represented as pleading in his defence. But it is pleading in and before a regularly constituted judiciary, and after time for preparation in much greater abundance than he could have wished: – call this *the supposed studied or premeditated account*.

In this view, the proper standard of comparison can not be dubious. The historian being himself, in all three accounts, the immediately reporting witness, and having had his own time for the forming of them all, – that which he gives in his own person, and which therefore naturally occupies the first

place, should, in respect of both qualities, as well as in that of clearness, have been, (and, setting aside deceptious design, naturally would have been), as perfect as it was in his power to make it. To the others alone could any excuse be afforded, in respect of any one of those requisites, by any circumstance peculiar to the respective cases.

What is above being observed – Of the ten following instances of disconformity, seven will be found to be cases of simple deficiency, three of contradiction.

In those which are cases of simple deficiency, it will be seen to have urgency for its justification or excuse; for the others there appears no justification or excuse.<sup>5</sup> Of the twelve distinguishable heads in question, under two alone, viz. that of *place* and that of *time*, will the conformity be found complete. *Place*, a spot near to Damascus, in the road leading from Jerusalem to Damascus: *Time*, meaning time of *day*, – about noon. But, in the quality of trustworthiness deficient as all three accounts will presently be shown to be, it will be seen how little is contributed, by conformity as to the mere circumstances of time and place.

Now then let us see the subjects, in relation to which a want of conformity is observable. To save words, the shortest form of description possible will throughout be employed.

- |                |   |  |
|----------------|---|--|
| Omissions      | } | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The light seen.</li> <li>2. The dialogue.</li> <li>3. Falling to the ground.</li> <li>4. Language of the voice.</li> <li>5. Kicking against the pricks.</li> </ol>   |
| Contradictions | } | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. The Lord's commands.</li> <li>7. Paul's companions' posture.</li> <li>8. Paul's companions' hearing or not hearing.</li> <li>9. If hearing, what they heard.</li> <li>10. Nothing seen but light.</li> </ol> |

1. *Light seen.* Between Acts account and Paul's 1st or supposed unstudied account, no disconformity worth remarking. In Acts it is a "*light*," in Paul 1st a "*great light*";<sup>6</sup> in both it is about

<sup>5</sup> In regard to the matter testified, that is, in regard to the object of the testimony; it is, first of all, a requisite condition, that what is reported to be true should be possible, both absolutely, or as an object of the elaborative Faculty, and relatively, or as an object of the Presentative Faculties, – Perception, External or Internal. A thing is possible absolutely, or in itself, when it can be construed to thought, that is, when it is not inconsistent with the logical laws of thinking; a thing is relatively possible as an object of perception, External or Internal, when it can affect Sense or Self-consciousness, and, through such affection, determine its apprehension by one or other of these faculties. A testimony is, therefore, to be unconditionally rejected, if the fact which it reports be either in itself impossible, or impossible as an object of the representative faculties. But the impossibility of a thing, as an object of these faculties, must be decided either upon physical, or upon metaphysical, principles. A thing is physically impossible as an object of sense, when the existence itself, or its perception by us, is, by the laws of the material world impossible. – Hamilton's Logic 460. – Ed.

<sup>6</sup> "*Light, – great Light.*" – It will be noticed that this "light" is presented first objectively as a phenomenon, a thing. But what is "light"? The universal answer is "That force in nature which, acting on the Retina of the eye produces the sensation we call vision." This vision is the total of the subjective effect of that agency of Nature, the subjective realization through the functions of the Cerebellum. But functions are accomplished through agencies called organs. The retina is one of these organs. Through the operations of these organs and cerebellum subjective apprehension is produced as an effect, but in some cases of very forcible apprehensions they are interpreted as a diseased condition of the organs of sense. Ideas sometimes acquire unusual vividness and permanence and are, therefore, peculiarly liable to be mistaken for their objective prototypes and hence specters, spectral allusions which are very common in cases of emotional excitement. Further, it will be noticed all the time that the reporter, Luke, wrote what Paul, or some other person or rumor had previously communicated to him. Now Luke, was accustomed to pen these wonders, these superhuman Chimerical prodigies. Take the example of the trial of Stephen, Acts 7. After the Charges of the Complainants, Ib. 6-9, "Libertines" and others had been heard by the High Priest, he inquired of Stephen personally as to the verity of the charges, And Luke reports his responses, And then to make sure of portraying fully the Emotional conditions of the witnesses and the spectators, he reports, V. 54. "When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart and they grabed on him with their teeth; but he, Stephen, being full of the Holy Ghost looked up steadfastly into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, Behold I see the heavens opened, and the son of man standing on the right hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the City and stoned him, and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet whose name was Saul." This Saul, now Paul, must have acted as overseer or umpire. Paul, is by chronologers reckoned to have been about 12 years of age; But it will be seen that Luke, the narrator, is just such a superserviceable witness as wholly impairs his credibility. He says first, Stephen was in fact filled with the Holy Ghost, saw the glory of God, for he evidently was glorioble, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God; and that in addition thereto he states that Stephen, said he saw the same wonders – with the addition that the heavens

midday. But in Paul's 2d or supposed studied account, it is above the brightness of the sun at that time of the day.

In Acts the passage is simply narrative: in Paul's 1st, the urgency of the occasion left no room for flowers. But in Paul's 2d, time being abundant, flowers were to be collected, and this is one of them. In the ordinary course of nature there exists not upon earth any light equal in brightness to that of the sun; especially the sun at midday, and in such a latitude. Supposing the light in question ever so much greater than the midday sun, neither Paul nor this his historian could, without a miracle on purpose, have had any means of knowing as much. For a miracle for such a purpose, the existence of any effectual demand does not seem probable. For the purpose mentioned, – namely the bereaving of the power of vision every open eye that should direct itself towards it, – to wit, so long as that same direction should continue, – the ordinary light of the sun would have been quite sufficient. At the time and place in question, whatever they may have been, suppose it true that, though midday was the time, the atmosphere was cloudy, and in such sort cloudy, that without something done for the purpose, a light productive of such effects could not have been produced. Still, for this purpose, a specially created body of light different from that of the sun, and exceeding it in intensity, could not be needful. The removal of a single cloud would have been amply sufficient: – a single cloud, and that a very small one.

But if the light was really a light created for the purpose, and brighter than that of the sun; of circumstances so important, mention should not have been omitted in the standard narrative.

Here then is either a deficiency in the standard narrative, – and this deficiency, as already observed, an inexcusable one, – or a redundancy in the subsequent account: a redundancy, the cause of which seems sufficiently obvious: a redundancy – in that account which, being premeditated on the part of the historian, is given by him as being premeditated on the part of the speaker, whom he represents as delivering it: a redundancy, – and that in a word a falsehood: a falsehood, and for what purpose? – for deception: the hero represented by his historian as using endeavours to deceive.

2. *Dialogue.* Per Acts, the Dialogue contained five speeches: to wit, 1. The voice's speech; 2. Paul's; 3. The Lord's, whose voice, Paul and his historiographer<sup>7</sup>, from what experience is not said, knew the voice to be; 4. Paul's; 5. The Lord's. In Paul 1st, speeches the same in number, order, and, save in one phrase about kicking against the pricks, nearly so in terms. But in Paul 2d, the number of the speeches is no more than three: and, as will be seen below, of the last the import is widely different from that of any of those reported in the other two accounts.

3. *Falling to the ground.* Per Acts and Paul 1st, by Paul alone was this prostration experienced. Per Paul 2d, by his unnumbered companions, by the whole company of them, as well as by himself. Deficiency here on the part of the proper standard; so, in the case of the unstudied speech. In the studied speech it is supplied.

4. *Language of the voice.* Per Acts and Paul 1st, of the language nothing is said. Deficiency, as in the case last mentioned; to wit, in the regular history, and in the unstudied speech. In the studied speech it is supplied. Stage effect greater. Agrippa, to whom it was more particularly addressed, being, under the Roman viceroy, a sort of king of the Jews, – what seems to have occurred to the historian is – that it might be a sort of gratification to him to be informed, that his own language, the Hebrew, was the language which, on this occasion, was employed by that voice, which by Paul, by whom it

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were opened, &c. If he had been cross-examined and asked whether little Paul, did not behold all these wonders, he no doubt would have answered in the affirmative and volunteered the statement, That they all saw these wonders, the high priest, the accusers, bystanders, and human canines that gnashed their teeth upon Stephen. Consult any author on Psychology on the subject of Emotions, Exstatic illusions, &c. But in the assembly inquisitors of Stephen, Paul and others before the high priests, what special law or cannons were they accused of violating? Answer, one cannon is quite conspicuous, to wit: – Ex. 22:28. "Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of the people." When the inquisitor the high priest found the accused guilty, he was delivered over to the witnesses for execution. The detectives enjoyed the luxury of doing the stoning. If Christ's limitation had been in use, to wit: – that none but the guiltless should throw stones, the accusing sleuths might have been less zealous. – Ed.

<sup>7</sup> Historiographer is used purposely by the author to denote a specialist for the occasion.

had never been heard before, was immediately understood to be the Lord's; *i. e.* Jesus's; *i. e.* God's. The character, in which Paul was on this occasion brought by his historiographer on the stage, being that of a consummate orator, furnished with all his graces, – this compliment was among the rest put into his mouth. Moreover, by Jesus no language, for aught that appears, but the Hebrew, having been ever spoken, hence the account became the more consistent or credible.

5. *Kicking against the pricks.*<sup>8</sup> "Hard for thee to kick against the pricks." Per Acts, this proverbial expression is employed by the voice, as soon as it turns out to have been the Lord's. In the supposed and hasty unstudied speech, it is dropped. This is natural enough. In Paul 2d – in that studied speech, it is employed: it stands there among the flowers.

6. *The Lord's Commands.* Commands delivered to Paul by the Lord. Under this head there is a disastrous difference; a sad contradiction. Per Acts, the command is for Paul to go into Damascus: there it stops. Follows immediately an article of information, which is, that at that time and place there is no information for him; but that, sooner or later, some will be ready for him. After he has arrived at Damascus, it shall there, by somebody or other, be told him, it is said, what he is to do. So likewise in Paul 1st, in the unstudied speech, he is, in like manner, to learn not merely what he is to do, but everything that he is to do. Lastly comes, Paul 2d, the studied speech. By the time the historian had arrived at this point in his history, he had forgotten that, according to his own account of the matter, no information at all had, during the road scene, been given to Paul by the Lord's voice; by that voice which was so well known to be the Lord's. That the supposed studied speech, by the charms of which the favour of the King was so happily gained, might be the more impressive, – he makes his orator, in direct contradiction to the account which, on the former occasion, had by him (the historian) been given, enter, on the very spot, into all the details of the Lord's commands.

When the time had come for composing this supposed studied speech, – the historian had, it should seem, forgot Ananias's vision, that subsidiary vision, which we shall come to presently, containing a further promise of the Lord's commands and instructions; and which, after all, unless it is by this studied speech that they are to be regarded as given, are not given by him anywhere.

7. *Paul's companions – their posture.* Per Acts, though he fell, they stood it out. Per Paul 1st, not said whether they fell or stood it out. Per Paul 2d, they fell. The supposed studied oratorical account is here in full contradiction with the historical one.

8. *Paul's companions – their hearing or not hearing.* Per Acts, they not only saw the light, but heard the voice. Per Paul 1st, they did NOT hear the voice. In the supposed hasty and unstudied speech is the oratorical account made to contradict the historical one. In this particular, which of the accounts was true? If the historical, the haste must, in the oratorical, be the apology, not only for the incompleteness but for the incorrectness. In Paul 2d, nothing is said about their hearing or not hearing.

Supposing the story in any of the accounts to have had any truth in it, there was a middle case, fully as possible and natural as either of these extreme and mutually contradictory ones. It may have been, that while some stood their ground, others fell. And the greater the numbers, the greater the probability of this middle case. But as to their number, all is darkness.

9. *Paul's companions – if they heard, what it was they heard.* If they heard anything, they heard, as far as appears, whatever Paul himself heard. Per Acts, it is after the order given to Paul to go on to Damascus, – with the promise thereupon, that there and then, and not before, he should receive the information he should receive; it is after the statement made of his hearing all this from the voice, that the further statement comes, declaring that it was by Paul's companions also that this same voice was heard. But this same voice was, it is said, the Lord's voice. That when the voice had answered to the name by which Paul called it, to wit, the name of Lord, it stop there, so far as concerned Paul's companions; – and that it reserved what followed, to wit, the above-mentioned order with the

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<sup>8</sup> "Goad" is the word used in the Douay Testament and in the late revisions of The Protestants.

promise, for Paul's single ear; true it is, this may be *imagined* as well as anything else: but at any rate it is not *said*.

If Paul 2d – the studied oratorical account – is to be believed, all the information for the communication of which this miracle was performed was, as will be seen, communicated here upon the road: viz. immediately after the voice had been called by him *Lord*. But, if this was the case, and, as above, Paul's companions heard all that he heard, – then so it is, that the revelation was made as well to them as to him; – this revelation, upon the strength of which we shall see him setting himself up above all the Apostles; himself and that Gospel of his own, which he says was his own, and none of theirs. Now then – these companions – was it upon the same errand as his that they went, to wit, the bringing in bonds to Jerusalem all the Damascus Christians? If so, or if on any other account they were any of them in a condition to need conversion, – they were converted as well as he; or else, so far as concerned them, the miracle was thrown away. Companions as they were of his, were they or were they not respectively attendants of his? attendants going under his orders, and on the same errand? Unless, by the Jerusalem rulers, on the part of the Damascus rulers, both will and power were depended upon, as adequate to the task of apprehending the followers of Jesus and sending them bound to Jerusalem, such these companions ought to have been, every one of them – supposing always on the part of this about-to-be Apostle an ordinary prudence: that sort and degree of prudence with which no ordinary police-officer is unprovided. Some persons under his orders he must have had, or he could never have been sent on so extensively and strongly coercive an errand.

