

**FINDLAY  
GEORGE  
GILLANDERS**

THE EXPOSITOR'S BIBLE:  
THE EPISTLE TO THE  
GALATIANS

George Findlay

**The Expositor's Bible: The  
Epistle to the Galatians**

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# George G. Findlay

## The Expositor's Bible: The Epistle to the Galatians

### THE PROLOGUE.

#### Chapter i. 1-10

### CHAPTER I. THE ADDRESS

*"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."<sup>1</sup> – Gal. i. 1, 2.*

Antiquity has nothing to show more notable in its kind, or more precious, than this letter of Paul to the Churches of Galatia. It takes us back, in some respects nearer than any other document we possess, to the beginnings of Christian theology and the Christian Church. In it the spiritual consciousness of Christianity first reveals itself in its distinctive character and its full strength, free from the trammels of the past, realizing the advent of the new kingdom of God that was founded in the death of Christ. It is the voice of the Church testifying "God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts." Buried for a thousand years under the weight of the Catholic legalism, the teaching of this Epistle came to life again in the rise of Protestantism. Martin Luther put it to his lips as a trumpet to blow the reveillé of the Reformation. His famous Commentary summoned enslaved Christendom to recover "the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free." Of all the great Reformer's writings this was the widest in its influence and the dearest to himself. For the spirit of Paul lived again in Luther, as in no other since the Apostle's day. The Epistle to the Galatians is the charter of Evangelical faith.

The historical criticism of the present century has brought this writing once more to the front of the conflict of faith. Born in controversy, it seems inevitably to be born for controversy. Its interpretation forms the pivot of the most thoroughgoing recent discussions touching the beginnings of Christian history and the authenticity of the New Testament record. The Galatian Epistle is, in fact, the key of New Testament Apologetics. Round it the Roman and Corinthian Letters group themselves, forming together a solid, impregnable quaternion, and supplying a fixed starting-point and an indubitable test for the examination of the critical questions belonging to the Apostolic age. Whatever else may be disputed, it is agreed that there was an apostle Paul, who wrote these four Epistles to certain Christian societies gathered out of heathenism, communities numerous, widely scattered, and containing men of advanced intelligence; and this within thirty years of the death of Jesus Christ. Every critic must reckon with this fact. The most sceptical criticism makes a respectful pause before our Epistle. Hopeless of destroying its testimony, Rationalism treats it with an even exaggerated deference; and seeks to extract evidence from it against its companion witnesses amongst the New Testament writings. This attempt, however misdirected, is a signal tribute to the importance of the document, and to the force with which the personality of the writer and the conditions of the time have stamped themselves upon it. The deductions of the Baurian criticism appear to us to rest

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<sup>1</sup> The text used in this exposition is, with very few exceptions, that of the Revised English Version, or its margin.

on a narrow and arbitrary examination of isolated passages; they spring from a mistaken *à priori* view of the historical situation. Granting however to these inferences, which will meet us as we proceed, their utmost weight, they still leave the testimony of Paul to the supernatural character of Christianity substantially intact.

Of the four major Epistles, this one is superlatively characteristic of its author. It is *Paulinissima Paulinarum*— most Pauline of Pauline things. It is largely autobiographical; hence its peculiar value. Reading it, we watch history in the making. We trace the rise of the new religion in the typical man of the epoch. The master-builder of the Apostolic Church stands before us, at the crisis of his work. He lets us look into his heart, and learn the secret of his power. We come to know the Apostle Paul as we know scarcely any other of the world's great minds. We find in him a man of the highest intellectual and spiritual powers, equally great in passion and in action, as a thinker and a leader of men. But at every step of our acquaintance the Apostle points us beyond himself; he says, "It is not I: it is Christ that lives in me." If this Epistle teaches us the greatness of Paul, it teaches us all the more the Divine greatness of Jesus Christ, before whom that kingly intellect and passionate heart bowed in absolute devotion.

The situation which the Epistle reveals and the personal references in which it abounds are full of interest at every point. They furnish quite essential data to the historian of the Early Church. We could wish that the Apostle, telling us so much, had told us more. His allusions, clear enough, we must suppose, to the first readers, have lent themselves subsequently to very conflicting interpretations. But as they stand, they are invaluable. The fragmentary narrative of the Acts requires, especially in its earlier sections, all the illustration that can be obtained from other sources. The conversion of Paul, and the Council at Jerusalem, events of capital importance for the history of Apostolic times, are thereby set in a light certainly more complete and satisfactory than is furnished in Luke's narrative, taken by itself. And Paul's references to the Judean Church and its three "pillars," touch the crucial question of New Testament criticism, namely that concerning the relation of the Gentile Apostle to Jewish Christianity and the connection between his theology and the teaching of Jesus. Our judgement respecting the conflict between Peter and Paul at Antioch in particular will determine our whole conception of the legalist controversy, and consequently of the course of Church history during the first two centuries. Around these cursory allusions has gathered a contest only less momentous than that from which they sprung.

The personal and the doctrinal element are equally prominent in this Epistle; and appear in a combination characteristic of the writer. Paul's theology is the theology of experience. "It pleased God," he says, "to reveal His Son in me" (ch. i. 16). His teaching is cast in a psychological mould. It is largely a record of the Apostle's spiritual history; it is the expression of a living, inward process – a personal appropriation of Christ, and a growing realization of the fulness of the Godhead in Him. The doctrine of Paul was as far as possible removed from being the result of abstract deduction, or any mere combination of data externally given. In his individual consciousness, illuminated by the vision of Christ and penetrated by the Spirit of God, he found his message for the world. "We believe, and therefore speak. We have received the Spirit of God, that we may know the things freely given us of God: " sentences like these show us very clearly how the Apostle's doctrine formed itself in his mind. His apprehension of Christ, above all of the cross, was the focus, the creative and governing centre, of all his thoughts concerning God and man, time and eternity. In the light of this knowledge he read the Old Testament, he interpreted the earthly life and teaching of Jesus. On the ground of this personal sense of salvation he confronted Peter at Antioch; on the same ground he appeals to the vacillating Galatians, sharers with himself in the new life of the Spirit. Here lies the nerve of his argument in this Epistle. The theory of the relation of the Law to the Abrahamic promise developed in the third chapter, is the historical counterpart of the relation of the legal to the evangelical consciousness, as he had experienced the two states in turn within his own breast. The spirit of Paul was a microcosm,

in which the course of the world's religious evolution was summed up, and brought to the knowledge of itself.

The Apostle's influence over the minds of others was due in great part to the extraordinary force with which he apprehended the facts of his own spiritual nature. Through the depth and intensity of his personal experience he touched the experience of his fellows, he seized on those universal truths that are latent in the consciousness of mankind, "by manifestation of the truth commending himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God." But this knowledge of the things of God was not the mere fruit of reflection and self-searching; it was "the ministration of the Spirit." Paul did not simply *know* Christ; he was one with Christ, "joined to the Lord, one spirit" with Him. He did not therefore speak out of the findings of his own spirit; the absolute Spirit, the Spirit of truth and of Christ, spoke in him. Truth, as he knew it, was the self-assertion of a Divine life. And so this handful of old letters, broken and casual in form, with their "rudeness of speech," their many obscurities, their rabbinical logic, have stirred the thoughts of men and swayed their lives with a power greater perhaps than belongs to any human utterances, saving only those of the Divine Master.

The features of Paul's style show themselves here in their most pronounced form. "The style is the man." And the whole man is in this letter. Other Epistles bring into relief this or that quality of the Apostle's disposition and of his manner as a writer; here all are present. The subtlety and trenchant vigour of Pauline dialectic are nowhere more conspicuous than in the discussion with Peter in ch. ii. The discourse on Promise and Law in ch. iii. is a master-piece of exposition, unsurpassed in its keenness of insight, breadth of view, and skill of application. Such passages as ch. i. 15, 16; ii. 19, 20; vi. 14, take us into the heart of the Apostle's teaching, and reveal its mystical depth of intuition. Behind the masterful dialectician we find the spiritual seer, the man of contemplation, whose fellowship is with the eternal and unseen. And the emotional temperament of the writer has left its impress on this Epistle not less distinctly than his mental and spiritual gifts. The denunciations of ch. i. 6-10; ii. 4, 5; iv. 9; v. 7-12; vi. 12-14, burn with a concentrated intensity of passion, a sublime and holy scorn against the enemies of the cross, such as a nature like Paul's alone is capable of feeling. Nor has the Apostle penned anything on the other hand more amiable and touching, more winningly frank and tender in appeal, than the entreaty of ch. iv. 11-20. His last sentence, in ch. vi. 17, is an irresistible stroke of pathos. The ardour of his soul, his vivacity of mind and quick sensibility, are apparent throughout. Those sudden turns of thought and bursts of emotion that occur in all his Epistles and so much perplex their interpreters, are especially numerous in this. And yet we find that these interruptions are never allowed to divert the writer from his purpose, nor to destroy the sequence of his thought. They rather carry it forward with greater vehemence along the chosen course, as storms will a strong and well-manned ship. The Epistle is strictly a unity. It is written, as one might say, at a single breath, as if under pressure and in stress of mind. There is little of the amplitude of expression and the delight in lingering over some favourite idea that characterize the later Epistles. Nor is there any passage of sustained eloquence to compare with those that are found in the Roman and Corinthian letters. The business on which the Apostle writes is too urgent, his anxiety too great, to allow of freedom and discursiveness of thought. Hence this Epistle is to an unusual degree closely packed in matter, rapid in movement, and severe in tone.

In its construction the Epistle exhibits an almost dramatic character. It is full of action and animation. There is a gradual unfolding of the subject, and a skilful combination of scene and incident brought to bear on the solution of the crucial question. The Apostle himself, the insidious Judaizers, and the wavering Galatians, – these are the protagonists of the action; with Peter and the Church at Jerusalem playing a secondary part, and Abraham and Moses, Isaac and Ishmael, appearing in the distance. The first Act conducts us rapidly from scene to scene till we behold Paul labouring amongst the Gentiles, and the Churches of Judea listening with approval to the reports of his success. The Council of Jerusalem opens a new stage in the history. Now Gentile liberties are at stake; but Titus' circumcision is successfully resisted, and Paul as the Apostle of the Uncircumcised is acknowledged

by "the pillars" as their equal; and finally Peter, when he betrays the truth of the Gospel at Antioch, is corrected by the Gentile Apostle. The third chapter carries us away from the present conflict into the region of first principles, – to the Abrahamic Covenant with its spiritual blessing and world-wide promise, opposed by the condemning Mosaic Law, an opposition finally resolved by the coming of Christ and the gift of His Spirit of adoption. At this point the Apostle turns the gathered force of his argument upon his readers, and grapples with them front to front in the expostulation carried on from ch. iv. 8 to v. 12, in which the story of Hagar forms a telling episode. The fifth and closing Act, extending to the middle of ch. vi., turns on the antithesis of Flesh and Spirit, bringing home the contention to the region of ethics, and exhibiting to the Galatians the practical effect of their following the Pauline or the Judaistic leadership. Paul and the Primitive Church; Judaism and Gentile-Christian liberties; the Covenants of Promise and of Law; the circumcision or non-circumcision of the Galatians; the dominion of Flesh or Spirit: these are the contrasts through which the Epistle advances. Its centre lies in the decisive question given in the *fourth* of these antitheses. If we were to fix it in a single point, ver. 2 of ch. v. is the sentence we should choose: —

"Behold, I Paul say unto you,  
If ye be circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing."

The above analysis may be reduced to the common threefold division, followed in this exposition: – viz. (1) *Personal History*, ch. i. 11-ii. 21; (2) *Doctrinal Polemic*, ch. iii. 1-v. 12; (3) *Ethical Application*, ch. v. 13-vi. 10.

The epistolary Introduction forms the *Prologue*, ch. i. 1-10; and an *Epilogue* is appended, by way of renewed warning and protestation, followed by the concluding signature and benediction, – ch. vi. 11-18.

The Address occupies the first two verses of the Epistle.

I. On the one side is *the writer*: "Paul, an Apostle." In his earliest Letters (to Thessalonica) the title is wanting; so also in Philippians and Philemon. The last instance explains the other two. To the Macedonian Churches Paul writes more in the style of friendship than authority: "for love's sake he rather entreats." With the Galatians it is different. He proceeds to define his apostleship in terms that should leave no possible doubt respecting its character and rights: "not from men," he adds, "nor through man; but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, that raised Him from the dead."

This reads like a contradiction of some statement made by Paul's opposers. Had they insinuated that he *was* "an apostle from men," that his office was derived, like their own, only from the mother Church in Jerusalem? Such insinuations would very well serve their purpose; and if they were made, Paul would be sure not to lose a moment in meeting them.

The word *apostle* had a certain latitude of meaning.<sup>2</sup> It was already, there is reason to believe, a term of Jewish official usage when our Lord applied it to His chosen Twelve. It signified a *delegate* or *envoy*, accredited by some public authority, and charged with a special message. We can understand therefore its application to the emissaries of particular Churches – of Jerusalem or Antioch, for example – despatched as their messengers to other Churches, or with a general commission to proclaim the Gospel. The recently discovered "Teaching of the Apostles" shows that this use of the title continued in Jewish-Christian circles to the end of the first century, alongside of the restricted

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<sup>2</sup> Compare Acts xiv. 4, 14 (*Barnabas and Paul*); 1 Thess. ii. 6 (*Paul and his comrades*); Rom. xvi. 7 (*Andronicus and Junias*); 2 Cor. viii. 23 (*Titus and others*, "apostles of the churches"); 2 Cor. xi. 13 ("false apostles": *Judean emissaries*); also Rev. ii. 2; Heb. iii. 1; John xiii. 16. On the N.T. use of *apostle*, see Lightfoot's Galatians, pp. 92-101; but especially Huxtable's *Dissertation* in the Pulpit Commentary (Galatians), pp. xxiii. – l., the most satisfactory elucidation of the subject we have met with. Prebendary Huxtable however presses his argument too far, when he insists that St. Paul held his higher commission entirely in abeyance until the crisis of the Judaic controversy.

and higher use. The lower apostleship belonged to Paul in common with Barnabas and Silas and many others.

In the earlier period of his ministry, the Apostle was seemingly content to rank in public estimation with his companions in the Gentile mission. But a time came when he was compelled to arrogate to himself the higher dignity. His right thereto was acknowledged at the memorable conference in Jerusalem by the leaders of the Jewish Church. So we gather from the language of ch. ii. 7-9. But the full exercise of his authority was reserved for the present emergency, when all his energy and influence were required to stem the tide of the Judaistic reaction. We can well imagine that Paul "gentle in the midst" of his flock and "not seeking to be of weight" (1 Thess. ii. 6, 7), had hitherto said as little as need be on the subject of his official rights. His modesty had exposed him to misrepresentations both in Corinth and in Galatia. He will "have" these people "to know" that his gospel is in the strictest sense Divine, and that he received his commission, as certainly as any of the Twelve, from the lips of Jesus Christ Himself (ver. 11).