These companions, if, on this occasion, any such or any other companions he had, had each of them a name. To this vision, such as it was, they being each of them respectively, as well as himself, whether in the way of sight and hearing both, or in the way of sight alone, percipient witnesses, their names, in the character of so many percipient witnesses, ready upon every proper occasion to answer in the character of *reporting* witnesses, would have been of no small use: of use, were it only for the giving to this story a little more substance than it has in the form we see it in.

As to Ananias – the supposed principal actor in the scene next to Paul – for him, indeed, supposing any such person to have existed, a name, it is seen, was found. But, with a view to any purpose of evidence, how little that name amounted to, will be seen likewise.

In this vision of Paul's, as it is called, – was any person seen, or anything but light – light at midday? No; positively not any person, nor as far as appears, the light excepted, anything whatsoever. Per Acts, chap. ix:8, when "his eyes were opened," – so it is expressly said, – "he saw no man." This was after he had fallen to the earth; for it was after he arose from the earth. But, it was before he fell to the earth, and thereupon heard the voice, that, according to this same account, he saw the extra light – the light created for the purpose: and, forasmuch as at the conclusion of the dialogue with the five speeches in it – forasmuch as at the conclusion of it, such was the effect produced upon him by the light, as to render him at that time stone-blind, requiring to be led by the hand, it could not from the first have been anything less effective. Per Acts, in this state he continues all the way as far as Damascus, and for three days after his arrival there. So likewise in the supposed unstudied speech, Paul 1st. But in the studied speech, Paul 2d, there is no blindness; the blindness is either forgotten or discarded.

But the curious circumstance is, his being led by the hand – all the way to Damascus led by the hand: – led by the hand by these same companions. Now these same companions, how was it that they were able to lead him by the hand? All that he saw was the light, and by that light he was blinded. But all that he saw they saw: this same light they saw as well as he. This same light, then, by which he was blinded – were they not blinded likewise by it? Was it a privilege – a privilege reserved for a chosen favourite – a privilege which it cost a miracle to produce – the being blinded when nobody else was blinded?

Blinded then as they were, how came he to be led by them, any more than they by him? Can the blind lead the blind? Let Jesus answer. Shall they not both fall into the ditch?

Oh! but (says somebody) it is only in Paul 1st, – in Paul's supposed unstudied speech, that the historian makes them see the light that Paul saw. Answer. True: but neither in his own person does he say the contrary. As to their seeing, all he says is, that *they* saw no man, "hearing a voice but seeing no man." (ver. 7.) But by the same account, (ver. 8.) "When *his* eyes were opened, he saw no man;" so that, though in what he says in his own person the historian does not mention this which he mentions, speaking in Paul's person, – yet he does not contradict it.

10. *Paul's companions. What part, if any, took they in the conversation?* Per Acts, they stood speechless: and it is after the dialogue has been reported, that this is stated. In the unstudied speech, nothing is said about their speech. In the studied speech, with reference to them, no mention is made of speech; any more than of sight or hearing.

But, forasmuch as, according to Acts, whatever Paul saw and heard, they saw and heard likewise; how happened it, that by no one of them, so much as a word, on an occasion so interesting to all, was said – or a question put? To be sure it was to Paul alone, that by the voice, whosever it was, any address was made. It was his concern: – his alone, and none of theirs.

So, indeed, some might think; but, others in their situation, quite as naturally might think otherwise. Sooner or later, at any rate, they would recover whatever it was they lost: sight, if sight; speech, if speech. Whenever recovered, speech would thereupon range with but the greater freedom, for the restraint which, for a time, had been put upon it: – range over the whole business, including whatever secrets Paul had been put in possession of: – the commission, the sweeping and incarcerating commission he had been intrusted with by the rulers, and the unperformed promise that had been made to him by the voice, which being at midday, accompanied by an extraordinary light, was of course the Lord's voice. These things would naturally, by these his companions, have been converted from secrets into town-talk.

Nay but (says somebody) though it *is* said he saw no *man*, it is *not* said, he saw not the Lord: and elsewhere he may be seen saying – saying in the most positive terms, that he did see the Lord<sup>9</sup>. And if he did see the Lord anywhere, why not here as well as anywhere else?

"*Saw no man.*" Yes: so says the English version. But the original is more comprehensive: – Saw no person, says the original: that is, to speak literally, saw no one of the masculine gender. No one what? No one person of this gender: this is what the word means, if it means anything. No person; and therefore no Lord: no God; if so it be that, when applied to denote God, the word person means God, or as some say, a part of God.

Note, likewise, – that, when the companions are spoken of, – both in the translation and in the original, the object to which the negative is applied is expressed by the same word as when he, Paul, is spoken of.

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<sup>9</sup> Cor. 15:8 – "As unto one born out of due time, He appeared unto me also."

## SECTION 3. Vision II. – Ananias's

### Topic 1. —*Ananias's Description*

Of the vision itself there being but one account, by this singleness discordancy is saved.

But, of the description belonging to Ananias there are two accounts. One the historical, as before: the other, the unpremeditated oratorical account supposed to be given by Paul in the first of his two supposed speeches, as above; and, room being thus given for discordancy, – discordancy, as of course, enters – or at any rate a strong suspicion of it.

Per Acts, Ananias is a disciple: a disciple, to wit, a Christian; a disciple immediately of Jesus or his Apostles: for, such is the signification attached to the word *disciple* in the Acts: such he would on this occasion be of course understood to be; for, otherwise the word would be uncharacteristic and insignificant.

Materially different is the description supposed to have been given of this same Ananias by Paul in that same supposed unpremeditated speech; so different as to be not without effort, if by any effort, reconcilable with it.

He is now a disciple of Jesus and the Apostles; of that Jesus, by whom the law, *i. e.* the Mosaic law, was after such repeated exposure of its inaptitude, pronounced obsolete. He is now not only spoken of as being, notwithstanding this conversion, a devout man according to that same law; but, moreover, as having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there, to wit, at Damascus. Of the Jews? Yes; of "*all*" the Jews.

If, notwithstanding his conversion to a religion by which that of the Jews was slighted and declared to be superseded, he was still so happy as to be the subject of this good *report*, which is as much as to say – of a correspondently unanimous good opinion; this, it would seem, would have been the man to preach to them that religion: especially if that part of the story were true, according to which he was distinguished by the same supernatural sort of communication; this man, who was already a Christian, this man, and not Paul, who of all opposers of Christianity had been the most fierce and the most mischievous, would naturally have been the man to receive the supernatural commission. Supposing his vision real, and the reports of it true, no difficulty, rationally speaking, could he have found in obtaining credence for it at the hands of the Apostles: those Apostles, at whose hands, from first to last it will be seen, never was it the lot of Paul, with *his* vision or visions, to obtain credence.

The audience, before which this speech was supposed to be delivered, of whom was it composed? With the exception of a few Romans, to whom it was probably unintelligible unless by accident, altogether of Jews; and these – no one can say in what proportion, probably in by much the largest, Jews not christianized. Hence then the sort of character, which the occasion and the purpose required should be given, to this supposed miraculously formed acquaintance of the person who, upon the strength of this acquaintance, was to be numbered among the Apostles.

### Topic 2. —*Mode of Conversation*

By this vision is produced a dialogue. Interlocutors, the Lord and Ananias. In the course of the dialogue, speeches five: whereof, by the Lord, three; the other two by Ananias.

In and by the first pair of speeches the Lord calls the man by his name: the man answers, Behold, says he, I am here, Lord. In the English translation, to atone for the too great conciseness

of the Greek original, the words "*am here*" are not improperly interpolated. Giving to this supposed supernatural intercourse what seemed to him a natural cast – a cast suited to the occasion – seems to have been the object of the historian in the composition of this dialogue. But, upon so supernatural a body, a natural colouring, at any rate a colouring such as this, does not seem to fit quite so completely as might have been wished. On the road, when the voice, – which turned out to be that of the Lord, that is, being interpreted, Jesus's, – addressed itself to Paul, this being the first intercourse, there was a necessity for its declaring itself, for its declaring whose it was; and the declaration was made accordingly. Here, on the other hand, no sooner does Ananias hear himself called by his name, than he knows who the person is by whom he is thus addressed. Taken as it stands, an answer thus prompt includes the supposition of an already established intercourse. Such intercourse supposed – in what way on former occasions had it been carried on? Laying such former occasion out of the question – in what way is it supposed to be carried on on the occasion here in question? On the occasion of his visit to Paul, – the Lord, to whomsoever he may have been audible, had never, from first to last, as we have seen, been visible. On the occasion of this visit of his to Ananias – was the Lord audible only, or visible only, or both audible and visible? If both audible and visible, or even if only visible, – the mode of revelation was more favourable to this secondary and virtually unknown personage, than to the principal one.

Between mortal and mortal, when it is the desire of one man to have personal communication with another whom he supposes to be within hearing, but who is either not in his sight or not looking towards him, – he calls to him by his name; and in token of his having heard, the other answers. From man to man, such information is really necessary; for – that the requisite attention has place where it is his desire that it should have place, the human interlocutor has no other means of knowing. Not considering, that the person to whom the information is supposed to be conveyed is a sort of person to whom no such information could be necessary, the historian represents his Ananias as giving to the Lord, as if to a mere mortal, information of his presence. Behold, Lord! I am here.

### **Topic 3. —*Lord's Commands and Information: Want of particularization a disprobative Circumstance***

The conversation being thus begun, the interlocutors proceed to business. In speech the 3d, Lord delivers to Ananias, the devout Jew, a command, and thereupon a piece of information. The command is – to repair to a place therein described, and find out Paul: the information is – that at the time then present Paul is praying; and that, at an anterior point of time not designated, he had seen a vision.

In the command, the designation of the place wears, upon the face of it, the appearance of that sort and degree of particularity, the exaction of which is, in these days, in which genuine visions are never exemplified, matter of course, on every occasion on which it is the real intention, of those on whom it depends, that through the medium of personal testimony the truth should be extracted. On every such occasion, the object in question, whether it be an event or a quiescent state of things, is endeavoured to be individualized: and, for the production of this effect, the individual portion of space, and the individual portion of time, are endeavoured to be brought to view together.

On the occasion here in question, towards the individualization of the portion of space some approach is made: the town being foreknown, to wit, Damascus, the *street* is particularized; it is the street called *Straight*: as in Westminster we have *Long-ditch*, and in London *Crooked-lane*. Moreover, the *house* is particularized; it is the house of Judas. To this Judas had any one of those marks of distinction been added, which in that age and nation we find to have been common, – as in the instance of the too notorious Judas the Iscariot, *i. e.*, the inhabitant of Iscara, and in that of Judas Barsabas, *i. e.*, the son of Sabas, or, as we should say, Sabasson, not long after mentioned, Acts 25:22, – it would have been something. But, destitute of such limitative adjunct, *Judas* of itself was nothing. In

that age and country, even without reckoning notorious traitors, there was never any want of Judases. Not inferior in plenty were Ananias: in the Acts we have three of them; – this private inhabitant of Damascus: the High Priest, whose seat was at Jerusalem; and the husband of Sapphira: and in Josephus they vie in abundance with the Johns and Jesuses.

But, on the occasion in question, and to the purpose in question, though a distinctive adjunct as above would have done something, it would have done very little. In the field of time, – seven-and-twenty years at least, and we know not how much more, according to the received chronology, was the distance between the event in question, and the report given of it in this history. Neither in Damascus nor yet in Jerusalem was any such thing as a newspaper, – not even an enslaved newspaper, in existence; no, nor yet so much as a printing-press, – not even an enslaved printing-press. For writing, the materials were expensive; and handwriting was the only mode of copying. Publication was not, as under the printing-press, promiscuous: unless by accident, for an indefinite length of time, into no other hand did any copy find its way, other than those of the author's confidential friends, or friends separated from the author by a greater or less number of removes, as it might happen; but all of them linked to one another by the bonds of amity, and unity of principle and practice.

In such a capital as Damascus, Straight Street might have been as long as Oxford Street; and, unless the style of building in those earlier days had much more of convenience and luxury in it than in these latter days, was much more crowded. Conceive a man at this time of day, going to Oxford Street with the intention of finding the house, in which, thirty years ago, a man of the name of Brown or Smith had his residence, – to wit, on some indeterminate day, of the number of those included within the space of an indeterminate number of years; and this, for the purpose of ascertaining whether, on this indeterminate day, and by this Smith or this Brown, a vision, not seen by anybody else, had been seen. Suppose a man in Rome set out on such an errand – and then say what would be the probable result of it.

#### **Topic 4. — *Vision reported to Ananias by the Lord as having been seen by Paul***

Of the report then given of this anterior vision, the character is too remarkable to be given, as it were, in a parenthesis: it is therefore referred to a separate head. Acts ix. 12. "And Paul hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him that he might receive his sight."