"Not from men" excludes human derivation; "not through man," human intervention in the conferment of Paul's office. The singular number (*man*) replaces the plural in the latter phrase, because it stands immediately opposed to "Jesus Christ" (a striking witness this to His Divinity). The second clause carries the negation farther than the first; for a call from God may be, and commonly is, imposed by human hands. There are, says Jerome, four kinds of Christian ministers: first, those sent neither from men nor through man, like the prophets of old time and the Apostles; secondly, those who are from God, but through man, as it is with their legitimate successors; thirdly, those who are from men, but not from God, as when one is ordained through mere human favour and flattery; the fourth class consists of such as have their call neither from God nor man, but wholly from themselves, as with false prophets and the false apostles of whom Paul speaks. His vocation, the Apostle declares, was superhuman, alike in its origin and in the channel by which it was conveyed. It was no voice of man that summoned Saul of Tarsus from the ranks of the enemies to those of the servants of Christ, and gave him the message he proclaimed. Damascus and Jerusalem in turn acknowledged the grace given unto him; Antioch had sent him forth on her behalf to the regions beyond: but he was conscious of a call anterior to all this, and that admitted of no earthly validation. "Am I not an apostle?" he exclaims, "have I not seen Jesus our Lord?" (1 Cor. ix. 1). "Truly the signs of the Apostle were wrought in him," both in the miraculous powers attending his office, and in those moral and spiritual qualities of a minister of God in which he was inferior to none.<sup>3</sup> For the exercise of his ministry he was responsible neither to "those of repute" at Jerusalem, nor to his censurers at Corinth; but to Christ who had bestowed it (1 Cor. iv. 3, 4).

The call of the Apostle proceeded also from "God the Father, who raised Jesus Christ from the dead." Christ was in this act the mediator, declaring the Supreme will. In other places, more briefly, he styles himself "Apostle by the will of God." His appointment took place by a Divine intervention, in which the ordinary sequence of events was broken through. Long after the Saviour in His bodily presence had ascended to heaven, when in the order of nature it was impossible that another Apostle should be elected, and when the administration of His Church had been for several years carried on by human hands, He appeared once more on earth for the purpose of making this man His "minister and witness;" He appeared in the name of "the Father, who had raised Him from the dead." This interposition gave to Paul's ministry an exceptional character. While the mode of his election was in one aspect humbling, and put him in the position of "the untimely one," the "least of the Apostles," whose appearance in that capacity was unlooked for and necessarily open to suspicion; on the other hand, it was glorious and exalting, since it so richly displayed the Divine mercy and the transforming power of grace.

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<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 10; 2 Cor. iv. 2; vi. 3-10; xi. 5, 16-xii. 13.

But why does he say, *who raised Him from the dead?* Because it was the *risen Jesus* that he saw, and that he was conscious of seeing in the moment of the vision. The revelation that arrested him before Damascus, in the same moment convinced him that Jesus was risen, and that he himself was called to be His servant. These two convictions were inseparably linked in Paul's recollections. As surely as God the Father had raised His Son Jesus from the dead and given Him glory, so surely had the glorified Jesus revealed Himself to Saul his persecutor to make him His Apostle. He was, not less truly than Peter or John, a witness of His resurrection. The message of the Resurrection was the burden of the Apostleship.

He adds, "and all the brethren which are with me." For it was Paul's custom to associate with himself in these official letters his fellow-labourers, present at the time. From this expression we gather that he was attended just now by a considerable band of companions, such as we find enumerated in Acts xx. 2-6, attending him on his journey from Ephesus to Corinth during the third missionary tour. This circumstance has some bearing on the date of the letter. Bishop Lightfoot (in his Commentary) shows reason for believing that it was written, not from Ephesus as commonly supposed, but at a somewhat later time, from *Macedonia*. It is connected by numerous and close links of internal association with the Epistle to the Romans, which on this supposition speedily followed, and with 2 Corinthians, immediately preceding it. And the allusion of the text, though of no decisive weight taken by itself, goes to support this reasoning. Upon this hypothesis, our Epistle was composed in Macedonia, during the autumn of 57 (or possibly, 58) A.D. The emotion which surcharges 2 Corinthians runs over into Galatians: while the theology which labours for expression in Galatians finds ampler and calmer development in Romans.

II. Of *the readers*, "the churches of Galatia," it is not necessary to say much at present. The character of the Galatians, and the condition of their Churches, will speak for themselves as we proceed. *Galatian* is equivalent to *Gaul*, or *Kelt*. This people was a detached fragment of the great Western-European race, which forms the basis of our own Irish and West-British populations, as well as of the French nationality. They had conquered for themselves a home in the north of Asia Minor during the Gaulish invasion that poured over South-eastern Europe and into the Asiatic peninsula some three and a half centuries before. Here the Gallic intruders stubbornly held their ground; and only succumbed to the irresistible power of Rome. Defeated by the Consul Manlius in 189 B.C., the Galatians retained their autonomy, under the rule of native princes, until in the year 25 B.C., on the death of Amyntas, the country was made a province of the Empire. The people maintained their distinctive character and speech despite these changes. At the same time they readily acquired Greek culture, and were by no means barbarians; indeed they were noted for their intelligence. In religion they seem to have largely imbibed the Phrygian idolatry of the earlier inhabitants.

The Roman Government had annexed to Galatia certain districts lying to the south, in which were situated most of the cities visited by Paul and Barnabas in their first missionary tour. This has led some scholars to surmise that Paul's "Galatians" were really Pisidians and Lycaonians, the people of Derbe, Lystra, and Pisidian Antioch. But this is improbable. The inhabitants of these regions were never called Galatians in common speech; and Luke distinguishes "the Galatic country" quite clearly from its southern borderlands. Besides, the Epistle contains no allusions, such as we should expect in the case supposed, to the Apostle's earlier and memorable associations with these cities of the South. Elsewhere he mentions them by name (2 Tim. iii. 11); and why not here, if he were addressing this circle of Churches?

The Acts of the Apostles relates nothing of Paul's sojourn in Galatia, beyond the fact that he twice "passed through the Galatic country" (Acts xvi. 6; xviii. 23), on the first occasion during the second missionary journey, in travelling north and then westwards from Pisidia; the second time, on his way from Antioch to Ephesus, in the course of the third tour. Galatia lay outside the main line of Paul's evangelistic career, as the historian of the Acts describes it, outside the Apostle's own design, as it would appear from ch. iv. 13. In the first instance Galatia follows (in the order of the Acts), in

the second precedes Phrygia, a change which seems to indicate some new importance accruing to this region: the further clause in Acts xviii. 23, "strengthening all the disciples," shows that the writer was aware that by this time a number of Christian societies were in existence in this neighbourhood.

No *city* is mentioned in the address, but the *country* of Galatia only – the single example of the kind in Paul's Epistles. The Galatians were countryfolk rather than townfolk. And the Church seems to have spread over the district at large, without gathering itself into any one centre, such as the Apostle had occupied in other parts of his Gentile field.

Still more significant is the curtness of this designation. Paul does not say, "To the Churches of God in Galatia," or "to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ," as in other Epistles. He is in no mood for compliments. These Galatians are, he fears, "removing from God who had called them" (ver. 6). He stands in doubt of them. It is a question whether they are now, or will long continue, "Churches of God" at all. He would gladly commend them if he could; but he must instead begin with reproaches. And yet we shall find that, as the Apostle proceeds, his sternness gradually relaxes. He remembers that these "foolish Galatians" are his "children," once ardently attached to him (ch. iv. 12-20). His heart yearns towards them; he travails over them in birth again. Surely they will not forsake him, and renounce the gospel of whose blessings they had enjoyed so rich an experience (ch. iii. 3; v. 10). He calls them "brethren" once and again; and with this kindly word, holding out the hand of forgiveness, he concludes the letter.

## CHAPTER II. THE SALUTATION

*"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." – Gal. i. 3-5.*

The greetings and benedictions of the Apostolic Letters deserve more attention from us than they sometimes receive. We are apt to pass over them as if they were a kind of pious formality, like the conventional phrases of our own epistles. But to treat them in such fashion is to do injustice to the seriousness and sincerity of Holy Scripture. This salutation of "Grace and Peace" comes from Paul's very heart. It breathes the essence of his gospel.

This formula appears to be of the Apostle's coining. Other writers, we may believe, borrowed it from him. *Grace* represents the common Greek salutation, —*joy to you*, χαίρειν changing to the kindred χάρις; while the more religious *peace* of the Hebrew, so often heard from the lips of Jesus, remains unaltered, only receiving from the New Covenant a tenderer significance. It is as though East and West, the old world and the new, met here and joined their voices to bless the Church and people of Jesus Christ.

*Grace* is the sum of all blessing bestowed by God; *peace*, in its wide Hebraic range of meaning, the sum of all blessing experienced by man. *Grace* is the Father's goodwill and bounty in Christ to His undeserving children; *peace*, the rest and reconciliation, the recovered health and gladness of the child brought home to the Father's house, dwelling in the light of his Father's face. *Grace* is the fountain of redeeming love; *peace* is the "river of life proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb," that flows calm and deep through each believing soul, the river whose "streams make glad the city of God."

What could a pastor wish better for his people, or friend for the friend he loves most, than this double blessing? Paul's letters are perfumed with its fragrance. Open them where you will, they are breathing out, "Grace to you and peace." Paul has hard things to write in this Epistle, sorrowful complaints to make, grievous errors to correct; but still with "Grace and peace" he begins, and with "Peace and grace" he will end! And so this stern and reproachful letter to these "foolish Galatians" is all embalmed and folded up in grace and peace. That is the way to "be angry and sin not." So mercy rejoices over judgement.

These two benedictions, we must remember, go together. Peace comes through grace. The proud heart never knows peace; it will not yield to God the glory of His grace. It scorns to be a debtor, even to Him. The proud man stands upon his rights, upon his merits. And he will have them; for God is just. But peace is not amongst them. No sinful child of man deserves that. Is there wrong between your soul and God, iniquity hidden in the heart? Till that wrong is confessed, till you submit to the Almighty and your spirit bows at the Redeemer's cross, what hast thou to do with peace? No peace in this world, or in any world, for him who will not be at peace with God. "When I kept silence," so the ancient confession runs (Ps. xxxii. 3-5), "my bones waxed old through my moaning all the day long" – that is why many a man is old before his time! because of this continual inward chafing, this secret, miserable war of the heart against God. "Day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture was turned into the drought of summer" – the soul withered like grass, all the freshness and pure delight of life wasted and perishing under the steady, unrelenting heat of the Divine displeasure. "Then I said" – I could bear it no longer – "I said, I will confess my transgression unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." And then peace came to the weary soul. The bitterness and hardness of life were gone; the heart was young again. The man was new born, a child of God.

But while Paul gives this salutation to all his Churches, his greeting is extended and qualified here in a peculiar manner. The Galatians were falling away from faith in Christ to Jewish ritualism. He does not therefore wish them "Grace and peace" in a general way, or as objects to be sought from any quarter or by any means that they might choose; but only "from God our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins." Here is already a note of warning and a tacit contradiction of much that they were tempted to believe. It would have been a mockery for the Apostle to desire for these fickle Galatians grace and peace on other terms. As at Corinth, so in Galatia, he is "determined to know nothing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Above the puerilities of their Jewish ritual, above the pettiness of their wrangling factions, he directs his readers' gaze once more to the sacrifice of Calvary and the sublime purpose of God which it reveals.

Do *we* not need to be recalled to the same sight? We live in a distracted and distracting age. Even without positive unbelief, the cross is too frequently thrust out of view by the hurry and press of modern life. Nay, in the Church itself is it not in danger of being practically set on one side, amidst the throng of competing interests which solicit, and many of them justly solicit, our attention? We visit Calvary too seldom. We do not haunt in our thoughts the sacred spot, and linger on this theme, as the old saints did. We fail to attain "the fellowship of Christ's sufferings;" and while the cross is outwardly exalted, its inward meaning is perhaps but faintly realised. "Tell us something new," they say; "that story of the cross, that evangelical doctrine of yours we have heard it so often, we know it all so well!" If men are saying this, if the cross of Christ is made of none effect, its message staled by repetition, we must be strangely at fault either in the hearing or the telling. Ah, if we knew the cross of Christ, it would crucify us; it would possess our being. Its supremacy can never be taken from it. That cross is still the centre of the world's hope, the pillar of salvation. Let the Church lose her hold of it, and she loses everything. She has no longer any reason to exist.

I. So the Apostle's greeting invites his readers to contemplate anew *the Divine gift bestowed upon sinful men*. It invokes blessing upon them "from our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins."

To see this gift in its greatness, let us go a little farther back; let us consider who the Christ is that thus "gives Himself." He is, we are taught, the almoner of all the Divine bounties. He is not the object alone, but the depositary and dispenser of the Father's good pleasure to all worlds and all creatures. Creation is rooted in "the Son of God's love" (Col. i. 15-18). Universal life has its fountain in "the Only-begotten, which is in the bosom of the Father." The light that dispelled the weltering gloom of chaos, the more wondrous light that shone in the dawn of human reason, came from this "outbeaming of the Father's glory." Countless gifts had He, "the life of men, the Word that was from the beginning," bestowed on a world that knew Him not. Upon the chosen race, the people whom on the world's behalf he formed for Himself, He showered His blessings. He had given them promise and law, prophet and priest and king, gifts of faith and hope, holy obedience and brave patience and deep wisdom and prophetic fire and heavenly rapture; and His gifts to them have come through them to us, "partakers with them of the root and fatness of the olive tree."

But now, to crown all, *He gave Himself!* "The Word became flesh." The Son of God planted Himself into the stock of human life, made Himself over to mankind; He became the Son of man. So in the fulness of time came the fulness of blessing. Earlier bestowments were instalments and prophecies of this; later gifts are its outcome and its application. What could He have done more than this? What could the Infinite God do more, even for the most worthy, than He has done for us in "sending His Son, the Only-begotten, that we might live through Him!" Giving us Him, surely He will give us grace and peace.

And if our Lord Jesus Christ "gave Himself," is not that sufficient? What could Jewish ritual and circumcision add to this "fulness of the Godhead?" Why hunt after the shadows, when one has the substance? Such were the questions which the Apostle has to ask his Judaizing readers. And what, pray, do *we* want with modern Ritualism, and its scenic apparatus, and its priestly offices? Are these

things designed to eke out the insufficiency of Christ? Will they recommend Him better than His own gospel and the pure influence of His Spirit avail to do in these latter days? Or has modern thought, to be sure, and the progress of the 19th century carried us beyond Jesus Christ, and created spiritual wants for which He has no supply? Paul at least had no anticipation of this failure. All the need of hungry human hearts and searching minds and sorrowing spirits, to the world's latest ages, the God of Paul, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is able to supply in Him. "We are complete in Him," – if we but knew our completeness. The most advanced thinkers of the age will still find Jesus Christ in advance of them. Those who draw the most largely from His fulness, leave its depths unsounded. There are resources stored for the times to come in the revelation of Christ, which our age is too slight, too hasty of thought, to comprehend. We are straitened in ourselves; never in Him.

From this supreme gift we can argue down to the humblest necessities, the commonest trials of our daily lot. It adapts itself to the small anxieties of a struggling household, equally with the largest demands of our exacting age. "Thou hast given us Thy Son," says some one, "and wilt Thou not give us bread?" We have a generous Lord. His only complaint is that we do not ask enough. "Ye are My friends," He says: "I have given My life for you. Ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Giving us Himself, He has given us all things. Abraham and Moses, David and Isaiah, "Paul and Apollos and Cephas – yea the world itself, life and death, things present and to come – all are ours; and we are Christ's and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. iii. 22, 23). Such is the chain of blessing that hangs on this single gift.

Great as the gift is, it is not greater than our need. Wanting a Divine Son of man, human life remains a baffled aspiration, a pathway leading to no goal. Lacking Him, the race is incomplete, a body without its head, a flock that has no master. By the coming of Christ in the flesh human life finds its ideal realized; its haunting dream of a Divine helper and leader in the midst of men, of a spiritual and immortal perfection brought within its reach, has attained fulfilment. "God hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David; as He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began." Jacob's vision has come true. There is the golden ladder, with its foot resting on the cold, stony earth, and its top on heaven's starry platform, with its angels ascending and descending through the darkness; and you may climb its steps, high as you will! So humanity receives its crown of life. Heaven and earth are linked, God and man reunited in the person of Jesus Christ.