#### **Topic 5. — *Ananias's Objection to the Lord's Commands to visit Paul – He informs the Lord what he had heard about Paul***

By the two first speeches of this dialogue, we are given to understand that Ananias had already held intercourse with the Lord; an intercourse which, the nature of the two parties considered, could not have been other than a supernatural intercourse: yes, and on this very subject: for, if not on this particular subject, the subject of it, whatever it was, could not but have called for notice and communication. But, no sooner does this next speech commence, than we are given to understand that there had not – could not have been any such intercourse: for if there had been, what follows would have been rendered useless and needless. Upon receiving the command, Ananias's first thought is – to endeavour to excuse himself from paying obedience to it; for in this endeavour it is, that he gives the Lord a piece of information; to wit – of what, in relation to Paul's character, he (Ananias) had heard. Acts ix. 13: "Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem. And here he hath authority from the Chief Priests to bind all that call on thy name." Thus then, commands known to have been the Lord's, having that instant been received, – the man by whom they have been received – so small is the confidence, reposed in the Lord by this his favoured disciple – instead of paying obedience to them, answers them by an

objection. This objection, prepared for it or not prepared for it, the Lord, as might well be expected, immediately overrules.

A question that here presents itself is – Since it was from *many*, i.e. *many men*, that Ananias had heard, not only what everybody had been hearing for weeks, or months, or years, – viz. of the evil that Paul had been doing to the Jerusalem saints, but of the authority that he had so lately received, to bind at Damascus all the Damascus saints he could find – since it was from so many, who then were these many? How was it, that in the compass of the three days (ver. 9), during which Paul had remained without sight or nourishment, a commission, – to the execution of which secrecy was so obviously necessary, – had to such a degree transpired? Suppose the secret to have thus transpired, – two results would, in any natural and credible state of things, have been among the consequences. The persons thus devoted to destruction would have made their escape; the commission by which alone the supposed proceedings against them could have found a justification or a cause, not having been delivered. On the other hand, hearing that Paul was there, and that he either was, or pretended to be, in the house in question, or in some other, in the extraordinary condition above described, – the persons spoken of in the Acts under the name of *the Synagogue*, would not have left him there, but would have convened him before them, and, if he really had any such commission, have caused it to be produced, and read it: convened before them, not only Paul with his supposed commission, but those companions of his that we have already heard of, if any such he had<sup>10</sup>.

But of these there will be occasion to speak in another place.

### **Topic 6. —*The Lord's Answer, obviating the objection, and giving intimation of his designs in favour of Paul***

This objection, no sooner has the Lord overruled it, than he undertakes to answer it, and to explain to this his so singularly favoured old disciple the intentions he had formed in favour of his intended new convert, whose conversion is, however, as yet but in progress (ver. 14): "But the Lord said to him, Go thy way; for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel: – For (continues the Lord) I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." Being, and therefore at the time of Paul's vision purposing to be, in relation to his designs for Paul, thus communicative to this same Ananias, who is a perfect stranger to this same Paul, – to what purpose, on the occasion of his supposed visionary intercourse with Paul, should *the Lord* have stopped short; reserving the communication, for the intention of giving it him at second-hand by the mouth of that same stranger? This is one of the swarms of questions which an account of this sort could scarcely fail to present to any inquiring mind.

Meantime, as to the Lord's having thus stopped short, this we shall see is in full contradiction with the account which the historian makes him give in his supposed second reported speech, to wit, the supposed premeditated one, spoken before Agrippa, who, under the proconsul Festus, was king of the Jews, and who, on that occasion, is spoken of as being assessor to the said proconsul Festus.

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<sup>10</sup> Another question that here presents itself is – How could it have happened that, Jerusalem being under one government, and Damascus under another (if so the case was), the will of the local rulers at Jerusalem found obedience, as it were of course, at the hands of the adequate authorities at Damascus? To the question how this *actually* happened, it were too much to undertake to give an answer. For an answer to the question how it may be *conceived* to have happened, reference may be made to existing English practice. The warrant issued by the constituted authorities in Jerusalem expected to find, and found accordingly in Damascus, an adequate authority disposed to back it. In whatsoever Gentile countries Jews, in a number sufficient to compose a synagogue, established themselves, a habit naturally enough took place, as of course, among them – the habit of paying obedience, to a considerable extent, to the functionaries who were regarded as rulers of the synagogue. Few are or have been the conquered countries, in which some share of subordinate power has not been left, as well to the natives of the conquered nation as to any independent foreigners, to whom, in numbers sufficient to constitute a sort of corporate body, it happened from time to time to have become settlers. After all, what must be confessed is – that, in all this there seems nothing but what might readily enough have been conceived, without its having been thus expressed.

On that occasion the Lord is represented as explaining himself more fully to Paul himself, than here, for the benefit of Paul, through Ananias.

## SECTION 4. ANANIAS: HIS VISIT TO PAUL AT DAMASCUS

We now come to the visit, which, we are to understand, was, in reality, paid to Paul by Ananias, in consequence of this vision, in obedience to the command imagined to be given in it.

Note that, though, in the original – in *the including vision*, as it may be called – the command is given to inquire in the house in question for the person (Saul) in question, – this is *all* the command which, in that least visionary of the two visions, is delivered. In the first instance to make the inquiry, and in conclusion to go his way – this is all to which the commands given to him in the direct way extend themselves. To accomplish the object of this intercourse – to do anything towards it beyond the making of this inquiry – he has to take hints and to draw inferences: – inferences from the Lord's speech, which is thus continued, Acts ix. 12: "And (Paul) *hath seen in a vision* a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him that he might receive his sight." From having been told what – in a vision, to wit, this *contained or included vision* – this same Paul had been *fancying he had seen* him (Ananias) do – from this he was to conclude that it was the Lord's will that he (Ananias) *should do in reality* that which Paul had been fancying him to have done; though the only effect, for the doing of which it had so been fancied to have been performed, had never been produced. This was what he was to conclude was the Lord's will; although the Lord himself, who (if any person) should have known how to speak plainly and beyond danger of misconception, had forborne to tell him as much.

On the occasion of this important visit – this visit of Ananias to Paul, – the double light – the light cast by the first of the two oratorical accounts – to wit, the supposed unpremeditated one, upon the historical one – recommences.

Follows now – and from both sources – the account of the interview, and of the cure performed in the course of it.

### ACTS' ACCOUNT. – Ch. ix. ver. 17-22

And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him, said: Brother Saul, the Lord, *even Jesus*, that *appeared* unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, *and be filled with the Holy Ghost*. – And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been *scales*: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and *was baptized*. – And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul *certain days* with the disciples which were *at Damascus*. – And straightway he *preached* Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. – But all that heard *him* were amazed, and said: Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the Chief Priests? – But Saul *increased the more* in strength, and *confounded the Jews* which dwelt at *Damascus*, proving that this is very Christ.

### PAUL'S ACCOUNT. – Acts, Ch. xxii. ver. 12-16

12. And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt *there*, – Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me: Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. – And he said: The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will,

and *see* that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. – For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast *seen* and heard. – And now, why tarriest thou? arise, and *be baptized*, and wash away thy sins; calling on the name of the Lord.

### **Topic 1. —On visiting Paul, Ananias's Introductory Speech – Preliminary Recital**

I. In the historical account, the speech has in it several distinguishable parts.

I. "Brother Saul."

First comes the address, in which Saul, the future Paul, is addressed by disciple Ananias by the name of *brother*. If, as between Jew and Jew, this was a common form of salutation, – so far everything is in order. But, if it was only in consideration of his having been denominated a disciple, to wit, of Jesus, – the salutation is rather premature: the conversion, supposing it effected, is, at any rate, not yet declared. Not only in the historical account is this appellation employed, but likewise in the oratorical one.

The attention of Paul being thus bespoken by his visitor, mention is thereupon made of the purpose of the visit.

I. In the first place comes a recital. "The Lord (says he), even Jesus, that *appeared* unto thee on the way as thou camest, hath sent me" ... Unfortunately, according to the historian himself, this assertion, as we have seen already, is not true. In no manner or shape did the Lord Jesus, or any other person, make his appearance; – all that *did* appear was the light – the light at midday: so he has just been writing, and before the ink, if ink it was that he used, was dry, already had he forgotten it.

This, however, is but a collateral averment: – a recital, an episode, matter of *inducement*, as an English lawyer would phrase it.

### **Topic 2. —Declared Purposes or Objects of the Visit**

Purpose the first. "That thou mightest," says Ananias, "receive thy sight." Thus says Ananias in the historical account: in the supposed oratorical one he is more concise. No supposed past occurrence referred to: – no purpose declared. "Receive thy sight" are the words.

Purpose the second. That thou mightest "be filled with the Holy Ghost," says the historical account. But in a succeeding passage what is the purpose, which, in the supposed oratorical account Ananias is made to speak of, in the design that it should be taken for the purpose which the Lord by his commandment meant to be accomplished? Not the being filled by the Holy Ghost; only the being baptized. "And now, why tarriest thou? (Acts xxii. ver. 16) Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Well but (says somebody) receiving the Holy Ghost, and being baptized, – by these two expressions, is not one, and no more than one effect – one and the same effect – to be understood? No, in truth, if the historian himself is to be believed. Turn to another chapter – the very next chapter before this, Acts 12 to 17, and there you will see, that the being baptized was one thing, the receiving the Holy Ghost another thing, and much more. For administering the ceremony of baptism, a single Apostle, Philip, was sufficient: whereas, for the causing the Holy Ghost to be received, nothing less was requisite than the cooperation of two Apostles, and those two commissioned by the rest.

So serious always, according to this historian, was the difference, that it was after he had been already baptized, and baptized gratis in a crowd, that for the power of conferring this benefit, whatever it was that it was composed of, Sorcerer Simon made to the two Apostles, those offers – those pecuniary offers – which are said to have been no sooner made than rejected. Acts 13 to 24.

**Topic 3. —Actual Effects of the Visit, and the Application in consequence made in the course of it. Effect 1. Scales fall from Eyes, and Sight is received in consequence**

In the historical narrative, the effect is as complete as it is remarkable. Fall from his eyes a portion of matter of the nature or resemblance of scales: whereupon he receives sight forthwith.

In the supposed oratorical account, whatsoever had been meant by scales, nothing is said of them. Neither is the declaration made of the completeness of the case quite so explicit. One look he gave – gave to his wonder-working surgeon – and instead of its being given forthwith – to give this one look required, it should seem, if not a whole hour, at any rate so little less, that any time less than an hour could not – such, in this supposed unpremeditated speech, was the anxiety felt for correctness – could not be ventured to be particularized.

The more closely these scales, or things resembling scales, are looked at, the more difficult will it be to find them amount to anything. In no cure, performed upon eyes in any natural way, in these our days – upon eyes that have lost their sight – do any scales fall off, or anything in any degree resembling scales; – in no disorder of the eyes, known to have place in these our days, do scales, or anything like scales, come over the eyes. By the taking of matter from the eyes, sight, it is true, is every now and then restored: but this matter is not matter, foreign in relation to the eye and exterior to it; but one of the component parts called *humours* of the eye, which, by losing its transparency having suspended the faculty of vision, is let out by a lancet; whereupon not only is the faculty of sight restored, but the part which had been extirpated restored likewise; and without any expense in the article of miracles.

On the supposition of falsity, – quere the use of this circumstance? *Answer.* To afford support to the conception, that memory and not imagination was the source from which the story was derived. True it is, that, instead of support, a circumstance exposed to contradiction would be an instrument of weakness: if, for example, on the supposition that Paul had no companions on the road, names indicative of really existing and well-known persons had been added, to the intimation given in the *Acts*, of the existence of such companions. But to no such hazard was the story of the scales exposed: not to any great danger, on the supposition of the existence of Paul's Ananias: not to any danger at all, upon the supposition of his non-existence.

But, upon this occasion, now again once more present themselves – present themselves to the mind's eye – Paul's companions. That they were blinded at all can scarcely, it has been seen, be believed, if on this matter the historian himself is believed. For, per Acts ix. 8, "they led him by the hand: " so, per Paul 1st, Acts xxii. 11, "When I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of those that were with me, I came unto Damascus." But if, notwithstanding so it was that *they* too were blinded, – how was it with *their* eyes? Had *their* eyes scales upon them? did these scales ever fall off? – if so, by what means were they made to fall off? *their* evidence would have been not much, if anything, less impressive, – and it would have been much less open to suspicion, – than Paul's evidence, supposing him to have spoken of these scales – which the historian, to whom, if he is to be believed, their existence is so well known, did not take upon him to represent Paul as saying that he did. But if so it was, that, though rendered blind as Paul's, no scales were superinduced upon, nor consequently made to fall off, the eyes of those nameless and unknown persons, – how came they to be superinduced upon and made to fall off from the eyes of their singularly favoured principal? If, for a length of time more or less considerable, they really were made blind, – it was, if the historian is to be believed, by the same cause by which, in the instance of Paul's eyes, this same effect was produced: – the same cause, to wit an extraordinary light at noonday. If, whatsoever was the matter with them, the eyes of these ordinary persons could be set to rights without a miracle, what need could there be of a miracle for the producing the same desirable effect in the person of this their leader or master, extraordinary as this same leader or master was?