But Paul will not suffer us to linger at Bethlehem. He hastens on to Calvary. The Atonement, not the Incarnation, is in his view the centre of Christianity. To the cross of Jesus, rather than to His cradle, he attaches our salvation. "Jesus Christ gave Himself" – what for, and in what way? What was the errand that brought Him here, in such a guise, and at such a time? Was it to meet our *need*, to fulfil our human aspirations, to crown the moral edifice, to lead the race onward to the goal of its development? Yes – ultimately, and in the final issue, for "as many as receive Him"; it was to "present every man perfect in Christ." But that was not the primary object of His coming, of such a coming. Happy for us indeed, and for Him, if it could have been so. To come to a world waiting for Him, hearkening for the cry, "Behold thy God, O Israel," would have been a pleasant and a fitting thing. But to find Himself rejected by His own, to be spit upon, to hear the multitude shout, "Away with Him!" was this the welcome that He looked for? Yea surely, nothing else but this. For He gave Himself *for our sins*. He came to a world steeped in wickedness, seething with rebellion against God, hating Him because it hated the Father that sent Him, sure to say as soon as it saw Him, "We will not have this man to reign over us." Not therefore by way of incarnation and revelation alone, as it might have been for an innocent race; but by way of *sacrifice*, as a victim on the altar of expiation, "a lamb led to the slaughter," He gave Himself up for us all. "To deliver us from an evil world," says the Apostle; to mend a faulty and imperfect world, something less and other would have sufficed.

Extreme diseases call for extreme remedies. The case with which our good Physician had to deal was a desperate one. The world was sick at heart; its moral nature rotting to the core. Human life

was shattered to its foundation. If it was to be saved, if the race was to escape perdition, the fabric must be reconstructed upon another basis, on the ground of a new righteousness, outside ourselves and yet akin to us, near enough to take hold of us and grow into us, which should draw to itself the broken elements of human life, and as a vital organic force refashion them, "creating" men "anew in Christ Jesus" – a righteousness availing before God, and in its depth and width sufficient to bear a world's weight. Such a new foundation Jesus Christ has laid in His death. "He laid down His life for us," the Shepherd for the sheep, the Friend for His perishing friends, the Physician for sufferers who had no other remedy. It had come to this, – either He must die, or we must die for ever. Such was the sentence of the All-wise Judge; on that judgement the Redeemer acted. "His judgements are a great deep"; and in this sentence there are depths of mystery into which we tremble to look, "secret things that belong unto the Lord our God." But so it was. There was no way but this, no moral possibility of saving the world, and yet saving Him the accursed death.

If there had been, would not the Almighty Father have found it out? would He not have "taken away the cup" from those white, quivering lips? No; He must *die*. He must consent to be "made sin, made a curse" for us. He must humble His stainless innocence, humble His glorious Godhead down to the dust of death. He must die, at the hands of the men He created and loved, with the horror of the world's sin fastened on Him; die under a blackened heaven, under the averting of the Father's face. And He did it. He said, "Father, Thy will be done. Smite the Shepherd; but let the sheep escape." So He "gave Himself for our sins."

Ah, it was no easy march, no holiday pageant, the coming of the Son of God into this world of ours. He "came to *save sinners*." Not to help good men – this were a grateful task; but to redeem bad men – the hardest work in God's universe. It tasked the strength and the devotion of the Son of God. Witness Gethsemane. And it will cost His Church something, more haply than we dream of now, if the work of the Redeemer is to be made effectual, and "the travail of His soul satisfied."

In pity and in sorrow was that gift bestowed; in deep humility and sorrow must it be accepted. It is a very humbling thing to "receive the atonement," to be made righteous on such terms as these. A man who has done well, can with satisfaction accept the help given him to do better. But to know that one has done very ill, to stand in the sight of God and truth condemned, marked with the disgrace that the crucifixion of the Son of God has branded on our human nature, with every stain of sin in ourselves revealed in the light of His sacrifice, is a sore abasement. When one has been compelled to cry out, "Lord, save; or I perish!" he has not much left to plume himself upon. There was Saul himself, a perfect moralist, "blameless in the righteousness of the law." Yet he must confess, "How to perform that which is good I find not. In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing. Wretch that I am, who shall deliver me?" Was not this mortifying to the proud young Pharisee, the man of strict conscience and high-souled moral endeavour? It was like death. And whoever has with sincerity made the same attempt to attain in the strength of his will to a true virtue, has tasted of this bitterness.

This however is what many cannot understand. The proud heart says, "No; I will not stoop to that. I have my faults, my defects and errors, not a few. But as for what you call *sin*, as for guilt and inborn depravity, I am not going to tax myself with anything of the kind. Leave me a little self-respect." So with the whole herd of the self-complacent, half-religious Laodiceans. Once a week they confess themselves "miserable sinners," but their sins against God never yet cost them one half hour of misery. And Paul's "gospel is hid to them." If they read this Epistle, they cannot tell what it is all about; why Paul makes so much ado, why these thunderings of judgement, these cries of indignation, these beseechings and protestings and redoubled arguments, – all because a parcel of foolish Galatians wanted to play at being Jews! They are inclined to think with Festus, that this good Paul was a little beside himself. Alas! to such men, content with the world's good opinion and their own, the death of Christ is made of none effect. Its moral grandeur, its infinite pathos, is lost upon them. They pay it a conventional respect, but as for *believing* in it, as for making it their own, and dying with Christ to live in Him – they have no idea what it means. That, they will tell you, is "mysticism," and they are

practical men of the world. They have never gone out of themselves, never discovered their moral insufficiency. These are they of whom Jesus said, "The publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." It is our human independence, our moral self-conceit, that robs us of the Divine bounty. How should God give His righteousness to men so well furnished with their own? "Blessed" then "are the poor in spirit"; blessed are the broken in heart – poor enough, broken enough, bankrupt enough to stoop to a Saviour "who gave Himself for our sins."

II. Sinful men have made an *evil world*. The world, as Paul knew it, was evil indeed. "The existing evil age," he says, the world as it then was, in contrast with the glory of the perfected Messianic kingdom.

This was a leading distinction of the rabbinical schools; and the writers of the New Testament adopt it, with the necessary modification, that "the coming age," in their view, commences with the *Parousia*, the full advent of the Messiah King.<sup>4</sup> The period that intervenes since His first appearing is transitional, belonging to both eras. It is the conclusion of "this world,"<sup>5</sup> to which it appertains in its outward and material relations;<sup>6</sup> but under the perishing form of the present there lies hidden for the Christian believer the seed of immortality, "the earnest" of his future and complete inheritance.<sup>7</sup> Hence the different and seemingly contradictory ways in which Scripture speaks of the world that now is.

To Paul at this time the world wore its darkest aspect. There is a touching emphasis in the order of this clause. "The present world, *evil as it is*:" the words are a sigh for deliverance. The Epistles to Corinth show us how the world just now was using the Apostle. The wonder is that one man could bear so much. "We are made as the filth of the world," he says, "the offscouring of all things."<sup>8</sup> So the world treated its greatest living benefactor. And as for his Master – "the princes of this world crucified the Lord of glory." Yes, it was a bad old world, that in which Paul and the Galatians lived – false, licentious, cruel. And that "evil world" still exists.

True, the world, as we know it, is vastly better than that of Paul's day. Not in vain have Apostles taught, and martyrs bled, and the Church of Christ witnessed and toiled through so many ages. "Other men have laboured; we enter into their labours." An English home of to-day is the flower of the centuries. To those cradled in its pure affections, endowed with health and honourable work and refined tastes, the world must be, and was meant to be, in many aspects a bright and pleasant world. Surely the most sorrowful have known days in which the sky was all sunshine and the very air alive with joy, when the world looked as when it came forth fresh from its Creator's hand, "and behold, it was very good." There is nothing in the Bible, nothing in the spirit of true religion to damp the pure joy of such days as these. But there are "the days of darkness;" and they are many. The Serpent has crept into our Paradise. Death breathes on it his fatal blast.

And when we look outside the sheltered circles of home-life and Christian brotherhood, what a sea of misery spreads around us. How limited and partial is the influence of religion. What a mass of unbelief and godlessness surges up to the doors of our sanctuaries. What appalling depths of iniquity exist in modern society, under the brilliant surface of our material civilization. And however far the dominance of sin in human society may be broken – as, please God, it shall be broken, still evil is likely to remain in many tempting and perilous forms until the world is burnt to ashes in the fires of the Last Judgement. Is it not an evil world, where every morning newspaper serves up to us its miserable tale of disaster and of crime, where the Almighty's name is "all the day blasphemed," and every night drunkenness holds its horrid revels and the daughters of shame walk the city streets,

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<sup>4</sup> 2 Thess. i. 5-7; 2 Tim. iv. 18; Heb. x. 12, 13; 1 Pet. v. 10.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. x. 11; Heb. ix. 26.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 31; 1 John ii. 17.

<sup>7</sup> Rom. viii. 18; Eph. i. 13, 14.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 9-13; xv. 30, 32; 2 Cor. vi. 4, 10; xi. 16, 33.

where great Christian empires tax the poor man's bread and make his life bitter to maintain their huge standing armies and their cruel engines of war, and where, in this happy England and its cities teeming with wealth, there are thousands of patient, honest working women, whose life under the fierce stress of competition is a veritable slavery, a squalid, dreary struggle just to keep hunger from the door? Ay, it is a world so evil that no good and right-thinking man who knows it, would care to live in it for a single day, but for the hope of helping to make it better.

Now it was the purpose of Jesus Christ, that for those who believe in Him this world's evil should be brought absolutely to an end. He promises a full deliverance from all that tempts and afflicts us here. With sin, the root of evil, removed, its bitter fruits at last will disappear. We shall rise to the life immortal. We shall attain our perfect consummation and bliss both in body and soul. Kept from the evil of the world while they remain in it, enabled by His grace to witness and contend against it, Christ's servants shall then be lifted clean out for it of ever. "Father, I will," prayed Jesus, "that they also whom Thou hast given Me, may be with Me where I am." To that final salvation, accomplished in the redemption of our body and the setting up of Christ's heavenly kingdom, the Apostle's words look forward: "that He might deliver us *out of* this present evil world." This was the splendid hope which Paul offered to the dying and despairing world of his day. The Galatians were persuaded of it and embraced it; he entreats them not to let it go.

The self-sacrifice of Christ, and the deliverance it brings, are both, the Apostle concludes, "according to the will of God, even our Father." The wisdom and might of the Eternal are pledged to the work of human redemption. The cross of Jesus Christ is the manifesto of Infinite Love. Let him therefore who rejects it, know against Whom he is contending. Let him who perverts and falsifies it, know with what he is trifling. He who receives and obeys it, may rest assured that all things are working for his good. For all things are in the hands of our God and Father; "to Whom," let us say with Paul, "be glory for ever. Amen."

## CHAPTER III. THE ANATHEMA

*"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." – Gal. i. 6-10.*

After the Salutation in Paul's Epistles comes the Thanksgiving. Ἐυχαριστῶ or Εὐλογητός – these are the words we expect first to meet. Even in writing to Corinth, where there was so much to censure and deplore, he begins, "I give thanks to my God always for you." This letter deviates from the Apostle's devout and happy usage. Not "I give thanks," but "I marvel;" not blessing, but *anathema* is coming from his lips: a surprise that jars all the more upon one's ears, because it follows on the sublime doxology of the preceding verse. "I marvel to see you so quickly falling away to another gospel... But if any one preach unto you any gospel other than that ye received – ay, though it were ourselves, or an angel from heaven – I have said once, and I say again, Let him be Anathema."

These words were well calculated to startle the Galatians out of their levity. They are like a lightning-flash which shows one to be standing on the edge of a precipice. We see at once the infinite seriousness of the Judaic controversy, the profound gulf that lies between Paul and his opposers. He is for open war. He is in haste to fling his gage of defiance against these enemies of the cross. With all his tact and management, his readiness to consult the susceptibilities and accommodate the scruples of sincere consciences, the Apostle can find no room for conciliation here. He knows the sort of men he has to deal with. He perceives that the whole truth of the Gospel is at stake. Not circumstantial, but essentials; not his personal authority, but the honour of Christ, the doctrine of the cross, is involved in this defection. He must speak plainly; he must act strongly, and at once; or the cause of the Gospel is lost. "If I continued any longer to please men," he says, "I should not be a servant of Christ." To stand on terms with such opponents, to palter with this "other gospel," would be treason against Him. There is but one tribunal at which this quarrel can be decided. To Him "who had called" the Galatian believers "in Christ's grace," who by the same grace had called the Apostle to His service and given him the message he had preached to them – to *God* he appeals. In His name, and by the authority conferred upon him and for which he must give account, he pronounces these troublers "anathema." They are enemies of Christ, by their treachery excluded from His kingdom.

However unwelcome, however severe the course the Apostle takes, he has no alternative. "For now," he cries, "is it *men* that I persuade, or *God*?" He must do his duty, let who will condemn. Paul was ready to go all lengths in pleasing men in consistence with loyalty to Christ, where he could do it "for their good, unto edification." But if their approval clashed with God's, then it became "a very small thing:"<sup>9</sup> he did not heed it one jot. Such is the temper of mind which the Epistles to Corinth disclose in Paul at this juncture. In the same spirit he indites these trenchant and displeasing words.

With a heavy heart Paul has taken up his pen. If we judge rightly of the date of this letter, he had just passed through the darkest hour of his experience, when not his life alone, but the fate of his Gentile mission hung in the balance. His expulsion from Ephesus, coming at the same time

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<sup>9</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 3, 4; 2 Cor. v. 9-12; xii. 19.

as the Corinthian revolt, and followed by a prostrating attack of sickness, had shaken his soul to its depths. Never had his heart been so torn with anxiety, never had he felt himself so beaten down and discomfited, as on that melancholy journey from Ephesus to Macedonia.<sup>10</sup> "Out of anguish of heart and with many tears" and after-relentings (2 Cor. ii. 4; vii. 8) he wrote his First letter to Corinth. And this Epistle is even more severe. There runs through it a peculiar mental tension, an exaltation of feeling such as prolonged and deep suffering leaves behind in a nature like Paul's. "The marks of Jesus" (ch. vi. 17) are visible, impressed on his spirit no less than on his body. The Apostle's heart is full to overflowing. Its warm glow is felt under the calmer course of narrative and argument: while at the beginning and end of the Epistle it breaks forth in language of burning indignation and melting pathos. Before advancing a single step, before entering on any sort of explanation or discussion, his grief at the fickleness of his Galatian children and his anger against their seducers must find expression.

These sentences demand, before we proceed further, a few words of exegetical definition. For the reference of "so quickly" it is needless to go beyond the verb it qualifies. The Apostle cannot surely mean, "*so soon* falling away (after your conversion)." For the Galatian Churches had been founded five, if not seven, years before this time; and the backsliding of recent converts is less, and not more, surprising than of established believers. What astonishes Paul is the *suddenness* of this movement, the facility with which the Galatians yielded to the Judaizing "persuasion," the rapid spread of this new leaven. As to the double "other" (ἕτερον, *different*, R.V. – ἄλλο) of vv. 6 and 7, and the connection of the idiomatic "only" (εἰ μὴ, *except*), – we regard the second *other* as an abrupt correction of the first; while the *only* clause, extending to the end of ver. 7, mediates between the two, qualifying the statement "There is no other gospel," by showing in what sense the writer at first had spoken of "another." "Ye are falling away," says he, "to another sort of gospel – which is not another, except that there are certain that trouble you and would fain pervert the gospel of Christ." The word *gospel* is therefore in the first instance applied ironically. Paul yields the sacred title up to his opponents, only to snatch it out of their false hands. "*Another* gospel! there is only one; although there are men that falsify it, and seek to foist something else upon you in its name." Seven times in this context (vv. 6-11) does the Apostle reiterate, in noun or verb, this precious word, as though he could not let it go. A strange sort of "good news" for the Galatians, that they must be circumcised forsooth, and observe the Jewish Kalendar! (ch. v. 2, 3; vi. 12; iv. 9, 10.)

I. In Paul's view, there is but one gospel for mankind. *The gospel of Jesus Christ bears a fixed, inviolable character.*

On this position the whole teaching of Paul rests, – and with it, may we not add, Christianity itself? However variously we may formulate the essentials of a Christian man's faith, we are generally agreed that there are such essentials, and that they are found in Paul's gospel to the Gentiles. With him the good tidings about Christ constituted a very definite and, as we should say, *dogmatic* body of truth. In whatever degree his gospel has been confused and overlaid by later teachings, to his own mind its terms were perfectly clear, and its authority incontestable. With all its breadth, there is nothing nebulous, nothing limp or hesitating about the theology of Paul. In its main doctrines it is fixed and hard as adamant; and at the challenge of this Judaistic perversion it rings out an instant and peremptory denial. It was the ark of God on which the Jewish troublers laid their unholy hands. "Christ's grace" is lodged in it. God's call to mankind was conveyed by these "good tidings." The Churches which the Apostle had planted were "God's husbandry, God's building," and woe to the man who tampered with the work, or sought to lay another foundation than that which had been laid (1 Cor. iii. 5-11). To distort or mutilate "the word of the truth of the gospel," to make it mean now one thing and now another, to disturb the faith of half-instructed Christians by captious reasonings and self-interested perversions, was a capital offence, a sin against God and a crime against humanity.

<sup>10</sup> 2 Cor. i. 8-10; ii. 12, 13; iv. 8-11; vii. 5-7.

Paul possesses in his gospel truth of unspeakable value to mankind, the supreme revelation of God's mercy to the world. And he is prepared to launch his anathema against every wilful impugner, no matter what his pretensions, or the quarter from which he comes.

"Well," it may be said, "this is sheer religious intolerance. Paul is doing what every dogmatist, every ecclesiastical bigot has done in his turn. His beliefs are, to be sure, *the* truth; and accordingly he unchurches and anathematizes those who cannot agree with him. With all his nobility of mind, there is in Paul a leaven of Jewish rancour. He falls short of the sweet reasonableness of Jesus." So some will say, and in saying claim to represent the mild and tolerant spirit of our age. But is there not in every age an intolerance that is just and necessary? There is a logical intolerance of sophistry and trifling. There is a moral intolerance of impurity and deceit. And there is a religious intolerance, which includes both these and adds to them a holy jealousy for the honour of God and the spiritual welfare of mankind. It is mournful indeed to think how many crimes have been perpetrated under the cloak of pious zeal. *Tantum Religio potuit suadere malorum*. The corruption of Christianity by human pride and cruelty has furnished copious illustrations of the terrible line of Lucretius. But the perversion of this noblest instinct of the soul does not take away either its reasonableness or its use. The quality of a passion is one thing; the mode of its expression is another. The hottest fires of bigotry are cold when compared with the scorching intolerance of Christ's denunciations of the Pharisees. The anathemas of Jesus and of Paul are very different from those of arrogant pontiffs, or of narrow sectaries, inflamed with the idolatry of their own opinions. After all, the zeal of the rudest fanatic in religion has more in it of manly worth and moral capability than the languors of a blasé scepticism, that sits watching with amused contempt the strife of creeds and the search of human hearts after the Living God. There is an idle, listless, cowardly tolerance, as there is an intolerance that is noble and just.

The *one gospel* has had many interpreters. Their voices, it must be confessed, sound strangely discordant. While the teachings of Christianity excite so intensely a multitude of different minds, of every variety of temper and capacity, contradiction will inevitably arise. Nothing is easier than to scoff at "the Babel of religious opinions." Christian truth is necessarily refracted and discoloured in passing through disordered natures and defective minds. And, alas, that Church which claims to hold the truth without possibility of error or variation, has perverted Christ's gospel most of all.

But notwithstanding all differences, there exists a large and an increasing measure of agreement amongst the great body of earnest Christians. Slowly, yet surely, one debate after another comes to its settlement. The noise and publicity with which discussion on matters of faith is carried on in an age of religious freedom, and when liberty of thought has outrun mental discipline, should not lead us to exaggerate the extent of our disagreements. In the midst of human controversy and error, the Spirit of truth is carrying on His work. He is the supreme witness of Jesus Christ. And He abides with us for ever. The newly awakened historical conscience of our times is visibly making for unity. The Church is going back to the New Testament. And the more thoroughly she does this, the more directly and truthfully she addresses herself to the original record and comes face to face with Christ and His Apostles there, so much the more shall we realize the oneness and certainty of "the faith once delivered to the saints." Beneath the many superstructures, faulty and changing in their form, we reach the one "foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone." There we touch solid rock. "The unity of the faith" lies in "the knowledge of the Son of God." Of Him we shall learn most from those who knew Him best. Let us transport ourselves into the fellowship of His first disciples; and listen to His gospel as it came fresh from the lips of Peter and John and Paul, and the Divine Master Himself. Let us bid the voices of the centuries be silent, that we may *hear Him*.

For the Galatian readers, as for Paul, there could be but *one gospel*. By his voice the call of God had reached their hearts, (ver. 6; ch. v. 8). The witness of the Spirit of God and of Christ in the supernatural gifts they had received, and in the manifold fruit of a regenerate life (ch. iii. 2-5; v. 22, 23), was evidence to them that the Apostle's message was "the true gospel of the grace of God."

This they had gratefully acknowledged at the time of his first visit (ch. iv. 15). The proclamation of the crucified and risen Christ had brought to them unspeakable blessing. Through it they received the knowledge of God; they were made consciously sons of God, heirs of life eternal (ch. iii. 26; iv. 6-9; vi. 8). To entertain any other gospel, after this experience and all these professions, was an act of apostasy. "Ye are deserting (like runaway soldiers), *turning renegades* from God: " such is the language in which Paul taxes his readers. In listening to the persuasion of the Judaists, they were "disobeying the truth" (ch. v. 7, 8). They were disloyal to conscience; they were trifling with the most sacred convictions of their lives, and with the testimony of the Spirit of God. They were forgetting the cross of Christ, and making His death of none effect. Surely they must have been "bewitched" to act thus; some deadly spell was upon them, which had laid memory and conscience both to sleep (ch. ii. 21-iii. 3).

The nature and the contents of the two "gospels" current in Galatia will be made clear in the further course of the Epistle. They were the gospels of Grace and of Law respectively; of Salvation by Faith, and by Works; of life in the Spirit, and in the Flesh; of the Cross and the Resurrection on the one hand, and of Circumcision and the Kalendar and "Clean meats" on the other; the gospels of inwardness, and of externalism – of Christ, and of self. The conflict between these two was the great struggle of Paul's life. His success was, historically speaking, the salvation of Christianity.

But this contention did not end with his victory. The Judaistic perversion appealed to tendencies too persistent in our nature to be crushed at one blow. The gospel of externalism is dear to the human heart. It may take the form of culture and moralities; or of "services" and sacraments and churchly order; or of orthodoxy and philanthropy. These and such things make themselves our idols; and trust in them takes the place of Faith in the living Christ. It is not enough that the eyes of our heart should once have seen the Lord, that we should in other days have experienced "the renewing of the Holy Ghost." It is possible to forget, possible to "remove from Him that called us in the grace of Christ." With little change in the form of our religious life, its inward reality of joy in God, of conscious sonship, of fellowship in the Spirit, may be utterly departed. The gospel of formalism will spring up and flourish on the most evangelical soil, and in the most strictly Pauline Churches. Let it be banned and barred out never so completely, it knows how to find entrance, under the simplest modes of worship and the soundest doctrine. The serried defence of Articles and Confessions constructed against it will not prevent its entrance, and may even prove its cover and intrenchment. Nothing avails, as the Apostle says, but a constant "new creation." The life of God in human souls is sustained by the energy of His Spirit, perpetually renewed, ever proceeding from the Father and the Son. "The life that I live in the flesh, I live by the Faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." This is the true orthodoxy. The vitality of his personal faith in Christ kept Paul safe from error, faithful in will and intellect to the *one gospel*.

II. We have still to consider the import of *the judgement pronounced by Paul upon those who pervert the gospel of Christ*. "Let him be anathema. Even should it be ourselves, or an angel from heaven, *let him be anathema*."

These are tremendous words. Commentators have been shocked at the Apostle's damning his opponents after this fashion, and have sought to lighten the weight of this awful sentence. It has been sometimes toned down into an act of excommunication or ecclesiastical censure. But this explanation will not hold. Paul could not think of subjecting "an angel" to a penalty like that. He pronounced excommunication against disorderly members of the Thessalonian Church; and in 1 Cor. v. 1-8 he gives directions for the carrying out of a similar decree, attended with severe bodily affliction supernaturally adjudged, against a sinner whose presence grossly stained the purity of the Church. But this sentence goes beyond either of those. It contemplates the exclusion of the offenders from the Covenant of grace, their loss of final salvation.

Thrice besides has Paul used this ominous word. The cry "Jesus is anathema," in 1 Cor. xii. 3, reveals with a lurid effect the frenzied malignity towards Christ of which the spirit of evil is sometimes

capable. In a very different connection the word appears in Rom. ix. 3; where Paul "could wish himself anathema from Christ," if that were possible, for his brethren's sake; he could find it in his heart to be cut off for ever from that love of God in Christ of which he has just spoken in terms of unbounded joy and confidence (Rom. viii. 31-39), and banished from the heavenly kingdom, if through his exclusion his Jewish kindred might be saved. Self-sacrifice can go no further. No heavier loss than this could be conceived for any human being. Nearest to our passage is the imprecation at the end of 1 Corinthians: "If any man love not the Lord, let him be anathema," – a judgement proclaimed against cold and false hearts, knowing His love, bearing His name, but with no true love to Him.

This Greek word in its Biblical use has grown out of the *chérem* of the Old Testament, the *ban* declared against that which was cut off from the Divine mercies and exposed to the full sweep of judgement. Thus in Deut. xiii. 12-18, the city whose people should "go and serve other gods," is declared *chérem* (*anathema*), an "accursed," or "devoted thing" (R.V.), on which ensues its destruction by sword and fire, leaving it to remain "a ruin-heap for ever." Similarly in Joshua vi., vii., the spoil of Jericho is *anathema*, Achan's theft is therefore *anathema*, and Israel is made by it *anathema* until "the accursed thing is destroyed" from among the people. Such were the recollections associated with this word in the Mosaic law, which it would inevitably carry with it to the minds of those against whom it was now directed. And there is nothing in later Jewish usage to mitigate its force.

Now the Apostle is not writing like a man in a passion, who flings out his words as missiles, eager only to wound and confound his opponents. He repeats the sentence. He quotes it as one that he had already affirmed in the hearing of his readers. The passage bears the marks of well-weighed thought and judicial solemnity. In pronouncing this judgement on "the troublers," Paul acts under the sense of Apostolic responsibility. We must place the sentence in the same line as that of Peter against Ananias and Sapphira, and of Paul himself against Elymas the Cypriot sorcerer, and against the incestuous Corinthian. In each case there is a supernatural insight and authorization, "the authority which the Lord gave" and which is wielded by His inspired Apostle. The exercise of this judicial function was one of "the signs of the Apostle." This was the proof of "Christ speaking in him" which Paul was so loth to give at Corinth,<sup>11</sup> but which at this crisis of his ministry he was compelled to display. And if he "reckons to be bold against" his adversaries in Galatia, he knows well the ground on which he stands.

His anathema struck at men who were the worst enemies of Christ. "We can do nothing against the truth," he says; "but for the truth" he was ready to do and dare everything, – to "come with a rod," as he tells the proud Corinthians. There was no authority, however lofty, that he was not warranted to use on Christ's behalf, no measure, however severe, from which he would shrink, if it were required in defence of the truth of the Gospel. "He possesses weapons, not fleshly, but mighty through God"; and he is prepared to bring them all into play rather than see the gospel perverted or overthrown. Paul will hurl his anathema at the prince of the archangels, should He come "preaching another gospel," tempting his children from their allegiance to Christ. This bolt was not shot a moment too soon. Launched against the legalist conspiracy, and followed up by the arguments of this and the Roman Epistle, it saved the Church from being overpowered by reactionary Judaism. The Apostle's judgement has marked the gospel of the cross for all time as God's inviolable truth, guarded by lightnings.

The sentences of judgement pronounced by the Apostles present a striking contrast to those that have fulminated from the Chair of their self-styled successors. In the Canons of the Council of Trent, for example, we have counted one hundred and thirty-five anathemas. A large proportion of these are concerned with the rights of the priesthood; others with complicated and secondary points of doctrine; some are directed virtually against the teaching of Paul himself. Here is one

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<sup>11</sup> 2 Cor. x. 1-11; xiii. 1-10; 1 Cor. iv. 18-21.

specimen: "If any one shall say that justifying faith is nothing else but a trust in the Divine mercy, remitting sins for Christ's sake, or that it is this trust alone by which we are justified: let him be anathema."<sup>12</sup> Again, "If any one shall say that the Canon of the Mass contains errors, and therefore should be abrogated: let him be anathema."<sup>13</sup> In the closing session, the final act of the presiding Cardinal was to pronounce, "Anathema to all heretics;" to which the assembled prelates shouted in response, "Anathema, anathema." With this imprecation on their lips the Fathers of the Church concluded their pious labours. It was the Reformation, it was "the liberty of the sons of God" that Rome anathematized. Paul's censure holds good against all the Conciliar Canons and Papal Bulls that contravene it. But twice has he pronounced this awful word; once against any that "love not the Lord," a second time upon those who wilfully pervert His gospel. The Papal anathemas sound like the maledictions of an angry priesthood, jealous for its prerogatives; here we have the holy severity of an inspired Apostle, concerned only for the truth, and for his Master's honour. There speaks the conscious "lord over God's heritage," wearing the triple crown, wielding the powers of Interdict and Inquisition, whose word sets armies in motion and makes kings tremble on their seats. Here a feeble, solitary man, "his bodily presence weak, his speech contemptible," hunted from place to place, scourged and stoned, shut up for years in prison, who could not, except for love's sake, command the meanest service. How conspicuous in the one case, how wanting in the other, is the might of the Spirit and the dignity of the inspired word, the transcendence of moral authority.

It is *the moral conduct* of those he judges that determines in each case the sentence passed by the Apostle. For a man knowing Jesus Christ, as we presume the members of the Corinthian Church did know Him, not to love Him, argues a bad heart. Must not we count *ourselves* accursed, if with our knowledge of Christ we had no love for Him? Such a man is already virtually *anathema*. He is severed as a branch from its vine, ready to be gathered for the burning (John xv. 6). And these Galatian disturbers were something worse than mere mistaken enthusiasts for their native Jewish rites. Their policy was dishonourable (ch. iv. 17). They made the gospel of Christ subservient to factious designs. They sought to win credit with their fellow-countrymen and to escape the reproach of the cross by imposing circumcision on the Gentiles (ch. ii. 4; vi. 12, 13). They prostituted religion to selfish and party purposes. They sacrificed truth to popularity, the glory of Christ and the cross to their own. They were of those whom the Apostle describes as "walking in craftiness and handling the word of God deceitfully," who "traffic" in the gospel, peddling with it as with petty wares, cheapening and adulterating it like dishonest hucksters to make their own market by it (2 Cor. ii. 17; iv. 2). Did not Paul do well to smite them with the rod of his mouth? Justly has he marked with the brand of this fiery anathema the false minister, "who serves not the Lord Christ, but his own belly."