#### Topic 4. —*Baptism – was it performed? when, where, by whom, &c.?*

The baptism thus spoken of – was it performed? Yes: if you will believe the historian, speaking in his own person, speaking in his own historical account: "And forthwith," in the first place, "Paul recovered his sight;" – then, when, his sight having been recovered, he was able to go about as usual, – he arose and was baptized: baptized – that is say, as from this expression taken by itself any one would conclude – baptized, as soon as he arose, to wit, as soon as water could be found for the purpose: that water, which his guest Ananias, foreknowing what was to come to pass, and what was to be done to make it come to pass, might naturally be expected to have provided, and this without any supernatural foresight: in a word, without the expense of any additional miracle in any shape: – the water being thus ready upon the spot, and he in equal readiness to administer it.

This, according to the historian, speaking in his own person: but, when the time comes for giving an account of the matter in the person of Paul himself, – to wit in the supposed unpremeditated oratorical speech, – then, for whatever it was that stopped him, (whether the supposed urgency of the occasion on which the supposed speech was supposed to be made, or any thing and what else,) so it is, that he gives not any such information: he leaves the matter to hang in doubt: – a doubt, which, down to the present day remains unsolved.

A command to this effect is spoken of as having been given: thus much is said. But, what is not said is – whether to this same command any or what obedience was paid.

Thus it is that, instead of an *effect* which it seems desired that we should consider as being produced, what we see directly stated as being produced, is nothing more than a *command*– a command, by which, as by its cause, we are to suppose the effect to have been produced. What is more, in the same blind way, is intimation given us, of another and very different effect —*the washing away of sins*– as if produced by the first-mentioned physical operation; – namely, by that of a man's being dipped in, or sprinkled with, water: and thus it is, that from a mere physical operation of the most trivial nature, we are called upon to infer a spiritual and supernatural effect of the most awful importance; the spiritual effect stated as if it were produced by the physical operation, to which it has no perceptible real relation – nothing but the mere verbal one thus given to it; produced by it, and following it, as of course – just as if sins were a species of dirt, which, by washing, could as surely be got off as any other dirt.<sup>11</sup>

And was he then really baptized? If so he was, then also if, speaking in the person of his hero, the historian is to be believed, – then also, by this ceremony, the name of the Lord being at the same time called upon, – then also were his sins washed away; his sins washed away; the sinner, therefore and thereby, put into the same case as if the sins had not any of them been ever committed. How can it be understood otherwise? for if, in and by this passage, intimation – sufficiently perfect information – is given, that the ceremony was performed – then also is sufficiently perfect information given, that

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<sup>11</sup> It is well known that this dogma of Original sin – a disease that the human family enjoys by sad inheritance, Christ treated with negligible indifference. He dealt with the problems of man in a social state, as socially conditioned only. A human being conditioned as isolated from neighbors, friends and society, he did not as he scientifically could not deal with, He discoursed upon social duties, however sublimely, N.B. Acts 18:15, "But if thy brother shall offend against thee, go and rebuke him between thee and him alone, If he shall hear thee thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them then tell it unto the church. And if he neglect to hear the church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican, Amen I say unto you, Whatsoever you shall bind on earth, shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed also in heaven." Now without quibbling about the translation this scheme of social arbitration contains the ultimate of justice, It contains the only working hypothesis within any social condition of mankind. There is no such thing as justice in the abstract or concrete, It is like heat and electricity, a mere mode of motion, a form of action. And when a controversy between Citizens is fairly submitted to the judgment of normal men the voice of their consciousness, being the ultimate organ of nature's Creator, must be "binding" so far as man is concerned socially. And as there does not appear to the natural man any appeal to heaven, the arbitrament of man in the special case carries the seal of the eternities and forecloses all further controversy. The speech of the honorable Consciousness of Man is the voice of the Creator of his personality. – Ed.

such was the effect actually produced by it. "Arise" (Ananias is made to say) – "*Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*"

This is no light matter: if so it really were, that according to the religion of Jesus, by such a cause, such an effect was on that occasion produced; – that such effect could, in a word, on any occasion, in any case be produced, – that *murders*, or (not to embarrass the question with conceits of local jurisprudence) *killings* of men – killings of men by persecution carried on, on a religious account – slaughters of Christians by non-Christians – could thus, as in Paul's case, be divested of all guilt, at any rate of all punishment, at the hands of Almighty Justice; – if impunity could indeed be thus conferred by the sprinkling a man with water or dipping him in it, then would it be matter of serious consideration – not only what is the *verity* of that religion, but what the *usefulness* of it, what the usefulness – with reference to the present life at any rate, not to speak of a life to come: what the usefulness of it; and on what ground stands its claim to support by all the powers of factitious punishment and factitious reward, at the hands of the temporal magistrate.<sup>12</sup>

### **Topic 5. —*Performance of the Promise, supposed to have been made by the Lord, in favour of Paul, to Ananias***

If the supposed promise is inadequate to the occasion, the supposed performance is still more inadequate with reference to the promise.

In the supposed promise are two distinguishable parts, and in neither of them is the one thing needful to be found. Of these two parts, the only one in which in any direct stage the matter of a promise is contained, is the one last mentioned: it is the promise to show him, (Paul) what sufferings he will have to undergo in the course of the career, whatever it is, in which he is about to engage: to wit, in name and profession, the preaching the religion of Jesus: "for I will show him," says the Lord, according to the historian, – "I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." If so it was, that upon this promise, such as it is, performance never followed, the regret for the failure need not be very great. Whatsoever were the sufferings that he was predestined to undergo, that which was *not* in the nature of this foreshowing, was – the lessening their aggregate amount; that which *was* in the nature of it was – the making an addition to that same afflicting aggregate; to wit, by constant and unavoidable anticipation of the approach of such sufferings.

Of this talk, vague as it is, about sufferings, the obvious enough object was – the giving exaltation to the idea meant to be conveyed of the merits of the hero: – an object, which, by this and other means, has accordingly, down to the present day, in no small degree been accomplished. So much as to sufferings: as to enjoyments, by any idea entertained of the enjoyments derived by him from the same source, this design would have been – not promoted, but counteracted. But, when the time arrives, whether the mass of suffering was not, to no small amount, overbalanced by that of his enjoyments – meaning always worldly sufferings and worldly enjoyments – the reader will be left to judge.

Here then we have the only promise, which in any direct way is expressed: – a promise which, in the first place would have been useless, in the next place worse than useless.

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<sup>12</sup> Since what is in the text was written, maturer thoughts have suggested an interpretation, by which, if received, the sad inferences presented by the doctrine, that misdeeds, and consequent suffering that have had place, could by a dip into a piece of water be caused never to have happened, may be repelled. According to this interpretation, the act of being baptized – the bodily act – is one thing; an act of washing away the sins – the spiritual act – another. The effect produced is – not the causing the misdeeds and sufferings never to have had place, but the causing them to be compensated for, by acts productive of enjoyment, or of saving in the article of sufferings, to an equal or greater amount.

### Topic 6. —*Indirect Promise, that Paul shall spread the Name of Jesus*

In the whole substance of this promise, if there be anything, which, with reference to the professed end – to wit the giving extension to the religion of Jesus – would have been of use, it is in the foregoing part that it must be looked for. In this part then, if there be any such matter to be found, it will be this: to wit, a promise that he (Paul) shall bear, and therefore that he shall be enabled to bear, the name of the Lord, to wit, the name of Jesus, before the classes of persons specified, to wit, the Gentiles, and kings, and children of Israel: Acts ix. 15. But, only in an indirect way is this solely material part of the promise expressed: "He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name," &c. *i. e.* When I chose him, it was my design that he should do so. But, in the case of the Lord, according to the picture drawn of him by this historian, how very inconclusive evidence *intention* is of *execution*, there will, in the course of this work, have been abundant occasion to see.

Bear the name of Jesus? so far, so good. But for this function no such special and supernatural commission was necessary: without any such commission, the name of Jesus had been borne to the people at large, if in this particular the Gospel history is to be believed. Luke ix. 49, 50: "And John answered and said, 'Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name: and we forbid him, because he followed not with us.' And Jesus said unto him, 'Forbid him not, for he that is not against us, is for us.'" How inadequate soever, with reference to the professed end, to wit, giving extension to the religion of Jesus, the promise was perfectly adequate, and commensurate, to what we shall find to be Paul's real design; to wit, the planting a Gospel of his own, as, and for, and instead of, the Gospel of Jesus. The Gospel of Jesus was the Gospel of Jesus: and the Gospel, which, availing himself of the name of Jesus, it was Paul's design and practice to preach, was, as he himself declares, – as we shall see him declaring in the plainest and most express terms, – a Gospel of his own; a Gospel which was not the Gospel of the Apostles, and which, for fear of its being opposed by them, he kept studiously concealed from those confidential servants and real associates of Jesus, as may be seen in the following passages: Gal. i. 9, 11, and 12; "As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other Gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed. – But I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man. – For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." Gal. 2:2: "And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that Gospel which I preach among the Gentiles; but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means, I should run, or had run, in vain."

In the course of Paul's dialogue with the voice on the road – that voice which we are given to understand was the Lord's, *i. e.* Jesus's – the promise supposed to be made to Paul, it must be remembered, was – the promise to tell him, when in the city, what he was to do. "What thou must do," says the historian in his historical account: – "all things which are appointed for thee to do," says the historian in the supposed unpremeditated oratorical account, which, in this so often mentioned first of the speeches, he is supposed by the historian to have delivered.

Among all these things, – one thing, which it is manifestly the design of the historian, as it was that of his hero, to make men believe, was accomplished: to wit, the satisfying them what was the religious doctrine, for the dissemination of which the expense of this miracle was incurred. This, moreover, is the promise; which, in the reading of the story everybody looks for: this too is the promise which in the reading of this same story, the believers in the religion of Jesus have very generally been in the habit of considering as performed. Not in and by this history, however, will they have any such satisfaction, when the matter comes to be looked into. For, in respect of this information, desirable as it is, – Paul is, in this strangely supposed intercourse, put off – put off to another time and place: put off, for no reason given, nor for any substantial reason that can be imagined. Further on, when a show of performing the promise comes to be made, then, instead of accomplishment, we have more evasion. Instead of furnishing the information to Paul himself – to Paul directly – for, when the time

and place for performance comes, performance – what the Lord is not supposed so much as to profess to do, what he professes to do is – to make the communication to this man, who, his existence being supposed, was an utter stranger to Paul – namely to this Ananias. Well, and for the conveying the information, in this indirect and inadequate way – for conveying it to and through this same Ananias – what is done? – as we have seen, what amounts to nothing.

When, for affording the information – had any information been intended to be afforded – the time and place are come; when Ananias and Paul have been brought together; what is it that, from the information afforded us by the historian, we are to understand, passed? *Answer*, that, after the scales had fallen from his eyes, Paul was baptized; that he ate meat, and that after he had eaten meat he was strengthened: strengthened, we are warranted to suppose, by the meat which he had so eaten. Moreover, that somehow or other, in this large city he was certain days – number not specified, – with certain disciples – neither names nor number specified, – and preached Christ in the synagogues, saying that he was the son of God.

Thus far then we are got; and, of the supposed revelation, in all this time nothing revealed. Promises, put-offs, evasions – and, after all, no performance.

Among the purposes of this work, is the satisfying the reader – not only that Paul received not any revelation from the Almighty; but that, even upon his own showing, never did he receive any such revelation: that, on pretence of his having received it from the Almighty by a special revelation, he preached indeed a certain doctrine; but that this doctrine was partly one of his own, contrary to that of Jesus's apostles, and therefore contrary to that of Jesus: and that, in the way of revelation, he never did receive anything; neither that doctrine of his own which he preached, nor anything else.

### **Topic 7. —*Doctrine, supposed to be preached by Paul at Damascus in the synagogues***

Straightway, if the historian is to be believed; – straightway after being strengthened by the meat; – and straightway after he had passed the certain days with the disciples; – then did Paul preach Christ in the synagogues – preach that he is the son of God.

Here, had he really preached in any such places – here would have been the time, and the best time, for telling us what, in pursuance of the supposed revelation, he preached. For, whatever it was, if anything, that he ever learnt from his supposed revelation, it was not till he had learnt it, till he made this necessary acquisition, that the time for beginning to preach in the synagogues in question or anywhere else was come. And, no sooner had he received it, than then, when it was fresh in his memory – then was the time for preaching it. But, never having received any such thing as that which he pretended, and which the historian has made so many people believe, he received, – no such thing had he to preach at any time or place.

Whatever of that nature he had had, if he had had at any *time*, Damascus was not the *place*, at any rate at *that time*, for him to preach it, or anything else, in synagogues – in any receptacle so extensively open to the public eye.

Preach, in the name of Jesus – in the name of that Jesus, whose disciples, and with them whose religion, he now went thither with a commission to exterminate, – preach in that name he could not, without proclaiming his own religion – his own perfidy; – his own rebellion, against the authorities, from which, at his own solicitation, the commission so granted to him had been obtained: – his own perfidious contempt – not only of those Jerusalem rulers, but of those Damascus authorities, from whom, for that important and cruel purpose, he was sent to receive instruction and assistance. At some seven-and-twenty years distance in the field of time, and at we know not what distance in the field of space, probably that between Rome and Damascus, it was as easy for the historian to affirm the supposed preaching, as to deny it: but, as to the preaching itself, whether it was within the bounds of moral possibility, let the reader judge.