But does this declaration preclude in such a case the possibility of repentance? We trow not. It declares the doom which is due to any, be he man or angel, who should do what these "troublers" are doing. It is a general sentence, and has for the individuals concerned the effect of a warning, like the announcement made concerning the Traitor at the Last Supper. However unlikely repentance might be in either instance, there is nothing to forbid it. So when Peter said to Simon Magus, "Thy money perish with thee!" he nevertheless continued, "Repent, therefore, of this thy wickedness, and pray the Lord, if perhaps the thought of thy heart shall be forgiven thee" (Acts viii. 20-22). To his worst opponents, on any sign of contrition, Paul, we may be sure, would have gladly said the same.

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<sup>12</sup> Session vi., Can. xii.

<sup>13</sup> Session xxii., Can. vi.

## THE PERSONAL HISTORY. Chapter i. 11-ii. 21

### CHAPTER IV. *PAUL'S GOSPEL REVEALED BY 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. 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." – Gal. i. 11-14.*

Here the Epistle begins in its main purport. What has gone before is so much exordium. The sharp, stern sentences of vv. 6-10 are like the roll of artillery that ushers in the battle. The mists rise from the field. We see the combatants arrayed on either side. In due order and with cool self-command the Apostle proceeds to marshal and deploy his forces. His truthful narrative corrects the misrepresentations of his opponents, and repels their attack upon himself. His powerful dialectic wrests from their hands and turns against them their weapons of Scriptural proof. He wins the citadel of their position, by establishing the claim of the men of faith to be the sons of Abraham. On the ruins of confuted legalism he builds up an impregnable fortress for Christian liberty, an immortal vindication of the gospel of the grace of God.

The cause of Gentile freedom at this crisis was bound up with the person of the Apostle Paul. His Gospel and his Apostleship must stand or fall together. The former was assailed through the latter. He was himself just now "the pillar and stay of the truth." If his character had been successfully attacked and his influence destroyed, nothing, humanly speaking, could have saved Gentile Christendom at this decisive moment from falling under the assaults of Judaism. When he begins his crucial appeal with the words, "Behold, *I Paul* say unto you" (ch. v. 2), we feel that the issue depends upon the weight which his readers may attach to his personal affirmation. He pits his own truthfulness, his knowledge of Christ, his spiritual discernment and authority, and the respect due to himself from the Galatians, against the pretensions of the new teachers. The comparison is not indeed so open and express as that made in 2 Corinthians; none the less it tacitly runs through this Epistle. Paul is compelled to put himself in the forefront of his argument. In the eyes of his children in the faith, he is bound to vindicate his Apostolic character, defamed by Jewish malice and untruth.

The first two chapters of this Epistle are therefore Paul's *Apologia pro vita sua*. With certain chapters in 2 Corinthians, and scattered passages in other letters, they form the Apostle's autobiography, one of the most perfect self-portraits that literature contains. They reveal to us the man more effectively than any ostensible description could have done. They furnish an indispensable supplement to the external and cursory delineations given in the Acts of the Apostles. While Luke skilfully presents the outward framework of Paul's life and the events of his public career, it is to the Epistles that we turn – to none more frequently than this – for the necessary subjective data, for all that belongs to his inner character, his motives and principles. This Epistle brings into bold relief the Apostle's moral physiognomy. Above all, it throws a clear and penetrating light on the event which determined his career – the greatest event in the history of Christianity after the Day of Pentecost – Paul's conversion to faith in the Lord Jesus.

This was at once the turning-point in the Apostle's life, and the birth-hour of his gospel. If the Galatians were to understand his teaching, they must understand this occurrence; they must know why he became a Christian, how he had received the message which he brought to them. They would, he felt sure, enter more sympathetically into his doctrine, if they were better acquainted with the way in which he had arrived at it. They would see how well-justified was the authority, how needful the severity with which he writes. Accordingly he begins with a brief relation of the circumstances of his call to the service of Christ, and his career from the days of his Judaistic zeal, when he made havoc of the faith, till the well-known occasion on which he became its champion against Peter himself, the chief of the Twelve (ch. i. 11-ii. 21.) His object in this recital appears to be threefold: to refute the misrepresentations of the Circumcisionists; to vindicate his independent authority as an Apostle of Christ; and further, to unfold the nature and terms of his gospel, so as to pave the way for the theological argument which is to follow, and which forms the body of the Epistle.

I. *Paul's gospel was supernaturally conveyed to him, by a personal intervention of Jesus Christ.* This assertion is the Apostle's starting-point. "My gospel is not after man. I received it as Jesus Christ revealed it to me."

That the initial revelation was made to him by Christ in person, was a fact of incalculable importance for Paul. This had made him an Apostle, in the august sense in which he claims the title (ver. 1). This accounts for the vehemence with which he defends his doctrine, and for the awful sentence which he has passed upon its impugners. The Divine authorship of the gospel he preached made it impossible for him to temporize with its perverters, or to be influenced by human favour or disfavour in its administration. Had his teaching been "according to man," he might have consented to a compromise; he might reasonably have tried to humour and accommodate Jewish prejudices. But the case is far otherwise. "I am not at liberty to please men," he says, "for my gospel comes directly from Jesus Christ" (vv. 10, 11). So he "gives" his readers "to know," as if by way of formal notification.<sup>14</sup>

The gospel of Paul was inviolable, then, because of its superhuman character. And this character was impressed upon it by its superhuman origin: "not according to man, for neither *from man* did I receive it, nor was I taught it, but by a revelation of Jesus Christ." The Apostle's knowledge of Christianity did not come through the ordinary channel of tradition and indoctrination; Jesus Christ had, by a miraculous interposition, taught him the truth about Himself. He says, "Neither did I," with an emphasis that points tacitly to the elder Apostles, whom he mentions a few sentences later (ver. 17). To this comparison his adversaries forced him, making use of it as they freely did to his disparagement.<sup>15</sup> But it comes in by implication rather than direct assertion. Only by putting violence upon himself, and with strong expressions of his unworthiness, can Paul be brought to set his official claims in competition with those of the Twelve. Notwithstanding, it is perfectly clear that he puts his ministry on a level with theirs. He is no Apostle at second-hand, no disciple of Peter's or dependant of the "pillars" at Jerusalem. "Neither did I," he declares, "any more than they, take my instructions from other lips than those of Jesus our Lord."

But what of this "revelation of Jesus Christ," on which Paul lays so much stress? Does he mean a revelation made *by* Christ, or *about* Christ? Taken by itself, the expression, in Greek as in English, bears either interpretation. In favour of the second construction – viz. that Paul speaks of a revelation by which Christ was made known to him – the language of ver. 16 is adduced: "It pleased God to reveal His Son in me." Paul's general usage points in the same direction. With him Christ is the *object* of manifestation, preaching, and the like. 2 Cor. xii. 1 is probably an instance to the contrary: "I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord."<sup>16</sup> But it should be observed that wherever this genitive

<sup>14</sup> Comp. Rom. ix. 22; 1 Cor. xii. 3; xv. 1; 2 Cor. viii. 1.

<sup>15</sup> See ch. ii. 6-14; 1 Cor. i. 12; iii. 22; iv. 9; ix. 1-5; xv. 8-10.

<sup>16</sup> This genitive is, however, open to the other construction, which is unquestionable in 1 Cor. i. 7; 2 Thess. i. 7; also 1 Pet. i. 7,

is objective (a revelation revealing Christ), *God* appears in the context, just as in ver. 16 below, to Whom the authorship of the revelation is ascribed. In this instance, *the gospel* is the object revealed; and *Jesus Christ*, in contrast with man, is claimed for its Author. So at the outset (ver. 1) Christ, in His Divine character, was the *Agent* by whom Paul, as veritably as the Twelve, had received his Apostleship. We therefore assent to the ordinary view, reading this passage in the light of the vision of Jesus thrice related in the Acts.<sup>17</sup> We understand Paul to say that no *mere man* imparted to him the gospel he preached, but *Jesus Christ revealed it*.

On the Damascus road the Apostle Paul found his mission. The vision of the glorified Jesus made him a Christian, and an Apostle. The act was a *revelation*— that is, in New Testament phrase, a supernatural, an immediately Divine communication of truth. And it was a revelation not conveyed in the first instance, as were the ordinary prophetic inspirations, through the Spirit; "Jesus Christ," in His Divine-human person, made Himself known to His persecutor. Paul had "seen that Just One and heard a voice from His mouth."

The appearance of Jesus to Saul of Tarsus was in itself a gospel, an earnest of the good tidings he was to convey to the world. "Why persecutest thou Me?" that Divine voice said, in tones of reproach, yet of infinite pity. The sight of Jesus the Lord, meeting Saul's eyes, revealed His grace and truth to the persecutor's heart. He was brought in a moment to the obedience of faith; he said, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" He "confessed with his mouth the Lord Jesus"; he "believed in his heart that God had raised Him from the dead." It was true, after all, that "God had made" the crucified Nazarene "both Lord and Christ;" for this was He!

The cross, which had been Saul's stumbling-block, deeply affronting his Jewish pride, from this moment was transformed. The glory of the exalted Redeemer cast back its light upon the tree of shame. The curse of the Law visibly resting upon Him, the rejection of men, marked Him out as God's chosen sacrifice for sin. This explanation at once presented itself to an instructed and keenly theological mind like Saul's, so soon as it was evident that Jesus was not accursed, as he had supposed, but approved by God. So Paul's gospel was given him at a stroke. Jesus Christ dying for our sins, Jesus Christ living to save and to rule – behold "the good news"! The Apostle had it on no less authority than that of the risen Saviour. From Him he received it to publish wide as the world.

Thus Saul of Tarsus was born again. And with the Christian man, the Christian thinker, the theologian, was born in him. The Pauline doctrine has its root in Paul's conversion. It was a single, organic growth, the seed of which was this "revelation of Jesus Christ." Its creative impulse was given in the experience of the memorable hour, when "God who said, Light shall shine out of darkness, in the face of Jesus Christ shined" into Saul's heart. As the light of this revelation penetrated his spirit, he recognised, step by step, the fact of the resurrection, the import of the crucifixion, the Divinity of Jesus, His human mediatorship, the virtue of faith, the office of the Holy Spirit, the futility of Jewish ritual and works of law, and all the essential principles of his theology. Given the genius of Saul and his religious training, and the Pauline system of doctrine was, one might almost say, *a necessary deduction* from the fact of the appearance to him of the glorified Jesus. If that form of celestial splendour was Jesus, then He was risen indeed; then He was the Christ; He was, as He affirmed, the Son of God. If He was Lord and Christ, and yet died by the Father's will on the cross of shame, then His death could only be a propitiation, accepted by God, for the sins of men, whose efficacy had no limit, and whose merit left no room for legal works of righteousness. If this Jesus was the Christ, then the assumptions of Saul's Judaism, which had led him into blasphemous hatred and outrage towards Him, were radically false; he will purge himself from the "old leaven," that his life may become "a new lump." From that moment a world of life and thought began for the future Apostle, the opposite

13. Rev. i. 1 furnishes a prominent example of the *subjective* genitive.

<sup>17</sup> Acts ix. 1-19; xxii. 5-16; xxvi. 12-18.

in all respects of that in which hitherto he had moved. "The old things," he cries, "passed away; lo, they have become new" (2 Cor. v. 17). Paul's conversion was as complete as it was sudden.

This intimate relation of doctrine and experience gives to Paul's teaching a peculiar warmth and freshness, a vividness of human reality which it everywhere retains, despite its lofty intellectualism and the scholastic form in which it is largely cast. It is theology alive, trembling with emotion, speaking words like flames, forming dogmas hard as rock, that when you touch them are yet glowing with the heat of those central depths of the human spirit from which they were cast up. The collision of the two great Apostles at Antioch shows how the strength of Paul's teaching lay in his inward realization of the truth. There was *life* behind his doctrine. He was, and for the time the Jewish Apostle was not, acting and speaking out of the reality of spiritual conviction, of truth personally verified. Of the Apostle Paul above all divines the saying is true, *Pectus facit theologum*. And this personal knowledge of Christ, "the master light of all his seeing," began when on the way to Damascus his eyes beheld Jesus our Lord. His farewell charge to the Church through Timothy (2 Tim. i. 9-12), while referring to the general manifestation of Christ to the world, does so in language coloured by the recollection of the peculiar revelation made at the beginning to himself: "God," he says, "called us with a holy calling, according to His purpose and grace, which hath now been manifested by the appearing<sup>18</sup> of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light<sup>19</sup> through the gospel, whereunto I was appointed a preacher and apostle. For which cause I also suffer these things. But I am not ashamed: for I *know* Him in whom I have believed." This manifestation of the celestial Christ shed its brightness along all his path.

II. His assertion of the Divine origin of his doctrine Paul sustains by referring to *the previous course of his life*. There was certainly nothing in that to account for his preaching Christ crucified. "For you have heard," he continues, "of my manner of life aforesaid, when I followed Judaism."

Here ends the chain of *fors* reaching from ver. 10 to 13 – a succession of explanations linking Paul's denunciation of the Christian Judaizers to the fact that he had himself been a violent anti-Christian Judaist. The seeming contradiction is in reality a consistent sequence. Only one who had imbibed the spirit of legalism as Saul of Tarsus had done, could justly appreciate the hostility of its principles to the new faith, and the sinister motives actuating the men who pretended to reconcile them. Paul knew Judaism by heart. He understood the sort of men who opposed him in the Gentile Churches. And if his anathema appear needlessly severe, we must remember that no one was so well able to judge of the necessities of the case as the man who pronounced it.

"You have heard" – from whom? In the first instance, probably, from Paul himself. But on this matter, we may be pretty sure, his opponents would have something to say. They did not scruple to assert that he "still preached circumcision"<sup>20</sup> and played the Jew even now when it suited him, charging him with insincerity. Or they might say, "Paul is a renegade. Once the most ardent of zealots for Judaism, he has passed to the opposite extreme. He is a man you cannot trust. Apostates are proverbially bitter against their old faith." In these and in other ways Paul's Pharisaic career was doubtless thrown in his teeth.

The Apostle sorrowfully confesses "that above measure he persecuted the Church of God and laid it waste." His friend Luke makes the same admission in similar language.<sup>21</sup> There is no attempt to conceal or palliate this painful fact, that the famous Apostle of the Gentiles had been a persecutor, the deadliest enemy of the Church in its infant days. He was the very type of a determined, pitiless oppressor, the forerunner of the Jewish fanatics who afterwards sought his life, and of the cruel bigots of the Inquisition and the Star-chamber in later times. His restless energy, his indifference to the

<sup>18</sup> Ἐπιφανεία, a supernatural appearance, such as that of the Second Advent.

<sup>19</sup> Φωτίζω, comp. 2 Cor. iv. 6.

<sup>20</sup> Ch. v. 11; comp. 1 Cor. ix. 20; Acts xvi. 3; xxi. 20-26; xxiii. 6.

<sup>21</sup> Acts vii. 58; viii. 1-3; ix. 1.

feelings of humanity in this work of destruction, were due to religious zeal. "I thought," he says, "I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." In him, as in so many others, the saying of Christ was fulfilled: "The time cometh, when whoso killeth you will think that he is offering a sacrifice to God." These Nazarenes were heretics, traitors to Israel, enemies of God. Their leader had been crucified, branded with the extremest mark of Divine displeasure. His followers must perish. Their success meant the ruin of Mosaism. God willed their destruction. Such were Saul's thoughts, until he heard the protesting voice of Jesus as he approached Damascus to ravage His little flock. No wonder that he suffered remorse to the end of his days.

Saul's persecution of the Church was the natural result of his earlier training, of the course to which in his youth he committed himself. The Galatians had heard also "how proficient he was in Judaism, beyond many of his kindred and age; that he was surpassed by none in zeal for their ancestral traditions." His birth (Phil. iii. 4, 5), education (Acts xxii. 3), temperament, circumstances, all combined to make him a zealot of the first water, the pink and pattern of Jewish orthodoxy, the rising hope of the Pharisaic party, and an instrument admirably fitted to crush the hated and dangerous sect of the Nazarenes. These facts go to prove, not that Paul is a traitor to his own people, still less that he is a Pharisee at heart, preaching Gentile liberty from interested motives; but that it must have been some extraordinary occurrence, quite out of the common run of human influences and probabilities, that set him on his present course. What could have turned this furious Jewish persecutor all at once into the champion of the cross? What indeed but the revelation of Christ which he received at the Damascus gate? His previous career up to that hour had been such as to make it impossible that he should have received his gospel through human means. The chasm between his Christian and pre-Christian life had only been bridged by a supernatural interposition of the mercy of Christ.

Our modern critics, however, think that they know Paul better than he knew himself. They hold that the problem raised by this passage is capable of a natural solution. Psychological analysis, we are told, sets the matter in a different light. Saul of Tarsus had a tender conscience. Underneath his fevered and ambitious zeal, there lay in the young persecutor's heart a profound misgiving, a mortifying sense of his failure, and the failure of his people, to attain the righteousness of the Law. The seventh chapter of his Epistle to the Romans is a leaf taken out of the inner history of this period of the Apostle's life. Through what a stern discipline the Tarsian youth had passed in these legal years! How his haughty spirit chafed and tortured itself under the growing consciousness of its moral impotence! The Law had been truly his παιδαγωγός (ch. iii. 24), a severe tutor, preparing him unconsciously "for Christ." In this state of mind such scenes as the martyrdom of Stephen could not but powerfully affect Saul, in spite of himself. The bearing of the persecuted Nazarenes, the words of peace and forgiveness that they uttered under their sufferings, stirred questionings in his breast not always to be silenced. Self-distrust and remorse were secretly undermining the rigour of his Judaic faith. They acted like a "goad" (Acts xxvi. 14), against which he "kicked in vain." He rode to Damascus – a long and lonely journey – in a state of increasing disquiet and mental conflict. The heat and exhaustion of the desert march, acting on a nervous temperament naturally excitable and overwrought, hastened the crisis. Saul fell from his horse in an access of fever, or catalepsy. His brain was on fire. The convictions that haunted him suddenly took form and voice in the apparition of the glorified Jesus, whom Stephen in his dying moments had addressed. From that figure seemed to proceed the reproachful cry which the persecutor's conscience had in vain been striving to make him hear. A flash of lightning, or, if you like, a sunstroke, is readily imagined to fire this train of circumstances, – and the explanation is complete! When, besides, M. Renan is good enough to tell us that he has himself "experienced an attack of this kind at Byblos," and "with other principles would certainly have taken the hallucinations he then had for visions,"<sup>22</sup> what more can we desire? Nay, does not Paul himself admit, in ver. 16 of this chapter, that his conversion was essentially a spiritual and subjective event?

<sup>22</sup> *Les Apôtres*, p. 180, note 1.

Such is the diagnosis of Paul's conversion offered us by rationalism; and it is not wanting in boldness nor in skill. But the corner-stone on which it rests, the hinge of the whole theory, is imaginary and in fatal contradiction with the facts of the case. Paul himself *knows nothing* of the remorse imputed to him previously to the vision of Jesus. The historian of the Acts knows nothing of it. In a nature so upright and conscientious as that of Saul, this misgiving would at least have induced him to desist from persecution. From first to last his testimony is, "I did it *ignorantly*, in unbelief." It was this ignorance, this absence of any sense of wrong in the violence he used against the followers of Jesus, that, in his view, accounted for his "obtaining mercy" (1 Tim. i. 13). If impressions of an opposite kind were previously struggling in his mind, with such force that on a mere nervous shock they were ready to precipitate themselves in the shape of an over-mastering hallucination, changing instantly and for ever the current of his life, how comes it that the Apostle has told us nothing about them? That he should have *forgotten* impressions so poignant and so powerful, is inconceivable. And if he has of set purpose ignored, nay, virtually denied this all-important fact, what becomes of his sincerity?

The Apostle was manifestly innocent of any such predisposition to Christian faith as the above theory imputes to him. True, he was conscious in those Judaistic days of his failure to attain righteousness, of the disharmony existing between "the law of his reason" and that which wrought "in his members." His conviction of sin supplied the moral precondition necessary in every case to saving faith in Christ. But this negative condition does not help us in the least to explain the vision of the glorified Jesus. By no psychological process whatever could the experience of Rom. vii. 7-24 be made to project itself in such an apparition. With all his mysticism and emotional susceptibility, Paul's mind was essentially sane and critical. To call him *epileptic* is a calumny. No man so diseased could have gone through the Apostle's labours, or written these Epistles. His discussion of the subject of supernatural gifts, in 1 Cor. xii. and xiv., is a model of shrewdness and good sense. He had experience of trances and ecstatic visions; and he knew, perhaps as well as M. Renan, how to distinguish them from objective realities.<sup>23</sup> The manner in which he speaks of this appearance allows of no reasonable doubt as to the Apostle's full persuasion that "in sober certainty of waking sense" he had seen Jesus our Lord.

It was this sensible and outward revelation that led to the inward revelation of the Redeemer to his soul, of which Paul goes on to speak in ver. 16. Without the latter the former would have been purposeless and useless. The objective vision could only have revealed a "Christ after the flesh," had it not been the means of opening Saul's closed heart to the influence of the Spirit of Christ. It was the means to this, and in the given circumstances the indispensable means.

To a history that "knows no miracles," the Apostle Paul must remain an enigma. His faith in the crucified Jesus is equally baffling to naturalism with that of the first disciples, who had laid Him in the grave. When the Apostle argues that his antecedent relations to Christianity were such as to preclude his conversion having come about by natural human means, we are bound to admit both the sincerity and the conclusiveness of his appeal.

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<sup>23</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 18; 2 Cor. xii. 1-6; Acts xvi. 9; xviii. 8, 9; xxii. 17, 18.

## CHAPTER V. *PAUL'S DIVINE COMMISSION*

*"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."*  
– Gal. i. 15-17.

*It pleased God to reveal His Son in me:* this is after all the essential matter in Paul's conversion, as in that of every Christian. The outward manifestation of Jesus Christ served in his case to bring about this result, and was necessary to qualify him for his extraordinary vocation. But of itself the supernatural vision had no redeeming virtue, and gave Saul of Tarsus no message of salvation for the world. Its glory blinded and prostrated the persecutor; his heart might notwithstanding have remained rebellious and unchanged. "I am Jesus," said the heavenly Form, – "Go, and it shall be told thee what thou shalt do"; – that was all! And that was not salvation. "Even though one rose from the dead," still it is possible not to believe. And faith is possible in its highest degree, and is exercised to-day by multitudes, with no celestial light to illumine, no audible voice from beyond the grave to awaken. The sixteenth verse gives us the inward counterpart of that exterior revelation in which Paul's knowledge of Christ had its beginning, – but only its beginning.

The Apostle does not surely mean by "in me," *in my case, through me (to others)*. This gives a sense true in itself, and expressed by Paul elsewhere (ver. 24; 1 Tim. i. 16), but unsuitable to the word "reveal," and out of place at this point of the narrative. In the next clause – "that I might preach Him among the Gentiles" – we learn what was to be the issue of this revelation for the world. But in the first place it was a Divine certainty *within the breast of Paul himself*. His Gentile Apostleship rested upon the most assured basis of inward conviction, upon a spiritual apprehension of the Redeemer's person. He says, laying emphasis on the last two words, "to reveal His Son *within me*." So Chrysostom: Why did he not say *to me*, but *in me*? Showing that not by words alone he learned the things concerning faith; but that he was also filled with the abundance of the Spirit, the revelation shining through his very soul; and that he had Christ speaking in himself.

I. *The substance of Paul's gospel was, therefore, given him by the unveiling of the Redeemer to his heart.*

The "revelation" of ver. 16 takes up and completes that of ver. 12. The dazzling appearance of Christ before his eyes and the summons of His voice addressed to Saul's bodily ears formed the special mode in which it pleased God to "call him by His grace." But "whom He called, He also justified." In this further act of grace salvation is first personally realised, and the gospel becomes the man's individual possession. This experience ensued upon the acceptance of the fact that the crucified Jesus was the Christ. But this was by no means all. As the revelation penetrated further into the Apostle's soul, he began to apprehend its deeper significance. He knew already that the Nazarene had claimed to be the Son of God, and on that ground had been sentenced to death by the Sanhedrim. His resurrection, now a demonstrated fact, showed that this awful claim, instead of being condemned, was acknowledged by God Himself. The celestial majesty in which He appeared, the sublime authority with which He spoke, witnessed to His Divinity. To Paul equally with the first Apostles, He "was declared Son of God in power, by the resurrection of the dead." But this persuasion was borne in upon him in his after reflections, and could not be adequately realised in the first shock of his great discovery. The language of this verse throws no sort of suspicion on the reality of the vision before Damascus. Quite the opposite. The inward presupposes the outward. Understanding follows sight.

The subjective illumination, the inward conviction of Christ's Divinity, in Paul's case as in that of the first disciples, was brought about by the appearance of the risen, Divine Jesus. That appearance furnishes in both instances the explanation of the astounding change that took place in the men. The heart full of blasphemy against His name has learnt to own Him as "the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Through the bodily eyes of Saul of Tarsus the revelation of Jesus Christ had entered and transformed his spirit.

Of this interior revelation *the Holy Spirit*, according to the Apostle's doctrine, had been the organ. The Lord on first meeting the gathered Apostles after His resurrection "breathed upon them, saying, Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John xx. 22). This influence was in truth "the power of His resurrection"; it was the inspiring breath of the new life of humanity issuing from the open grave of Christ. The baptism of Pentecost, with its "mighty rushing wind," was but the fuller effusion of the power whose earnest the Church received in that gentle breathing of peace on the day of the resurrection. By His Spirit Christ made Himself a dwelling in the hearts of His disciples, raised at last to a true apprehension of His nature. All this was recapitulated in the experience of Paul. In his case the common experience was the more sharply defined because of the suddenness of his conversion, and the startling effect with which this new consciousness projected itself upon the background of his earlier Pharisaic life. Paul had his Resurrection-vision on the road to Damascus. He received his Pentecostal baptism in the days that followed.

It is not necessary to fix the precise occasion of the second revelation, or to connect it specifically with the visit of Ananias to Saul in Damascus, much less with his later "ecstasy" in the temple (Acts ix. 10-19; xxii. 12-21). When Ananias, sent by Christ, brought him the assurance of forgiveness from the injured Church, and bade him "recover his sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost," this message greatly comforted his heart, and pointed out to him more clearly the way of salvation along which he was groping. But it is the office of the Spirit of God to reveal the Son of God; so Paul teaches everywhere in his Epistles, taught first by his own experience. Not from Ananias, nor from any man had he received this knowledge; *God* revealed His Son in the soul of the Apostle – "sent forth the Spirit of His Son into his heart" (ch. iv. 6). The language of 2 Cor. iii. 12-iv. 6 is the best commentary on this verse. A veil rested on the heart of Saul the Pharisee. He read the Old Covenant only in the condemning letter. Not yet did he know "the Lord" who is "the spirit." This veil was done away in Christ. "The glory of the Lord" that burst upon him in his Damascus journey, rent it once and for ever from his eyes. God, the Light-giver, had "shined in his heart, in the face of Jesus Christ." Such was the further scope of the revelation which effected Paul's conversion. As he writes afterwards to Ephesus, "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, had given him a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ; eyes of the heart enlightened to know the hope of His calling, and His exceeding power to usward, according to that He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand" (Eph. i. 17-21). In these words we hear an echo of the thoughts that passed through the Apostle's mind when first "it pleased God in him to reveal His Son."

## II. *In the light of this inner revelation Paul received his Gentile mission.*

He speedily perceived that this was the purpose with which the revelation was made: "that I should preach Him among the Gentiles." The three accounts of his conversion furnished by the Acts witness to the same effect. Whether we should suppose that the Lord Jesus gave Saul this commission directly, at His first appearance, as seems to be implied in Acts xxvi., or infer from the more detailed narrative of chapters ix. and xxii., that the announcement was sent by Ananias and afterwards more urgently repeated in the vision at the Temple, in either case the fact remains the same; from the beginning Paul knew that he was appointed to be Christ's witness to the Gentiles. This destination was included in the Divine call which brought him to faith in Jesus. His Judaic prejudices were swept away. He was ready to embrace the universalism of the Gospel. With his fine logical instinct, sharpened by hatred, he had while yet a Pharisee discerned more clearly than many Jewish Christians the bearing of

the doctrine of the cross upon the legal system. He saw that the struggle was one of life and death. The vehemence with which he flung himself into the contest was due to this perception. But it followed from this, that, once convinced of the Messiahship of Jesus, Paul's faith at a bound overleaped all Jewish barriers. "Judaism – or the religion of the Crucified," was the alternative with which his stern logic pursued the Nazarenes. Judaism *and* Christianity – this was a compromise intolerable to his nature. Before Saul's conversion he had left that halting-place behind; he apprehended already, in some sense, the truth up to which the elder Apostles had to be educated, that "in Christ Jesus there is neither Greek nor Jew." He passed at a step from the one camp to the other. In this there was consistency. The enlightened, conscientious persecutor, who had debated with Stephen and helped to stone him, was sure, if he became a Christian, to become a Christian of Stephen's school. When he entered the Church, Paul left the Synagogue. He was ripe for his world-wide commission. There was no surprise, no unpreparedness in his mind when the charge was given him, "Go; for I will send thee far hence among the Gentiles."

In the Apostle's view, his personal salvation and that of the race were objects united from the first. Not as a privileged Jew, but as a sinful man, the Divine grace had found him out. The righteousness of God was revealed to him on terms which brought it within the reach of every human being. The Son of God whom he now beheld was a personage vastly greater than his national Messiah, the "Christ after the flesh" of his Jewish dreams, and His gospel was correspondingly loftier and larger in its scope. "God was in Christ, reconciling," not a nation, but "*a world* unto Himself." The "grace" conferred on him was given that he might "preach among the Gentiles Christ's unsearchable riches, and make all men see the mystery" of the counsel of redeeming love (Eph. iii. 1-11). It was the world's redemption of which Paul partook; and it was his business to let the world know it. He had fathomed the depths of sin and self-despair; he had tasted the uttermost of pardoning grace. God and the world met in his single soul, and were reconciled. He felt from the first what he expresses in his latest Epistles, that "the grace of God which appeared" to him, was "for the salvation of all men" (Tit. ii. 11). "Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief" (1 Tim. i. 15). The same revelation that made Paul a Christian, made him the Apostle of mankind.

III. *For this vocation the Apostle had been destined by God from the beginning.* "It pleased God to do this," he says, "who had marked me out from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace."