**Topic 8. —*Supposed Amazement of the People of Damascus at this Paul's supposed preaching of Christ in the Synagogues there***

Had there really been any such preaching, well might have amazement followed it. But there was no such preaching, therefore no such amazement. Had there been real preaching, and real amazement produced by it – what would have been the subject of the amazement! Not so much the audacity of the preacher – for madmen acting singly are to be seen in but too great frequency: not so much the audacity of the speaker, as the supineness of the constituted authorities; for, madmen acting in bodies in the character of public functionaries have never yet been visible. And if any such assemblage was ever seen, many such would be seen, before any one could be seen, whose madness took the course of sitting still, while an offender against their authority, coming to them single and without support, – neither bringing with him support, nor finding it there, – continued, at a public meeting, preaching against them, and setting their authority at defiance.

**Topic 9. —*Matter of the Revelation, which, in and by the supposed unpremeditated Oratorical Account, is supposed to have been made***

Forgetting what, as we have seen, he had so lately been saying in his own person – in the person of Paul, – he on this occasion, returns to the subject: and more evasive is the result.

On this occasion – this proper occasion – what is it that he, Paul, takes upon him to give an account of. – That which the Lord had revealed to him? – revealed, communicated in the supernatural way of revelation, to him – Paul? No; but that which, according to him, – if he, and through him the historian, is to be believed, – the Lord communicated to Ananias concerning him – Paul. The Almighty having minded to communicate something to a man, and yet not communicating to that man any part of it, but communicating the whole of it to another! What a proceeding *this* to attribute to the Almighty, and upon such evidence!

Still we shall see, supposing it communicated, and from such a source communicated – still we shall see it amounted to nothing: to nothing – always excepted the contradiction to what, in relation to this subject, had, by this same historian, been a little before asserted.

Observe what were the *purposes*, for which, by this Ananias, Paul is supposed to be made to understand, that God – the God, says he, of our fathers – had chosen him.

1. Purpose the first – "To know his will." His will, respecting what? If respecting anything to the great purpose here in question, respecting the new doctrine which, to this Paul, to the exclusion of the Apostles of Jesus, is all along supposed to have been revealed. Of no such doctrine is any indication anywhere in these accounts to be found.

2. Purpose the second – "And see this just one." Meaning, we are to understand, the person all along spoken of under the name of the Lord; to wit, Jesus. But, in the vision in question, if the historian is to be believed, no Jesus did Paul see. All that he saw was a light, – an extraordinary strong light at midday; so strong, that after it, till the scales fell from his eyes, he saw not any person in any place: and this light, whatever it was, was seen by all that were with him, as well as by him.

3. Purpose the third – "And shouldest hear the voice of his mouth." Oh! yes; if what the historian says in that other place is to be believed – hear a voice he did; and if the historian is to be again believed, that voice was the Lord's. But, by hearing this voice, how was he distinguished? those that were with him, according to the historian's own account, heard it as well as he. And what was he the wiser? This also, it is hoped, has been rendered sufficiently visible – just nothing.

Purpose the fourth and last – "Thou shalt be his witness (the Lord's witness), of everything thou hast seen and heard: " – that is, of that which was nothing, and that which amounted to nothing.

Unhappily, even this is not all: for, before the subject is concluded, we must go back and take up once more the supposed premeditated and studied speech, which, on the second occasion, the self-constituted Apostle is supposed to have made to the Sub-king of the Jews, Agrippa, sitting by the side of his superior – the Roman Proconsul, Festus.

In the course of this long-studied speech, – to whom, is the communication, such as it is, – to whom, in an immediate way, and without the intervention of any other person, is it supposed to be made? Not to Ananias; – not to any such superfluous and unknown personage; – not to Ananias, but to Paul himself: viz. to the very person *by* whom this same communication, supposed to have been made to him, is supposed to be reported (Acts xxvi. 16 to 18): to this principal, or rather, only person concerned: – to this one person, the communication, such as it is, and to him the whole of it at once, is supposed to be made.

Here then is this Ananias discarded: – discarded with this vision of his, and that other vision which we have seen within it: the communication, which, speaking in the first place in his own person, – and then, on one occasion, in the person of this same hero of his – the historian had just been declaring, was made – not to Paul, but to Ananias; – this all-important communication, speaking again in this same third person, but on another occasion – the discourse being supposed to be a long-studied one – he makes this same Paul declare, was given – not to any Ananias, not to any other person – but directly to him, Paul, himself.

Let us now see what it amounts to. In the most logical manner, it begins with declaring the *purposes* it is made for; and, when the purposes are declared, all that it does is done. Ver. 16. "But now: rise, and stand upon thy feet; for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose." ... In this purpose are several parts: let us look into them one by one.

1. Part 1. "To make thee (says the Lord) a minister and a witness, both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee." But, as to the things which he had seen, by this same account they amounted to nothing but a glare of light. Here then was the light to *bear witness of*, if it was worth while: but, as to the *ministering*, here was nothing at all to minister to: for the light was past, and it required no ministering to, when it was present. Had it been the light of a lamp – yes; but there was no lamp in the case.

Thus much, as to these things which he had seen. Thereupon comes the mention of those things "in the which, the Lord is supposed to say, I will appear unto thee!" Here, as before, we have another put-off. If, in the way in question, and of the sort in question, there had been anything said, here was the time, the only time, for saying it. For immediately upon the mention of this communication, such as it is, follows the mention of what was due in consequence of it, in obedience to the commands supposed to be embodied in it, and by the light of the information supposed to be conveyed by it. "Whereupon, says he, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision..."

Part 2. The purpose continued. – "Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I now send thee." This, we see, is but a continuation of the same put-off: no revelation, no doctrine, no Gospel here. As to the doctrine – the Gospel – that Gospel which he preached, and which he said was his own, no such Gospel is on this occasion given to him; and, not being so much as reported to have been given to him on any other occasion, was it not therefore of his own making, and without any such supernatural assistance, as Christians have been hitherto made to believe was given to him?

As to the deliverance from the people and from the Gentiles, this is a clause, put in with reference to the dangers, into which the intemperance of his ambition had plunged him, and from whence in part it had been his lot to escape. Here then the sub-king and his Roman superior were desired to behold the accomplishment of a prophecy: but the prophecy was of that sort which came after the fact. – "Unto whom now I send thee..." In this they were desired to see a continuation of the prophecy: for, as to this point, it was, in the hope of the prophet, of the number of those, which not only announce, but by announcing contribute to, their own accomplishment.

Part 3. The purpose continued. – "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God..." Still the same nothingness: to his life's end a man might be hearing stories such as these, and still at the end of it be none the wiser: – no additional doctrine – no additional gospel – no declaration at all – no gospel at all – here.

Part 4. The purpose continued and concluded... "that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." Good. But this is not doctrine; this is not gospel; this is not itself the promised doctrine: but it is a description of the effect, of which the promised doctrine was to be the cause.

Now it is, as we have just seen, that Paul is represented as commencing his preaching, or sallying forth upon his mission; preaching, from *instructions* received in a supernatural way – received by revelation. Yet, after all, no such *instructions* has he received. Thrice has the historian – once in his own person, twice in that of his hero – undertaken to produce those instructions. But by no one, from first to last, have they anywhere been produced.

Truly, then, of his own making was this Gospel which Paul went preaching; of his own making, as well as of his own using; that Gospel, which he himself declares to his Galatians was not of man, was not, therefore, of those Apostles, to whom the opposition made by him is thus proclaimed.

When, after having given in his own person an account of a supposed occurrence, – an historian, on another occasion, takes up the same occurrence; and, in the person of another individual, gives of that same occurrence another account different from, and so different from, as to be irreconcilable with it; can this historian, with any propriety, be said to be himself a believer in this second account which he thus gives? Instead of giving it as a true account, does he not, at any rate, in respect of all the several distinguishable circumstances in which it differs from the account given in his own person – give it in the character of a fable? a fable invented on the occasion on which the other person is supposed to speak – invented in the intent that it shall promote the purpose for which this speech is supposed to be made? Yet this account, which in the eyes of the very man by whom it is delivered to us, is but a fable, even those to whom in this same character of a fable it is delivered – this account it is that *Christians* have thus long persisted in regarding, supporting, and acting upon, as if it were from beginning to end, a truth – a great body of truth! – O Locke! O Newton! where was your discernment!

On such evidence would any Judge fine a man a shilling? Would he give effect to a claim to that amount? Yet such is the evidence, on the belief of which the difference between happiness and misery, both in intensity as well as duration, infinite, we are told, depends!

## SECTION 5.

### VISION III. – PAUL'S ANTERIOR VISION, AS REPORTED BY THE LORD TO ANANIAS

By the nature of the acts which are the objects of it, the command, we see, is necessarily pregnant with information: but now comes the information given as such – the piece of information with which the command is followed. This information – in and by which another, an antecedent vision, is brought upon the carpet, and communicated – has been reserved for a separate consideration.

This information is in its complexion truly curious: to present a clear view of it, is not an altogether easy task. The information thus given by the Lord – given to this Ananias – this information, of which Paul is the subject, is – what? that, on some former occasion, neither time nor place mentioned, he, Ananias, to whom the Lord is giving the information, had been seen by this same Paul performing, with a certain intention, a certain action; the intention being – that, in relation to this same Paul, a certain effect should be produced – to wit, that of his receiving his sight. The Lord declares, Acts ix. 12, to Ananias, that Paul "had *seen in a vision* a man, Ananias himself, coming and putting his hand on him, that he (Paul) might receive his sight."

Well then – this action which the Lord thus informs Ananias that he, Ananias, had performed, – did he, at any time and place, ever perform it? Oh, no; that is not necessary: the question is not a fair one; for it was only in a vision that it was performed. Well then – if it was only in a vision that it was performed, then, in reality, it was never performed. The Lord said that it had been performed; but in so saying the Lord had said that which was not true. The Lord had caused him to believe this – the Lord knowing all the while that it was not true. Such is the deed, which, according to our historian, the Lord relates himself to have achieved.

But the *intention*, was that true? Oh, no; nor was there any need of its being so: for the intention, with which the act was supposed to be performed, was part and parcel of the divinely-taught untruth.

The effect, the production of which had been the object of the intention, was it then – had it then been – produced? Wait a little; no, not at that time. But the time was not then as yet come; and now it is coming apace.

But this effect – what is it? a man's receiving his sight; this same Paul's receiving his sight; this same Paul, of whom Ananias knew nothing, nor had ever heard anything, except what he had just been hearing – to wit, that, by a man of that name, he, Ananias, had once been seen – seen to do so and so – he, all the while – he, the doer, knowing nothing of what he was doing – knowing nothing at all about the matter. However, only in a vision did all this pass; which being the case, no proper subject of wonder was afforded to him by such otherwise somewhat extraordinary ignorance.

But this sight – which, at the hands of this seer of visions, to whom this information is thus addressed, this stranger, whose name was still *Saul*, was to receive – how happened it that it was to him, Ananias, that he came to receive it? This faculty – at his birth, was he not, like any other man, in possession of it? If he was, what was become of it? In this particular, the information thus supposed to have been given by Omniscience, was rather of the scantiest.

Supposing the story to have any foundation in truth, – such, to Ananias, it could not but have appeared; and, supposing him bold enough to ask questions, or even to open his mouth, a question, in the view of finding a supply for the deficiency, is what the assertion would naturally have for its first result. No such curiosity, however, has Ananias: instead of seeking at the hands of Omniscience an information, the demand for which was so natural, the first use he makes of his speech, or rather would have made of it, if, instead of being imagined in a vision, the state of things in question had been true, is – the furnishing to Omniscience a quantity of information of a sort in no small

degree extraordinary. For, hereupon begins a speech, in and by which Ananias undertakes to give Omniscience to understand, what reports, in relation to this same Paul, had reached his (Ananias's) ears. What he is willing thus to *speak* is more, however, than Omniscience is willing to *hear*: the story is cut short, and the story-teller bid to "go his way." "Then Ananias," says the text, Acts ix. 13. "Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem. And here he hath authority from the Chief Priests to bind all that call on thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way; for..." &c.

But, though thus cut short, he is far from being in disgrace. So far from it, that he is taken into confidence. Then comes – still in a vision, and the same vision – information of the till then secret acts and intentions of Omnipotence in relation to this same Paul: he had actually been "chosen" as "a vessel to bear the Lord's name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: " and the determination had been taken, says the Lord in this vision, "to show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." "For I will show him," says the Acts, ix. 16, "how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." And, with the announcement thus made of this determination, the historical account, thus by the historian in his own person given, of this same vision, closes.

Thus highly distinguished, and favoured with a confidence, equalling, if not surpassing, any which, according to any of the Gospel accounts, appears ever to have been imparted to any one of the Apostles, how comes it that Ananias has never been put in the number of the *Saints*? meaning always the Calendar *Saints*– those persons, to wit, who, as a mark of distinction and title of honour, behold their ordinary names preceded by this extraordinary one? Still the answer is: Aye, but this was but in vision: and of a vision one use is – that of the matter of which all that there is *not* a use for, is left to be taken for false; all that there *is* a use for, is taken, and is to pass, for true. When, by the name of Ananias, who, humanly speaking, never existed but in name, the service for which it was invented has been performed – to wit, the giving a support to Paul and his vision, – it has done all that was wanted of it: there is no, further use for it.

Supposing that thirdly mentioned vision really seen, at what point of time shall we place the seeing of it? In this too there seems to be no small difficulty.

Between the moment at which Paul is said to have had his vision, if a vision that can be called in which, the time being midday, he saw nothing but a glare of light, – between the moment of this vision, of which a loss of sight was the instantaneous consequence – between the moment of this loss of sight and the moment of the recovery of it, the interval is mentioned: three days it was exactly. Acts ix. 9, "And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink."

The time during which, in verse 9, he has just been declared to have been the whole time without sight, – this is the time, within which he is declared – declared, if the historian is to be believed, declared by the Lord himself – to have seen this introductory vision – this preparatory vision, for which it is so difficult to find a use. And thus it is, that in a vision, though *vision* means seeing, it is not necessary a man should have sight.

Meantime, of all these matters, on which his own existence, not to speak of the salvation of mankind, so absolutely depends, not a syllable is he to know, but through the medium of this so perfectly obscure and questionable personage – this personage so completely unknown to him – this same Ananias.

Three whole days he is kept from doing anything: during these three whole days the business of the miracle stands still. For what purpose is it thus kept at a stand? Is it that there might be time sufficient left for his learning to see, when his sight is returned, this preparatory vision, by which so little is done, and for which there is so little use?

## SECTION 6.

### VISIONS, WHY TWO OR THREE INSTEAD OF ONE

As to the matter of fact designated by the words *Paul's conversion*, so far as regards *outward* conversion, the truth of it is out of all dispute: – that he was *converted*, *i.e.* that after having been a persecutor of the votaries of the new religion, he turned full round, and became a leader. Whether the so illustriously victorious effect, had for its cause a supernatural intercourse of Paul with Jesus after his resurrection and ascension, and thence for its accompaniment an *inward* conversion – in this lies the matter in dispute.

From those, by whom, in its essential particular, the statement is regarded as being true, a natural question may be – If the whole was an invention of his own, to what cause can we refer the other vision, the vision of Ananias? To what purpose should he have been at the pains of inventing, remembering, and all along supporting and defending, the vision of the unknown supposed associate? Answer. – To the purpose, it should seem, of giving additional breadth to the basis of his pretensions.

Among that people, in those times, the story of a vision was so common an article, – so difficultly distinguishable from, so easily confounded with, on the one hand the true story of a dream, on the other hand a completely false story of an occurrence, which, had it happened, would have been a supernatural one, but which never did happen, – that a basis, so indeterminate and aerial, would seem to have been in danger of not proving strong enough to support the structure designed to be reared upon it.

On the supposition of falsity, the case seems to be – that, to distinguish his vision from such as in those days were to be found among every man's stories, as well as in every history, – and which, while believed by some, were disbelieved and scorned by others, – either Paul or his historian bethought himself of this contrivance of a *pair* of visions: – a pair of corresponding visions, each of which should, by reference and acknowledgment, bear witness and give support to the other: a *pair* of visions: for, for simplicity of conception, it seems good not to speak any further, of the antecedent vision interwoven so curiously in the texture of one of them, after the similitude of the flower termed by some gardeners *hose in hose*.

Of this piece of machinery, which in the present instance has been seen played off with such brilliant success upon the theological theatre, the glory of the invention may, it is believed, be justly claimed, if not by Paul, by his historian. With the exception of one that will be mentioned presently<sup>13</sup>, no similar one has, upon inquiry, been found to present itself, in any history, Jewish or Gentile.

The other pair of visions there alluded to, is – that which is also to be found in the Acts: one of them ascribed to Saint Peter, the other to the centurion Cornelius.

Paul, or his historian? – The alternative was but the suggestion of the first moment. To a second glance the claim of the historian presents itself as incontestable. In the case of Peter's pair of visions, suppose the story the work of invention, no assignable competitor has the historian for the honour of it: in the case of Paul's pair of visions, supposing *that* the only pair, the invention was at least as likely to have been the work of the historian as of the hero: add to this pair the other pair – that other pair that presents itself in this same work of this same history – all competition is at an end. In the case of even the most fertile genius, copying is an easier task than invention: and, where the original is of a man's own invention, copying is an operation still easier than in the opposite case. That an occurrence thus curious should find so much as a single inventor, is a circumstance not a little extraordinary: but, that two separate wits should jump in concurrence in the production of it, is a supposition that swells the extraordinariness, and with it the improbability, beyond all bounds.

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<sup>13</sup> See Ch. xvii. §. v. 4. Peter's and Cornelius's visions.

## SECTION 7.

### COMMISSION TO PAUL BY JERUSALEM RULERS – COMMISSION TO BRING IN BONDS DAMASCUS CHRISTIANS – PAUL'S CONTEMPT PUT UPON IT

Per Acts, in the historical account, is stated the existence of a commission: – granters, the Jerusalem rulers; persons to whom addressed, Paul himself at Jerusalem; and the synagogues, *i. e.* the rulers of the synagogues, at Damascus: object, the bringing in custody, from Damascus to Jerusalem, all Christians found there: all adult Christians at any rate, females as well as males; at Paul's own *desire*, adds this same historical account (ix. 2.); "for to be punished," adds Paul 1st supposed unpremeditated oratorical account, xxii. 5. In the supposed premeditated oratorical account, Paul 2nd, the existence of authority and commission granted to him by the Chief Priests is indeed mentioned, xxvi. 12: but, of the object nothing is said.

In the unpremeditated oratorical account, such is the boldness of the historian, nothing will serve him but to make the orator call to witness the constituted authorities – the Jerusalem rulers – whoever they were, that were present, – to acknowledge the treachery and the aggravated contempt he had been guilty of towards themselves or their predecessors: towards themselves, if it be in the literal sense that what on this occasion he says is to be understood: "As also the High Priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the Elders, from whom also I received letters," &c., Acts xxii. 5. In the premeditated oratorical account, the boldness of the orator is not quite so prominent; he says – it was "with authority and commission from the Chief Priests" at Jerusalem, that he went to Damascus; but, for the correctness of this statement of his, he does not now call upon them, or any of them, to bear witness.

In respect of the description of the persons, of whom the Jerusalem rulers, exercising authority in their behalf, were composed, – the conformity, as between the several accounts, is altogether entire. In the historical account, it is the authority of the High Priest, and the High Priest alone, that is exercised: in the unpremeditated oratorical account, it is that of the High Priest and all the estate of the Elders: in the premeditated account, it is that of the Chief Priests: nothing said either of High Priests or Elders.

Neither, in the supposed unpremeditated oratorical account, is it stated – that, at the time and place of the tumult, the rulers thus called to witness, or any of them, were actually on the spot. But, the spot being contiguous to the Temple – the Temple, out of which Paul had been that instant dragged, before there had been time enough for accomplishing the determination that had been formed for killing him, – the distance, between the spot, at which Paul with the surrounding multitude was standing, Paul being under the momentary protection of the Roman commander – between this spot and the spot, whatever it was, at which the question might have been put to them, or some of them, could not be great.

On the part of the historian, the boldness, requisite for the ascribing the correspondent boldness to the orator, may be believed without much difficulty. The materials for writing being at hand, there was no more danger in employing them in the writing of these words, than in the writing of an equal number of other words.

Not so on the part of the orator himself. For, supposing the appeal made, the multitude might have saved themselves the trouble of putting him to death: the constituted authorities whom he was thus invoking – those rulers, against whom, by his own confession, he had committed this treason – would have been ready enough to proceed against him in the regular way, and take the business out of the hands of an unauthorized mob.

The truth of the story, and for that purpose the trustworthiness of the historian, being to be defended at any rate, – by some people, all this contradiction, all this mass of self-contradiction, will of course be referred to *artlessness*, or, to take the choice of another eulogistic word, to *simplicity*: and, of trustworthiness, this amiable quality, whatever may be the name given to it, will be stated as constituting sufficient proof. No such design, as that of deceiving, inhabited, it will be said, his artless bosom: no such design was he capable of harbouring: for, supposing any such wicked design harboured by him, could he have been thus continually off his guard?

But – by all this self-contradiction, the quality really proved is – not artlessness, but weakness: and, with the desire of deceiving, no degree of weakness, be it ever so high, is incompatible. By weakness, when risen even to insanity, artfulness is not excluded: and, in the fashioning, from beginning to end, of all this story, art, we see, is by no means deficient, how unhappily soever applied.

But the story being such as it is, what matters it, as to the credence due to it, in what state, in respect of probity, was the author's mind? Being, as it is, to such a degree untrustworthy and incredible, as that, in so many parts of it, it is impossible it should have been true, the truth of it is impossible: what matters it then, whether it be to the weakness of the moral, or to that of the intellectual, quarter of the author's mind, that the falsity is to be ascribed?

Not only in the whole does this history, anonymous as it is, present satisfactory marks of *genuineness*, – that is, of being written by the sort of person it professes to be written by, namely, a person who in the course of Paul's last excursion was taken into his suite; but in many parts, so does it of *historic verity*. True or not true, – like any other history ancient or modern, it has a claim to be provisionally taken for true, as to every point, in relation to which no adequate reason appears for the contrary: improbability, for example, of the supposed facts as related, contradictoriness to itself, contradictoriness to other more satisfactory evidence, or probable subjection to sinister and mendacity-prompting interest.

But, under so much self-contradiction as hath been seen, – whether *bias* be or be not considered, could any, the most ordinary fact, be regarded as being sufficiently proved?

Meantime, let not any man make to himself a pretence for rejecting the important position thus offered to his consideration; – let him not, for fear of its being the truth, shut his eyes against that which is presented to him as and for the truth; – let him not shut his eyes, on any such pretence, as that of its being deficient in the quality of *seriousness*. If, indeed, there be any such duty, religious or moral, as that of *seriousness*; and that the stating as absurd that which is really absurd is a violation of that duty; – at that rate, *seriousness* is a quality, incompatible with the delivery and perception of truth on all subjects, and in particular on this of the most vital importance: seriousness is a disposition to cling to falsehood, and to reject truth. In no part has any ridicule *ab extra*, been employed: – ridicule, by allusion made to another object, and that an irrelevant one.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> See Bentham's *Church of Englandism examined*.

## SECTION 8. COMPANIONS – HAD PAUL ANY UPON THE ROAD?

Meantime, if all these miraculous visions and other miracles must needs be supposed, – a cluster of other miracles, though not mentioned, must be supposed along with them: miracles, for the production of which a still greater mass of supernatural force must have been expended. Here, their existence being supposed, here were those companions of his, who, unknown in names and number, saw or saw not all or anything that he saw, and heard or heard not all or anything that he heard. These men, at any rate, if so it be that they themselves, blind or not blind, led him, as it is said they did, into the city, because he could not see to guide himself, – must, in some way or other, have perceived that something in no small degree extraordinary had happened to him: so extraordinary, that, in the condition in which he was, and in which, if they saw anything, they saw him to be – no such commission, as that, for the execution of which, if, as well as companions, they were his destined assistants, they were put under his command, – could, in any human probability, receive execution at his hands. If they were apprised of this commission of his, could they, whether with his consent or even without his consent, avoid repairing to the constituted authorities to tell them what had happened? This commission of his, so important in itself, and granted to a man of letters by men of letters, could not but have been in writing: and accordingly, in the form of letters we are, by the historian, expressly informed it was. Of the existence of these letters, on the tenor of which their future proceedings as well as his depended, – these conductors of his, if *he* did not, with or without his consent would of course have given information, to the rulers to whom these same letters were addressed. Not being struck dumb, nor having, amongst the orders given by the voice, received any order to keep silence, or so much as to keep secret anything of what little they had heard, they would scarcely, under these circumstances, have maintained either silence or secrecy. The historian, knowing what he (the historian) intended to do with his hero – knowing that, at three days' end, he intended not only to make scales fall from his eyes, but to fill his belly, – might not feel any great anxiety on his account. But Paul himself, if he, in the condition he is represented in by the historian, – was, for three days together, with scales on his eyes, and nothing in his stomach: and, at the end of the three days, as ignorant as at the beginning, whether the scales would, at any time, and when, drop off, and his stomach receive a supply: in such a state surely, a man could not but feel a curiosity, not unattended with impatience, to know when and how all this was to end. Under these circumstances, by some means or other, would all these tongues have been to be stopped: otherwise, instead of the house of Judas in Straight-street, Paul might have had no other place, to receive his visitor in, than the town jail, or some one other of those strong places, into which visitors do not always find it more easy to gain entrance, than inmates to get out.

These tongues then – Paul's tongue, his companions' tongues – this assemblage of tongues, all so strongly urged to let themselves loose – by what could they have been stopped? If, by anything, by a correspondent cluster of miracles – nothing less.

That, from Jerusalem, about the time in question, Paul went to Damascus, – and that it was with some such letters in his possession, – seems, as will be seen presently, altogether probable; – also, that when there, he acted in the way his historian speaks of, betraying the confidence reposed in him by the constituted authorities, and joining with those whom he had solicited and received a commission to destroy; – that these were among the circumstances of his alleged conversion, seems probable enough: – though he, with all the need he had of miracles, if any were to be had, gives not – in what he himself, writing to his Galatian converts, says of his conversion – any of the slightest hint of them.

As to his conversion – meaning his *outward* conversion, which was all that was necessary to the production of the effect so notoriously produced by him – to *that*, it will be seen, no miracle was necessary: nothing but what belonged to the ordinary course of things. As to companions on the

journey – whether he had any or not; and if he had any, whether they were attendants on his orders, or acquaintances of his not under his orders; or mere strangers into whose company accident threw him – all this we must satisfy ourselves, as well as we can, under the ignorance of.