While "Saul was yet breathing out threatening and slaughter" against the disciples of Jesus, how different a future was being prepared for him! How little can we forecast the issue of our own plans, or of those we form for others. His Hebrew birth, his rabbinical proficiency, the thoroughness with which he had mastered the tenets of Legalism, had fitted him like no other to be the bearer of the Gospel to the Gentiles. This Epistle proves the fact. Only a graduate of the best Jewish schools could have written it. Paul's master, Gamaliel, if he had read the letter, must perforce have been proud of his scholar; he would have feared more than ever that those who opposed the Nazarene might "haply be found fighting against God." The Apostle foils the Judaists with their own weapons. He knows every inch of the ground on which the battle is waged. At the same time, he was a born Hellenist and a citizen of the Empire, native "of no mean city." Tarsus, his birthplace, was the capital of an important Roman province, and a centre of Greek culture and refinement. In spite of the Hebraic conservatism of Saul's family, the genial atmosphere of such a town could not but affect the early development of so sensitive a nature. He had sufficient tincture of Greek letters and conversance with Roman law to make him a true cosmopolitan, qualified to be "all things to all men." He presents an admirable example of that versatility and suppleness of genius which have distinguished for so many ages the sons of Jacob, and enable them to find a home and a market for their talents in every quarter of the world. Paul was "a chosen vessel, to bear the name of Jesus before Gentiles and kings, and the sons of Israel."

But his mission was concealed till the appointed hour. Thinking of his personal election, he reminds himself of the words spoken to Jeremiah touching his prophetic call. "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest out of the womb I sanctified thee. I appointed thee a prophet unto the nations" (Jer. i. 5). Or like the Servant of the Lord in Isaiah he might say, "The Lord hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath He made mention of my name. And He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of His hand hath He hid me; and He hath made me a polished shaft, in His quiver hath He kept me close" (Isa. xlix. 1, 2). This belief in a fore-ordaining Providence, preparing in secret its chosen instruments, so deeply rooted in the Old Testament faith, was not wanting to Paul. His career is a signal illustration of its truth. He applies it, in his doctrine of Election, to the history of every child of grace. "Whom He foreknew, He did predestinate. Whom He did predestinate, He called." Once more we see how the Apostle's theology was moulded by his experience.

The manner in which Saul of Tarsus had been prepared all his life long for the service of Christ, magnified to his eyes the sovereign grace of God. "He called me *through His grace*." The call came at precisely the fit time; it came at a time and in a manner calculated to display the Divine compassion in the highest possible degree. This lesson Paul could never forget. To the last he dwells upon it with deep emotion. "In me," he writes to Timothy, "Jesus Christ first showed forth all His longsuffering. I was a blasphemer, a persecutor, insolent and injurious; but I obtained mercy" (1 Tim. i. 13-16). He was so dealt with from the beginning, he had been called to the knowledge of Christ under such circumstances that he felt he had a right to say, above other men, "By the grace of God I am what I am." The predestination under which his life was conducted "from his mother's womb," had for its chief purpose, to exhibit God's mercy to mankind, "that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (Eph. ii. 7). To this purpose, so soon as he discerned it, he humbly yielded himself. The Son of God, whose followers he had hunted to death, whom in his madness he would have crucified afresh, had appeared to him to save and to forgive. The *grace* of it, the infinite kindness and compassion such an act revealed in the Divine nature, excited new wonder in the Apostle's soul till his latest hour. Henceforth he was the bondman of grace, the celebrant of grace. His life was one act of thanksgiving "to the praise of the glory of His grace!"

IV. From Jesus Christ in person Paul had received his knowledge of the Gospel, without human intervention. In the revelation of Christ to his soul he possessed the substance of the truth he was afterwards to teach; and with the revelation there came the commission to proclaim it to all men. His gospel-message was in its essence complete; the Apostleship was already his. Such are the assertions the Apostle makes in reply to his gainsayers. And he goes on to show that *the course he took after his conversion sustains these lofty claims*: "When God had been pleased to reveal His Son in me, immediately (right from the first) I took no counsel with flesh and blood. I avoided repairing to Jerusalem, to the elder Apostles; I went away into Arabia, and back again to Damascus. It was three years before I set foot in Jerusalem."

If that were so, how could Paul have received his doctrine or his commission from the Church of Jerusalem, as his traducers alleged? He acted from the outset under the sense of a unique Divine call, that allowed of no human validation or supplement. Had the case been otherwise, had Paul come to his knowledge of Christ by ordinary channels, his first impulse would have been to go up to the mother city to report himself there, and to gain further instruction. Above all, if he intended to be a minister of Christ, it would have been proper to secure the approval of the Twelve, and to be accredited from Jerusalem. This was the course which "flesh and blood" dictated, which Saul's new friends at Damascus probably urged upon him. It was insinuated that he had actually proceeded in this way, and put himself under the direction of Peter and the Judean Church. But he says, "I did nothing of the sort. I kept clear of Jerusalem for three years; and then I only went there to make private acquaintance with Peter, and stayed in the city but a fortnight." Although Paul did not for many

years make public claim to rank with the Twelve, from the commencement he acted in conscious independence of them. He calls them "Apostles *before me*," by this phrase assuming the matter in dispute. He tacitly asserts his equality in official status with the Apostles of Jesus, assigning to the others precedence only in point of time. And he speaks of this equality in terms implying that it was already present to his mind at this former period. Under this conviction he held aloof from human guidance and approbation. Instead of "going up to Jerusalem," the centre of publicity, the headquarters of the rising Church, Paul "went off into Arabia."

There were, no doubt, other reasons for this step. Why did he choose *Arabia* for his sojourn? and what, pray, was he doing there? The Apostle leaves us to our own conjectures. *Solitude*, we imagine, was his principal object. His Arabian retreat reminds us of the Arabian exile of Moses, of the wilderness discipline of John the Baptist, and the "forty days" of Jesus in the wilderness. In each of these instances, the desert retirement followed upon a great inward crisis, and was preparatory to the entrance of the Lord's servant on his mission to the world. Elijah, at a later period of his course, sought the wilderness under motives not dissimilar. After such a convulsion as Paul had passed through, with a whole world of new ideas and emotions pouring in upon him, he felt that he must be alone; he must get away from the voices of men. There are such times in the history of every earnest soul. In the silence of the Arabian desert, wandering amid the grandest scenes of ancient revelation, and communing in stillness with God and with his own heart, the young Apostle will think out the questions that press upon him; he will be able to take a calmer survey of the new world into which he has been ushered, and will learn to see clearly and walk steadily in the heavenly light that at first bewildered him. So "the Spirit immediately driveth him out into the wilderness." In Arabia one confers, not with flesh and blood, but with the mountains and with God. From Arabia Saul returned in possession of himself, and of his gospel.

The Acts of the Apostles omits this Arabian episode (Acts ix. 19-25). But for what Paul tells us here, we should have gathered that he began at once after his baptism to preach Christ in Damascus, his preaching after no long time<sup>24</sup> exciting Jewish enmity to such a pitch that his life was imperilled, and the Christian brethren compelled him to seek safety by flight to Jerusalem. The reader of Luke is certainly surprised to find a period of three years,<sup>25</sup> with a prolonged residence in Arabia, interpolated between Paul's conversion and his reception in Jerusalem. Luke's silence, we judge, is *intentional*. The Arabian retreat formed no part of the Apostle's public life, and had no place in the narrative of the Acts. Paul only mentions it here in the briefest terms, and because the reference was necessary to put his relations to the first Apostles in their proper light. For the time the converted Saul had dropped out of sight; and the historian of the Acts respects his privacy.

The place of the Arabian journey seems to us to lie between vv. 21 and 22 of Acts ix. That passage gives a twofold description of Paul's preaching in Damascus, in its earlier and later stages, with a double note of time (vv. 19 and 23). Saul's first testimony, taking place "straightway," was, one would presume, a mere declaration of faith in Jesus: "In the synagogues he proclaimed Jesus, (saying) that He is the Son of God" (R.V.), language in striking harmony with that of the Apostle in the text (vv. 12, 16). Naturally this recantation caused extreme astonishment in Damascus, where Saul's reputation was well-known both to Jews and Christians, and his arrival was expected in the character of Jewish inquisitor-in-chief. Ver. 22 presents a different situation. Paul is now preaching in his established and characteristic style; as we read it, we might fancy we hear him debating in the synagogues of Pisidian Antioch or Corinth or Thessalonica: "He was confounding the Jews, *proving* that this is the Christ." Neither Saul himself nor his Jewish hearers in the first days after his conversion would be in the mood for the sustained argumentation and Scriptural dialectic thus described. The

<sup>24</sup> ἡμέραι ἰκαναί, *a considerable time*. The expression is indefinite.

<sup>25</sup> Ver. 18: that is, parts of "three years," according to ancient reckoning – say from 36 to 38 A.D., possibly less than two in actual duration.

explanation of the change lies behind the opening words of the verse: "But Saul increased in strength" – a growth due not only to the prolonged opposition he had to encounter, but still more, as we conjecture from this hint of the Apostle, to the period of rest and reflection which he enjoyed in his Arabian seclusion. The two marks of time given us in vv. 19 and 23 of Luke's narrative, may be fairly distinguished from each other – "certain days," and "sufficient days" (or "a considerable time") – as denoting a briefer and a longer season respectively: the former so short that the excitement caused by Saul's declaration of his new faith had not yet subsided when he withdrew from the city into the desert – in which case Luke's note of time does not really conflict with Paul's "immediately"; the latter affording a lapse of time sufficient for Saul to develop his argument for the Messiahship of Jesus, and to provoke the Jews, worsted in logic, to resort to other weapons. From Luke's point of view the sojourn in Arabia, however extended, was simply an incident, of no public importance, in Paul's early ministry in Damascus.

The disappearance of Saul during this interval helps however, as we think, to explain a subsequent statement in Luke's narrative that is certainly perplexing (Acts ix. 26, 27). When Saul, after his escape from Damascus, "was come to Jerusalem," and "essayed to join himself to the disciples," they, we are told, "were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple!" For while the Church at Jerusalem had doubtless heard at the time of Saul's marvellous conversion three years before, his long retirement and avoidance of Jerusalem threw an air of mystery and suspicion about his proceedings, and revived the fears of the Judean brethren; and his reappearance created a panic. In consequence of his sudden departure from Damascus, it is likely that no public report had as yet reached Judæa of Saul's return to that city and his renewed ministry there. Barnabas now came forward to act as sponsor for the suspected convert. What induced him to do this – whether it was that his largeness of heart enabled him to read Saul's character better than others, or whether he had some earlier private acquaintance with the Tarsian – we cannot tell. The account that Barnabas was able to give of his friend's conversion and of his bold confession in Damascus, won for Paul the place in the confidence of Peter and the leaders of the Church at Jerusalem which he never afterwards lost.

The two narratives – the history of Luke and the letter of Paul – relate the same series of events, but from almost opposite standpoints. Luke dwells upon *Paul's connection with the Church at Jerusalem and its Apostles*. Paul is maintaining *his independence of them*. There is no contradiction; but there is just such discrepancy as will arise where two honest and competent witnesses are relating identical facts in a different connection.

## CHAPTER VI. *PAUL AND THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH*

*"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, but only 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 Judæa 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." – Gal. i. 18-24.*

For the first two years of his Christian life, Paul held no intercourse whatever with the Church at Jerusalem and its chiefs. His relation with them was commenced by the visit he paid to Peter in the third year after his conversion. And that relation was more precisely determined and made public when, after successfully prosecuting for fourteen years his mission to the heathen, the Apostle again went up to Jerusalem to defend the liberty of the Gentile Church (ch. ii. 1-10).

A clear understanding of this course of events was essential to the vindication of Paul's position in the eyes of the Galatians. The "troublers" told them that Paul's doctrine was not that of the mother Church; that his knowledge of the gospel and authority to preach it came from the elder Apostles, with whom since his attack upon Peter at Antioch he was at open variance. They themselves had come down from Judæa on purpose to set his pretensions in their true light, and to teach the Gentiles the way of the Lord more perfectly.

Modern rationalism has espoused the cause of these "deceitful workers" (2 Cor. xi. 13-15). It endeavours to rehabilitate the Judaistic party. The "critical" school maintain that the opposition of the Circumcisionists to the Apostle Paul was perfectly legitimate. They hold that the "pseud-apostles" of Corinth, the "certain from James," the "troublers" and "false brethren privily brought in" of this Epistle, did in truth represent, as they claimed to do, the principles of the Jewish Christian Church; and that there was a radical divergence between the Pauline and Petrine gospels, of which the two Apostles were fully aware from the time of their encounter at Antioch. However Paul may have wished to disguise the fact to himself, the teaching of the Twelve was identical, we are told, with that "other gospel" on which he pronounces his anathema; the original Church of Jesus never emancipated itself from the trammels of legalism; the Apostle Paul, and not his Master, was in reality the author of evangelical doctrine, the founder of the catholic Church. The conflict between Peter and Paul at Antioch, related in this Epistle, supplies, in the view of Baur and his followers, the key to the history of the Early Church. The Ebionite assumption of a personal rivalry between the two Apostles and an intrinsic opposition in their doctrine, hitherto regarded as the invention of a desperate and decaying heretical sect, these ingenious critics have adopted for the basis of their "scientific" reconstruction of the New Testament. Paul's Judaizing hinderers and troublers are to be canonized; and the pseudo-Clementine writings, forsooth, must take the place of the discredited Acts of the Apostles. Verily "the whirligig of time hath its revenges." To empanel Paul on his accusers' side, and to make this Epistle above all convict him of heterodoxy, is an attempt which dazzles by its very daring.

Let us endeavour to form a clear conception of the facts touching Paul's connection with the first Apostles and his attitude and feeling towards the Jewish Church, as they are in evidence in the first two chapters of this Epistle.

I. On the one hand, it is clear that the Gentile Apostle's relations to Peter and the Twelve were those of *personal independence and official equality*.

This is the aspect of the case on which Paul lays stress. His sceptical critics argue that under his assertion of independence there is concealed an opposition of principle, a "radical divergence." The

sense of independence is unmistakable. It is on that side that the Apostle seeks to guard himself. With this aim he styles himself at the outset "an Apostle not from men, nor by man" – neither man-made nor man-sent. Such apostles there were; and in this character, we imagine, the Galatian Judaistic teachers, like those of Corinth,<sup>26</sup> professed to appear, as the emissaries of the Church in Jerusalem and the authorised exponents of the teaching of the "pillars" there. Paul is an Apostle at first-hand, taking his commission directly from Jesus Christ. In that quality he pronounces his benediction and his anathema. To support this assumption he has shown how impossible it was in point of time and circumstances that he should have been beholden for his gospel to the Jerusalem Church and the elder Apostles. So far as regarded the manner of his conversion and the events of the first decisive years in which his Christian principles and vocation took their shape, his position had been altogether detached and singular; the Jewish Apostles could in no way claim him for their son in the gospel.

But at last, "after three years," Saul "did go up to Jerusalem." What was it for? To report himself to the authorities of the Church and place himself under their direction? To seek Peter's instruction, in order to obtain a more assured knowledge of the gospel he had embraced? Nothing of the kind. Not even "to question Cephas," as some render ἰστορήσαι, following an older classical usage – "to gain information" from him; but "I went up to make acquaintance with Cephas." Saul went to Jerusalem carrying in his heart the consciousness of his high vocation, seeking, as an equal with an equal, to make personal acquaintance with the leader of the Twelve. *Cephas* (as he was called at Jerusalem) must have been at this time to Paul a profoundly interesting personality. He was the one man above all others whom the Apostle felt he must get to know, with whom it was necessary for him to have a thorough understanding.