That, for giving effect, by his means, to the sort of commission he went entrusted with, the power of local authorities was trusted to, is a supposition altogether natural. For bringing to Jerusalem "bound, for to be punished (Acts ix. 2. xxii. 4), all the Christians that could be found in Damascus, both men and women," if the Damascus rulers were favourable to the persecuting design, no large force from Jerusalem could be needful. Even a small one would be superfluous: and, by a force, great or small, sent from the one set of constituted authorities, a slight would be shown to the other.

## SECTION 9. IN PAUL'S EPISTLE TO HIS GALATIANS, – BY HIS SILENCE, ACTS' ACCOUNTS OF HIS CONVERSION ARE VIRTUALLY CONTRADICTED

Of Paul's *outward* conversion – conversion from the character of an authorized persecutor of the religion of Jesus, to that of a preacher of a religion preached in the name of Jesus – such, as we have seen, is the account given in the Acts; given by the author of the Acts, and by him alone. For, what ought never to be out of mind, if instead of two different accounts – declared by him as having been, on different occasions, delivered by Paul – he had given two hundred, still they would have been his: – not Paul's, but his.

All this while, now for little less than 1800 years, from Paul's own pen we have an account of this his conversion: and, of any such story as that of its being effected through the instrumentality of visions, – in this account of his, not any the slightest trace is to be found; – not any the slightest allusion to it.

At the time of his giving this account – supposing this story of the mode of his conversion true – supposing even that, though false, it had been got up and propagated – at the time of his giving the account which bears such unquestionable marks of being his, was the occasion such as to render it probable, that he could thus have omitted all allusion, to an occurrence at once so extraordinary and so important? If not, then so it is – that, by the silence of Paul himself, the story related by his historian is virtually contradicted.

The occasion here in view is – that of his writing the so often mentioned, and so often about to be mentioned, Epistle to his Galatian disciples.

At the time of his writing this letter, so we shall have occasion to see over and over again in the tenor of it, he was acting in opposition – declared and violent opposition – to the Apostles: struggling with them for the mastery; declaring that to them he was not beholden for anything; – that the Gospel he preached was not their Gospel, but a Gospel of his own, received by him directly from Jesus; – declaring, that in Jerusalem itself, the seat of their authority, he had preached this Gospel of his, which was not theirs; but confessing, at the same time, that when he did so, it was in a secret manner, for fear of the opposition, which he well knew, had they known of it, they could not but have made to it.

In this state of contention – supposing any such miracle as that in question wrought in his favour – was it in the nature of the case that he should have failed to avail himself of it? – to avail himself of the account which the truth – the important truth – would have so well warranted him in giving of it? Supposing it true, had there at that time been witnesses to it – any percipient witnesses – the supposed Ananias – the supposed companions on the road, – would he have failed making his appeal to their testimony? Supposing even that there were none such left, the truth of the occurrence – of an occurrence of such momentous importance, would it not have inspired him with boldness, sufficient for the assertion of it, with all that intensity for which the case itself furnished so sufficient a warrant, and which the vehemence of his character would have rendered it so impossible for him to avoid? Supposing even the story an utter falsehood, yet, had it been at this time got up and promulgated, could he, if he saw any tolerable prospect of its obtaining credence, have failed to endeavour to avail himself of it?

No, surely. Yet, in this his address, made to his Galatian disciples, and to all such inhabitants of that country, as he could see a prospect of numbering among his disciples – in this address, written under a sense of the necessity he was under, of making for his support against the Apostles, the most plausible case his ingenuity could enable him to make, – not any, so much as the slightest, hint of any such miracle, does he venture to give. *Revelation! revelation!* – on this single word – on the ideas,

which, in the minds with which he had to deal, he hoped to find associated with that word – on this ground, without any other, did he see himself reduced to seek support in his contest with the Apostles. Revelation? revelation from Jesus? from the Lord, speaking from heaven? from the Almighty? On what occasion, in what place, at what time, in what company, if in any, was it thus received? To no one of these questions does he venture to furnish an answer – or so much as an allusion to an answer. Why? – even because he had none to give. He had been a persecutor of the disciples of Jesus – this he confesses and declares: he became a preacher in the name of Jesus – this he also declares; a preacher in the name of him, of whose disciples – the whole fellowship of them – he had been a persecutor – a blood-thirsty and blood-stained persecutor. His conversion, whatever it amounted to, how came it about? what was the cause, the time, the place, the mode of it; who the percipient witnesses of it? To all these questions, *revelation*; in the single word is contained all the answer, which – in this letter – in this plea of his – he, audacious as he was, could summon up audacity enough to give. Why, on so pressing an occasion, this forbearing? Why? but that, had he ventured to tell any such story, that story being a false one, there were his opponents – there were the Apostles, or men in connection with the Apostles – to contradict it – to confute it.

Had he made reference to any specific, to any individual, portion of place and time, the pretended facts might have found themselves in contradiction with some real and provable facts. But, time as well as place being left thus unparticularized, – he left himself at liberty, on each occasion, if called upon for time or place, to assign what portion of time and place the occasion should point out to him as being most convenient; – best adapted to the purpose of giving lodgment to an appropriate falsity; – and without danger, or with little danger, of exposure.

At distinct and different times, *five* interviews we shall see him have, with the Apostles – one or more of them: the first interview being, – according to his own account, as given in this very Epistle, – at little if anything more, than three years' distance from the time of his quitting the occupation of persecution. Then, says he, it was, Gal. i. 17 and 18, that "I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days." In all these days, is it possible, that, if the conversion miracle had really taken place as stated in the Acts, with the companions on the road and Ananias for witnesses, – he should not have related to Peter, and, if not spontaneously, at any rate in answer to such questions as a man in Peter's situation could not fail to put, have brought to view, every the minutest circumstance? This then was the time – or at least *one* time – of his trial, on the question, *revelation or no revelation*. Here then, when, with such vehemence, declaring – not his independence merely, but his superiority, in relation to the Apostles – and *that* on no other ground than this alleged revelation, was it, had the judgment in that trial been in his favour – was it possible, that he should have omitted to avail himself of it? Yet no such attempt, we see, does he make: – no attempt, to avail himself of the issue of the trial, or of anything that passed on the occasion of it. Altogether does he keep clear of any allusion to it: and indeed, if his historian – the author of the Acts – is to be believed, – with very good reason: for, whatever it was that, on that occasion, he said, in the Acts it is expressly declared that, by the disciples at least, he was utterly disbelieved. Acts ix. 26: "He assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the Apostles," &c. Why it was, that, after the disciples had thus unanimously declared him and his story unworthy of credit, the Apostles gave him notwithstanding a sort of reception; – and that, by no countenance, which they on that occasion gave him, was any ground afforded, for the supposition that any more credence was given to him and his story, by them than by the disciples at large, – will be explained in its place.

## TABLE II. – PAUL DISBELIEVED

**Table —*Showing, at one View, the Passages, from which the Inference is drawn, that Paul's inward Conversion was never believed, by any of the Apostles, or their Disciples***

*Explanations.*— The Interviews here seen are between Paul and one or more Apostles. Number of Interviews five, – of Visits the same: whereof, by Paul to Peter, four, – by Peter to Paul, – one: besides the one supposed fictitious. Of the Accounts, Paul's as far as it goes, is taken for the standard. Of Paul's Epistles the genuineness is out of dispute: Acts history is anonymous. Paul's evidence is that of an alleged percipient witness. His historian's, – as to these matters, mostly that of a narrator, – narrating – but from hearsay, Probably from Paul's.

## **INTERVIEWS, A.D. 35 (I); A.D. 52 (III)**

### **As per Paul, Gal. A.D. 58**

#### ***1. Introduction***

Gal. 1:1. "Paul, an apostle, not from men, neither through man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead, and all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia: Grace to you and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us out of this present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father: to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen."

#### ***2. Independence Declared***

Gal. 1:6. "I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel; which is not another gospel: only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema. As we have said before, so say I now again, if any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema. For am I now persuading men, or God? or am I seeking to please men? if I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ.

"For I make known to you, brethren, as touching the gospel which was preached by me, that it is not after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ."

#### ***3. Conversion Spoken Of***

Ver. 13. "For ye have heard of my manner of life in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and made havock of it: and I advanced in the Jews' religion beyond many of mine own age among my countrymen, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when it was the good pleasure of God, who separated me, even from my mother's womb and called me through his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me: but I went away into Arabia; and again I returned unto Damascus."

#### ***4. Account of Interview I***

Ver. 18. "Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and tarried with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. Now touching the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. Then I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. And I was still unknown by face unto the churches of Judea which were in Christ: but they only heard say, He that once persecuted us now preacheth the faith of which he once made havock; and they glorified God in me."

### ***5. Account of Interview III. II***

Gal. 2:1. "Then after the space of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus also with me. And I went up by revelation; and I laid before them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately before them who were of repute, lest by any means I should be running, or had run, in vain. But not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: and that because of the false brethren privily brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: to whom we gave place in the way of subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. But from those who were reputed to be somewhat (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth not man's person) – they, I say, who were of repute imparted nothing to me: but contrariwise, when they say that I had been intrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision, even as Peter with the gospel of the circumcision, for he that wrought for Peter unto the apostleship of the circumcision wrought for me also unto the Gentiles."

### ***6. Partition Treaty***

Ver. 9. "And when they perceived the grace that was given unto me, James and Cephas and John, they who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship, that we should go unto the Gentiles, and they unto the circumcision; only they would that we should remember the poor; which very thing I was also zealous to do."

### ***7. Jealousy, Notwithstanding***

Ver. 11. "But when Cephas (Peter) came to Antioch, I resisted him to the face, because he stood condemned. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they came, he drew back and separated himself, fearing them that were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that even Barnabas was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Cephas before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest as do the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, how compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? We being Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, yet knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, save through faith in Jesus Christ, even we believed on Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law: because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. But if, while we sought to be justified in Christ, we ourselves also were found sinners, is Christ a minister of sin? God forbid. For if I build up again those things which I destroyed, I prove myself a transgressor. For I through the law died unto the law, that I might live unto God. I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me. I do not make void the grace of God: for if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nought."

## **INTERVIEW I. A.D. 35**

### **Paul's Jerusalem Visit I**

#### **Reconciliation Visit**

##### **(Departure from Damascus.)**

Acts 9:23-30. "And when many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel together to kill him: but their plot became known to Saul. And they watched the gates also day and night that they might kill him: but his disciples took him by night, and let him down through the wall, lowering him in a basket."

##### **(Arrival at Jerusalem – Results.)**

Ver. 26. "And when he was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: and they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus. And he was with them going in and going out at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord."

##### **(Departure – Cause.)**

Ver. 29. "And he spake and disputed against the Grecian Jews; but they went about to kill him. And when the brethren knew it, they brought him down to Cæsarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus."

## **INTERVIEW I. A.D. 35**

### **Departure – Cause**

#### **In Paul's First Account**

Acts 22:17-21. "And it came to pass, that, when I had returned to Jerusalem, and while I prayed in the temple, I fell into a trance, and saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: because they will not receive of thee testimony concerning me. And I said, Lord, they themselves know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee: and when the blood of Stephen thy witness was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting, and keeping the garments of them that slew him. And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee forth far hence unto the Gentiles."

## **INTERVIEW II. A.D. 43**

### **Paul's Jerusalem Visit II**

#### **Money-Bringing Visit**

Acts 11:22-30. "And the report concerning them came to the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and then sent forth Barnabas as far as Antioch: who, when he was come, and had seen the grace of God, was glad; and he exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord: for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord. And he went forth to Tarsus to seek for Saul: and when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that even for a whole year they were gathered together with the church, and taught much people; and that the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

"Now in these days there came down prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be a great famine over all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius. And the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren that dwelt in Judea: which also they did, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul."

## INTERVIEW III. A.D. 52

### Paul's Jerusalem Visit III

#### Deputation Visit

#### As per Acts xv. 1-21

Acts 25:1-23. "And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, saying, Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved. And when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and questioning with them, the brethren appointed that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. They therefore, being brought on their way by the church, passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church and the apostles and the elders, and they rehearsed all things that God had done with them. But there arose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees who believed, saying, It is needful to circumcise them, and to charge them to keep the law of Moses.

"And the apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider of this matter. And when there had been much questioning Peter rose up, and said unto them,

"Brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the heart, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; and he made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. Now therefore why tempt ye God, that ye should put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in like manner as they.

"And all the multitude kept silence; and they hearkened unto Barnabas and Paul rehearsing what signs and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them. And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying,

"Brethren, hearken unto me: Symeon hath rehearsed how first God did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,

"After these things I will return,  
And I will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen;  
And I will build again the ruins thereof,  
And I will set it up:  
That the residue of men may seek after the Lord,  
And all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called,  
Saith the Lord, who maketh these things known from the beginning  
of the world.

"Wherefore my judgment is, that we trouble not them which from among the Gentiles turn to God; but that we write unto them, that they abstain from the pollutions of idols, and from fornication,

and from what is strangled, and from blood. For Moses from generations of old hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath."

## INTERVIEW IV. A.D. 52

### Peter's Visit to Antioch

Acts 15:22-33. "Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to chose men out of their company, and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren: and they wrote thus by them, The apostles and the elder brethren unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greeting: Forasmuch as we have heard that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls; to whom we gave no commandment; it seemed good unto us, having come to one accord, to choose out men and send them unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who themselves also shall tell you the same things by word of mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication; from which if ye keep yourselves, it shall be well with you. Fare ye well.

"So they, when they were dismissed, came down to Antioch; and having gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle. And when they had read it, they rejoiced for the consolation. And Judas and Silas, being themselves also prophets, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them. And after they had spent some time there, they were dismissed in peace from the brethren unto those that had sent them forth."

## **INTERVIEW A.D. 52**

### **Paul's Visit**

**As per Acts xviii. 19-23**

**(Supposed Fictitious.)**

"And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews. And when they asked him to abide a longer time, he consented not; but taking his leave of them and saying, I will return again unto you, if God will, he set sail from Ephesus. And when he had landed at Cæsarea, he went up and saluted the church, and went down to Antioch. And having spent some time there, he departed, and went through the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, stablishing all the disciples."

## **INTERVIEW V. A.D. 60**

### **Paul's Jerusalem Visit IV**

#### **Invasion Visit**

##### ***(Visit Proposed. A.D. 56.)***

Acts 19:20-21. "Now after these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome. And having sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while."

##### ***(Visit Again Proposed. A.D. 60.)***

Acts 20:16. "For Paul had determined to sail past Ephesus, that he might not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hastening, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.

"And from Miletus he went to Ephesus, and called to him the elders of the church. And when they were come to him, he said unto them,

"Ye yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, after that manner I was with you all the time, serving the Lord with all lowliness of mind, and with tears, and with trials which befell me by the lots of the Jews: how that I shrank not from declaring unto you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost testifieth unto me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But I hold not my life of any account, as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, shall see my face no more."

Acts 21:7-9. "And when we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais; and we saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day. And on the morrow we departed, and came unto Caesarea: and entering into the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we abode with him. Now this man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy."

##### ***(Visit Opposed. A.D. 60.)***

Ver. 10. "And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judea a certain prophet, named Agabus. (See Acts xi. 27.)

"And coming to us, and taking Paul's girdle, he bound his own feet and hands, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. And when we heard these things, both we and they of that place besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, What do ye, weeping and breaking

my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done."

## **INTERVIEW V. A.D. 60**

### **Paul's Jerusalem Visit IV**

#### **Invasion Visit – Results**

##### **Arrival**

Acts 21:15-36. "And after these days we took up our baggage, and went up to Jerusalem. And there went with us also certain of the disciples from Cæsarea, bringing with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we should lodge.

"And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly."

##### **Test, Proposed for Riddance**

"And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present. And when he had saluted them, he rehearsed one by one the things which God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry. And they, when they heard it, glorified God; and they said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of them which have believed; and they are all zealous for the law: and they have been informed concerning thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs. What is it therefore? they will certainly hear that thou art come. Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them; these take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges for them, that they may shave their heads: and all shall know that there is no truth in the things whereof they have been informed concerning thee; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, keeping the law. But as touching the Gentiles which have believed, we wrote, giving judgment that they should keep themselves from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what is strangled, and from fornication."

##### **The Test Swallowed**

"Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them went into the temple, declaring the fulfilment of the days of purification, until the offering was offered for every one of them."

##### **Indignation Universal**

"And when the seven days were almost completed, the Jews from Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the multitude, and laid hands on him, crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place: and moreover he brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath defiled this holy place. For they had before seen with him in the city Trophimus the Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple. And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they laid hold on Paul,

and dragged him out of the temple: and straightway the doors were shut. And as they were seeking to kill him, tidings came up to the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in confusion. And forthwith he took soldiers and centurions, and ran down upon them: and they, when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, left off beating Paul. Then the chief captain came near, and laid hold on him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and inquired who he was, and what he had done. And some shouted one thing, some another, among the crowd: and when he could not know the certainty for the uproar, he commanded him to be brought into the castle. And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the crowd; for the multitude of the people followed after, crying out, Away with him."

## **CHAPTER II**

### **Outward Conversion – how produced – how planned**

## SECTION 1. MOTIVE, TEMPORAL ADVANTAGE – PLAN

How flourishing the state of the church had at this period become, will be seen more fully in another place. Long before this period, – numbers of converts, in Jerusalem alone, above three thousand. The aggregate, of the property belonging to the individuals, had been formed into one common fund: the management – too great a burden for the united labours of the eleven Apostles, with their new associate Mathias – had, under the name so inappositely represented at present by the English word *deacon*, been committed to seven trustees; one of whom, Stephen, had, at the instance of Paul, been made to pay, with his life, for the imprudence, with which he had, in the most public manner, indulged himself, in blaspheming the idol of the Jews – their temple.<sup>15</sup>

Of that flourishing condition, Paul, under his original name of Saul, had all along been a witness. While carrying on against it that persecution, in which, if not the original instigator, he had been a most active instrument, persecuting, if he himself, in what he is made to say, in Acts xxii. 4, is to be believed, – "persecuting unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women;" – while thus occupied, he could not in the course of such his disastrous employment, have failed to obtain a considerable insight into the state of their worldly affairs.

Samaria – the field of the exploits and renown of the great sorcerer Simon, distinguished in those times by the name of *Magus*– Samaria, the near neighbour and constant rival, not to say enemy, of Jerusalem; – is not more than about five and forty miles distant from it. To Paul's alert and busy mind, – the offer, made by the sorcerer, to purchase of the Apostles a share in the government of the church, could not have been a secret.

At the hands of those rulers of the Christian Church, this offer had not found acceptance. Shares in the direction of their affairs were not, like those in the government of the British Empire in these our days, objects of sale. The nine rulers would not come into any such bargain; their disciples were not as cattle in their eyes: by those disciples themselves no such bargain would have been endured; they were not as cattle in their own eyes.

But, though the bargain proposed by the sorcerer did not take place, this evidence, which the offer of it so clearly affords, – this evidence, of the value of a situation of that sort in a commercial point of view, could not naturally either have remained a secret to Paul, or failed to engage his attention, and present to his avidity and ambition a ground of speculation – an inviting field of enterprise.

From the time when he took that leading part, in the condemnation and execution, of the too flamingly zealous manager, of the temporal concerns of the associated disciples of that disastrous orator, by whom the preaching and spiritual functions might, with so much happier an issue, have been left in the hands of the Apostles – from that time, down to that in which we find him, with letters in his pocket, from the rulers of the Jews in their own country, to the rulers of the same nation under the government of the neighbouring state of Damascus, he continued, according to the Acts ix. 1; "yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord."

Of these letters, the object was – the employing the influence of the authorities from which they came, viz. the High Priest and the Elders, to the purpose of engaging those to whom they were addressed, to enable him to bring in bonds, to Jerusalem from Damascus, all such converts to the religion of Jesus, as should have been found in the place last mentioned.

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<sup>15</sup> Acts vii. ver. 47. Speech of St. Stephen. "But Solomon built him an house. Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest?" In itself, perfectly comfortable all this, to the dictates of reason and the instruction of Jesus: but not the less clear blasphemy against the Mosaic law.

In his own person the author of the Acts informs us – that, by Saul, letters to this effect were *desired*<sup>16</sup>. In a subsequent chapter, in the person of Paul, viz. in the speech, to the multitude by whom he had been dragged out of the Temple, in the design of putting him to death, he informs us they were actually *obtained*<sup>17</sup>.

It was in the course of this his journey, and with these letters in his pocket, that, in and by the vision seen by him while on the road – at that time and not earlier – his conversion was, according to his own account of the matter, effected.

That which is thought to have been already proved, let it, at least for argument's sake, be affirmed. Let us say accordingly – this vision-story was a mere fable. On this supposition, then, what will be to be said of those same letters? – of the views in which they were obtained? – of the use which was eventually made of them? – of the purpose to which they were applied? For all these questions one solution may serve. From what is known beyond dispute – on the one hand, of his former way of life and connections – on the other hand, of his subsequent proceeding – an answer, of the satisfactoriness of which the reader will have to judge, may, without much expense of thought, be collected.

If, in reality, no such vision was perceived by him, no circumstance remains manifest whereby the change which so manifestly and notoriously took place in his plan of life, came to be referred to *that* point in the field of time – in preference to any antecedent one.

Supposing, then, the time of the change to have been antecedent to the commencement of that journey of his to Damascus – antecedent to the time of the application, in compliance with which his letter from the ruling powers at Jerusalem the object of which was to place at his disposal the lot of the Christians at Damascus, was obtained; – this supposed, what, in the endeavour to obtain this letter, was his object? Manifestly to place in his power these same Christians: to place them in his power, and thereby to obtain from them whatsoever assistance was regarded by him as necessary for the ulterior prosecution of his schemes, as above indicated.

On this supposition, in the event of their giving him that assistance, which, in the shape of money and other necessary shapes, he required – on this supposition, he made known to them his determination, not only to spare their persons, but to join with them in their religion; and, by taking the lead in it among the heathen, to whom he was, in several respects, so much better qualified for communicating it than any of the Apostles or their adherents, to promote it to the utmost of his power. An offer of this nature – was it in the nature of things that it should be refused? Whatsoever was most dear to them – their own personal security, and the sacred interests of the new religion, the zeal of which was yet flaming in their bosoms, concurred in pressing it upon their acceptance.

With the assistance thus obtained, the plan was – to become a declared convert to the religion of Jesus, for the purpose of setting himself at the head of it; and, by means of the expertness he had acquired in the use of the Greek language, to preach, in the name of Jesus, that sort of religion, by the preaching of which, an empire over the minds of his converts, and, by that means, the power and opulence to which he aspired, might, with the fairest prospect of success, be aimed at.

But, towards the accomplishment of this design, what presented itself as a necessary step, was – the entering into a sort of *treaty*, and forming at least in appearance, a sort of junction, with the leaders of the new religion and their adherents – the Apostles and the rest of the disciples. As for *them*, in acceding to this proposal, on the supposition of anything like sincerity and consistency on his part, *they* would naturally see much to gain and nothing to lose: much indeed to gain; no less than peace and security, instead of that persecution, by which, with the exception of the Apostles themselves, to

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<sup>16</sup> Acts ix. ver. 1 and 2. "And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the Disciples of the Lord, *went* unto the High Priest, – And *desired* of him letters to Damascus to the Synagogues, &c."

<sup>17</sup> Acts xxii. ver. 5. "As also the High Priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the Elders: from *whom also I received letters* unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem for to be punished."

all of whom experience seems, without exception, to have imparted the gift of prudence, the whole fraternity had so lately been driven from their homes, and scattered abroad in various directions.

With the Christians at Damascus, that projected junction was actually effected by him: but, in this state of things, to return to Jerusalem was not, at that time, to be thought of. In the eyes of the ruling powers, he would have been a trust-breaker – a traitor to their cause: in the eyes of the Christians, he would have been a murderer, with the blood of the innocent still reeking on his hands: no one would he have found so much as to lend an ear to his story, much less to endure it. In Damascus, after making his agreement with his new brethren, there remained little for him to do. Much had he to inform himself of concerning Jesus. Damascus – where Jesus had already so many followers – Damascus was a place for him to *learn* in: not to *teach* in: – at any rate, at that time.

Arabia, a promising field of enterprise – Arabia, a virgin soil, opened to his view. There he would find none to abhor his person – none to contradict his assertions: there his eloquence – and, under the direction of his judgment, his invention – would find free scope: in that country the reproach of inconsistency could not attach upon him: in that foreign land he beheld his place of quarantine – his school of probation – the scene of his novitiate. By a few years employed in the exercise of his new calling – with that spirit and activity which would accompany him of course in every occupation to which he could betake himself – he would initiate himself in, and familiarize himself with, the connected exercises of preaching and spiritual rule. At the end of that period, whatsoever might be his success in that country, such a portion of time, passed in innocence, would at any rate allay enmity: such a portion of time, manifestly passed, in the endeavour at any rate to render service to the common cause, might even establish confidence.

At the end of that time, he might, nor altogether without hope of success, present himself to the rulers of the church, in the metropolis of their spiritual empire: "Behold, he might say, in me no longer a persecutor, but a friend. The persecutor has long vanished: he has given place to the friend. Too true it is, that I was so once your persecutor. Years spent in unison with you – years spent in the service of the common cause – have proved me. You see before you, a tried man – an ally of tried fidelity: present me as such to your disciples: take me into your councils: all my talent, all my faculties, shall be yours. The land of Israel will continue, as it has been, the field of *your* holy labours; the land of the Gentiles shall be mine: we will carry on our operations in concert; innumerable are the ways in which each of us will derive from the other – information, assistance, and support."

To Arabia he accordingly repaired: so, in his Epistle to the Galatians, Gal. i. 17, he himself informs us: in that little-known country, he continued three whole years – so also, in the same place, he informs us. There it was, that he experienced that success, whatever it was, that went to constitute the ground, of the recommendation given of him by Barnabas to the Apostles. From thence he returned to Damascus: and, in that city, presenting himself in his regenerated character, and having realized by his subsequent conduct the expectations raised by his promises at the outset of his career<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Yet, for even at the outset, after certain "days spent with the disciples," and employed of course in receiving from them the necessary instructions, he preached Jesus with such energy and success as not only to "confound," Acts ix. 19 to 24, the unbelieving among the Jews, but to provoke them to "take counsel to kill him."

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