How momentous was this meeting! How much we could wish to know what passed between these two in the conversations of the fortnight they spent together. One can imagine the delight with which Peter would relate to his listener the scenes of the life of Jesus; how the two men would weep together at the recital of the Passion, the betrayal, trial and denial, the agony of the Garden, the horror of the cross; with what mingled awe and triumph he would describe the events of the Resurrection and the Forty Days, the Ascension, and the baptism of fire. In Paul's account of the appearances of the risen Christ (1 Cor. xv. 4-8), written many years afterwards, there are statements most naturally explained as a recollection of what he had heard privately from Peter, and possibly also from James, at this conference. For it is in his gospel message and doctrine, and his Apostolic commission, not in regard to the details of the biography of Jesus, that Paul claims to be independent of tradition. And with what deep emotion would Peter receive in turn from Paul's lips the account of his meeting with Jesus, of the three dark days that followed, of the message sent through Ananias, and the revelations made and purposes formed during the Arabian exile. Between two such men, met at such a time, there would surely be an entire frankness of communication and a brotherly exchange of convictions and of plans. In that case Paul could not fail to inform the elder Apostle of the extent of the commission he had received from their common Master; although he does not appear to have made any public and formal assertion of his Apostolic dignity for a considerable time afterwards. The supposition of a private cognizance on Peter's part of Paul's true status makes the open recognition which took place fourteen years later easy to understand (ch. ii. 6-10).

"But other of the Apostles," Paul goes on to say, "saw I none, but only James the brother of the Lord." James, *no Apostle* surely; neither in the higher sense, for he cannot be reasonably identified with "James the son of Alphæus;" nor in the lower, for he was, as far as we can learn, stationary at Jerusalem. But he stood so near the Apostles, and was in every way so important a person, that if Paul had omitted the name of James in this connection, he would have seemed to pass over a material fact. The reference to James in 1 Cor. xv. 7 – a hint deeply interesting in itself, and lending so much

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<sup>26</sup> 2 Cor. xi. 13; iii. 1-3. See the remarks on the word *Apostle* in Chapter I. p. 12.

dignity to the position of James – suggests that Paul had been at this time in confidential intercourse with James as well as Peter, each relating to the other how he had "seen the Lord."

So cardinal are the facts just stated (vv. 15-19), as bearing on Paul's apostleship, and so contrary to the representations made by the Judaizers, that he pauses to call God to witness his veracity: "Now in what I am writing to you, lo, before God, I lie not." The Apostle never makes this appeal lightly; but only in support of some averment in which his personal honour and his strongest feelings are involved.<sup>27</sup> It was alleged, with some show of proof, that Paul was an underling of the authorities of the Church at Jerusalem, and that all he knew of the gospel had been learned from the Twelve. From ver. 11 onwards he has been making a circumstantial contradiction of these assertions. He protests that up to the time when he commenced his Gentile mission, he had been under no man's tutelage or tuition in respect to his knowledge of the gospel. He can say no more to prove his case. Either his opposers or himself are uttering falsehood. The Galatians know, or ought to know, how incapable he is of such deceit. Solemnly therefore he avouches, closing the matter so far, as if drawing himself up to his utmost height: "Behold, before God, I do not lie!"

But now we are confronted with the narrative of the Acts (chap. ix. 26-30), which renders a very different account of this passage in the Apostle's life. (To vv. 26, 27 of Luke's narrative we have already alluded in the concluding paragraphs of Chapter V). We are told there that Barnabas introduced Saul "to the Apostles"; here, that he saw none of them but Cephas, and only James besides. The *number* of the Apostolate present in Jerusalem at the time is a particular that does not engage Luke's mind; while it is of the essence of Paul's affirmation. What the Acts relates is that Saul, through Barnabas' intervention, was now received by the Apostolic fellowship as a Christian brother, and as one who "had seen the Lord." The object which Saul had in coming to Jerusalem, and the fact that just then Cephas was the only one of the Twelve to be found in the city, along with James – these are matters which only come into view from the private and personal standpoint to which Paul admits us. For the rest, there is certainly no contradiction when we read in the one report that Paul "went up to make acquaintance with Cephas," and in the other, that he "was with them going in and out at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord;" that "he spake and disputed against the Hellenists," moving their anger so violently that his life was again in danger, and he had to be carried down to Cæsarea and shipped off to Tarsus. Saul was not the man to hide his head in Jerusalem. We can understand how greatly his spirit was stirred by his arrival there, and by the recollection of his last passage through the city gates. In these very synagogues of the Hellenists he had himself confronted Stephen; outside those walls he had assisted to stone the martyr. Paul's address delivered many years later to the Jewish mob that attempted his life in Jerusalem, shows how deeply these remembrances troubled his soul (Acts xxii. 17-22). And they would not suffer him now to be silent. He hoped that his testimony to Christ, delivered in the spot where he had been so notorious as a persecutor, would produce a softening effect on his old companions. It was sure to affect them powerfully, one way or the other. As the event proved, it did not take many words from Saul's lips to awaken against him the same fury that hurried Stephen to his death. A fortnight was time quite sufficient, under the circumstances, to make Jerusalem, as we say, too hot to hold Saul. Nor can we wonder, knowing his love for his kindred, that there needed a special command from heaven (Acts xxii. 21), joined to the friendly compulsion of the Church, to induce him to yield ground and quit the city. But he had accomplished something; he had "made acquaintance with Cephas."

This brief visit to the Holy City was a second crisis in Paul's career. He was now thrust forth upon his mission to the heathen. It was evident that he was not to look for success among his Jewish brethren. He lost no opportunity of appealing to them; but it was commonly with the same result as at Damascus and Jerusalem. Throughout life he carried with him this "great sorrow and unceasing pain of heart," that to his "kinsmen according to the flesh," for whose salvation he could consent to

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<sup>27</sup> See Rom. ix. 1; 2 Cor. i. 17, 18, 23; 1 Thess. ii. 5.

forfeit his own, his gospel was hid. In their eyes he was a traitor to Israel, and must count upon their enmity. Everything conspired to point in one direction: "Depart," the Divine voice had said, "for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles." And Paul obeyed. "I went," he relates here, "into the regions of Syria and Cilicia" (ver. 21).

To Tarsus, the Cilician capital, Saul voyaged from Judæa. So we learn from Acts ix. 30. His native place had the first claim on the Apostle after Jerusalem, and afforded the best starting-point for his independent mission. Syria, however, precedes Cilicia in the text; it was the leading province of these two, in which Paul was occupied during the fourteen years ensuing, and became the seat of distinguished Churches. In Antioch, the Syrian capital, Christianity was already planted (Acts xi. 19 – 21). The close connection of the Churches of these provinces, and their predominantly Gentile character, are both evident from the letter addressed to them subsequently by the Council of Jerusalem (Acts xv. 23, 24). Acts xv. 41 shows that a number of Christian societies owning Paul's authority were found at a later time in this region. And there was a highroad direct from Syro-Cilicia to Galatia, which Paul traversed in his second visit to the latter country (Acts xviii. 22, 23); so that the Galatians would doubtless be aware of the existence of these older Gentile Churches, and of their relation to Paul. He has no need to dwell on this first chapter of his missionary history. After but a fortnight's visit to Jerusalem, Paul went into these Gentile regions, and there for twice seven years – with what success was known to all – "preached the faith of which once he made havoc."

This period was divided into two parts. For five or six years the Apostle laboured alone; afterwards in conjunction with Barnabas, who invited his help at Antioch (Acts xi. 25, 26). Barnabas was Paul's senior, and had for some time held the leading position in the Church of Antioch; and Paul was personally indebted to this generous man (p. 82). He accepted the position of helper to Barnabas without any compromise of his higher authority, as yet held in reserve. He accompanied Barnabas to Jerusalem in 44 (or 45) A.D., with the contribution made by the Syrian Church for the relief of the famine-stricken Judean brethren – a visit which Paul seems here to forget.<sup>28</sup> But the Church at Jerusalem was at that time undergoing a severe persecution; its leaders were either in prison or in flight. The two delegates can have done little more than convey the moneys entrusted to them, and that with the utmost secrecy. Possibly Paul on this occasion never set foot inside the city. In any case, the event had no bearing on the Apostle's present contention.

Between this journey and the really important visit to Jerusalem introduced in chap. ii. 1, Barnabas and Paul undertook, at the prompting of the Holy Spirit expressed through the Church of Antioch (Acts xiii. 1-4), the missionary expedition described in Acts xiii., xiv. Under the trials of this journey the ascendancy of the younger evangelist became patent to all. Paul was marked out in the eyes of the Gentiles as their born leader, the Apostle of heathen Christianity. He appears to have taken the chief part in the discussion with the Judaists respecting circumcision, which immediately ensued at Antioch; and was put at the head of the deputation sent up to Jerusalem concerning this question. This was a turning-point in the Apostle's history. It brought about the public recognition of his leadership in the Church. The seal of man was now to be set upon the secret election of God.

During this long period, the Apostle tells us, he "remained unknown by face to the Churches of Judæa." Absent for so many years from the metropolis, after a fortnight's flying visit, spent in private intercourse with Peter and James, and in controversy in the Hellenistic synagogues where few Christians of the city would be likely to follow him,<sup>29</sup> Paul was a stranger to the bulk of the Judean disciples. But they watched his course, notwithstanding, with lively interest and with devout thanksgiving to God (vv. 22, 23). Throughout this first period of his ministry the Apostle acted in complete independence of the Jewish Church, making no report to its chiefs, nor seeking any direction

<sup>28</sup> Acts xi. 27-30. It is significant that this ministrations was sent "to the Elders."

<sup>29</sup> For the ministry alluded to in Acts xxvi. 20 there were other, later opportunities, especially in the journey described in Acts xv. 3; see also Acts xxi. 15, 16.

from them. Accordingly, when afterwards he did go up to Jerusalem and laid before the authorities there his gospel to the heathen, they had nothing to add to it; they did not take upon themselves to give him any advice or injunction, beyond the wish that he and Barnabas should "remember the poor," as he was already forward to do (ch. ii. 1-10). Indeed the three famous Pillars of the Jewish Church at this time openly acknowledged Paul's equality with Peter in the Apostleship, and resigned to his direction the Gentile province. Finally at Antioch, the head-quarters of Gentile Christianity, when Peter compromised the truth of the gospel by yielding to Judaistic pressure, Paul had not hesitated publicly to reprove him (ch. ii. 11-21). He had been compelled in this way to carry the vindication of his gospel to the furthest lengths; and he had done this successfully. It is only when we reach the end of the second chapter that we discover how much the Apostle meant when he said, "My gospel is not according to man."

If there was any man to whom as a Christian teacher he was bound to defer, any one who might be regarded as his official superior, it was the Apostle Peter. Yet against this very Cephas he had dared openly to measure himself. Had he been a disciple of the Jewish Apostle, a servant of the Jerusalem Church, how would this have been possible? Had he not possessed an authority derived immediately from Christ, how could he have stood out alone, against the prerogative of Peter, against the personal friendship and local influence of Barnabas, against the example of all his Jewish brethren? Nay, he was prepared to rebuke all the Apostles, and anathematize all the angels, rather than see Christ's gospel set at naught. For it was in his view "the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, *committed to my trust!*" (1 Tim. i. 11).

II. But while Paul stoutly maintains his independence, he does this in such a way as to show that there was no hostility or personal rivalry between himself and the first Apostles. His relations to the Jewish Church were all the while those of *friendly acquaintance and brotherly recognition*.

That Nazarene sect which he had of old time persecuted, was "the Church of God" (ver. 13). To the end of his life this thought gave a poignancy to the Apostle's recollection of his early days. To "the Churches of Judæa"<sup>30</sup> he attaches the epithet *in Christ*, a phrase of peculiar depth of meaning with Paul, which he could never have conferred as matter of formal courtesy, nor by way of mere distinction between the Church and the Synagogue. From Paul's lips this title is a guarantee of orthodoxy. It satisfies us that the "other gospel" of the Circumcisionists was very far from being the gospel of the Jewish Christian Church at large. Paul is careful to record the sympathy which the Judean brethren cherished for his missionary work in its earliest stages, although their knowledge of him was comparatively distant: "Only they continued to hear that our old persecutor is preaching the faith which once he sought to destroy. And in me they glorified God." Nor does he drop the smallest hint to show that the disposition of the Churches in the mother country toward himself, or his judgement respecting them, had undergone any change up to the time of his writing this Epistle.

He speaks of the elder Apostles in terms of unfeigned respect. In his reference in ch. ii. 11-21 to the error of Peter, there is great plainness of speech, but no bitterness. When the Apostle says that he "went up to Jerusalem to see Peter," and describes James as "the Lord's brother," and when he refers to both of them, along with John, as "those accounted to be pillars," can he mean anything but honour to these honoured men? To read into these expressions a covert jealousy and to suppose them written by way of disparagement, seems to us a strangely jaundiced and small-minded sort of criticism. The Apostle testifies that Peter held a Divine trust in the Gospel, and that God had "wrought for Peter" to this effect, as for himself. By claiming the testimony of the Pillars at Jerusalem to his vocation, he shows his profound respect for theirs. When the unfortunate difference arose between Peter and himself at Antioch, Paul is careful to show that the Jewish Apostle on that occasion was influenced by the circumstances of the moment, and nevertheless remained true in his real convictions to the common gospel.

<sup>30</sup> Ver. 22. It is arbitrary in Meyer to exclude from this category the Church of Jerusalem.

In view of these facts, it is impossible to believe, as the *Tendency* critics would have us do, that Paul when he wrote this letter was at feud with the Jewish Church. In that case, while he taxes Peter with "dissimulation" (ch. ii. 11-13), he is himself the real dissembler, and has carried his dissimulation to amazing lengths. If he is in this Epistle contending against the Primitive Church and its leaders, he has concealed his sentiments toward them with an art so crafty as to overreach itself. He has taught his readers to reverence those whom on this hypothesis he was most concerned to discredit. The terms under which he refers to Cephas and the Judean Churches would be just so many testimonies against himself, if their doctrine was the "other gospel" of the Galatian troublers, and if Paul and the Twelve were rivals for the suffrages of the Gentile Christians.

The one word which wears a colour of detraction is the parenthesis in ver. 6 of ch. ii.: "whatever aforetime<sup>31</sup> they (those of repute) were, makes no difference to me. God accepts no man's person." But this is no more than Paul has already said in ch. i. 16, 17. At the first, after receiving his gospel from the Lord in person, he felt it to be out of place for him to "confer with flesh and blood." So now, even in the presence of the first Apostles, the earthly companions of his Master, he cannot abate his pretensions, nor forget that his ministry stands on a level as exalted as theirs. This language is in precise accord with that of 1 Cor. xv. 10. The suggestion that the repeated οἱ δοκοῦντες conveys a sneer against the leaders at Jerusalem, as "seeming" to be more than they were, is an insult to Paul that recoils upon the critics who utter it. The phrase denotes "those of repute," "reputed to be pillars," the acknowledged heads of the mother Church. Their position was recognised on all hands; Paul assumes it, and argues upon it. He desires to magnify, not to minify, the importance of these illustrious men. They were pillars of his own cause. It is a maladroit interpretation that would have Paul cry down James and the Twelve. By so much as he impaired their worth, he must assuredly have impaired his own. If their status was mere *seeming*, of what value was their endorsement of his? But for a preconceived opinion, no one, we may safely affirm, reading this Epistle would have gathered that Peter's "gospel of the circumcision" was the "other gospel" of Galatia, or that the "certain from James" of ch. ii. 12 represented the views and the policy of the first Apostles. The assumption that Peter's dissimulation at Antioch expressed the settled doctrine of the Jewish Apostolic Church, is unhistorical. The Judaizers *abused* the authority of Peter and James when they pleaded it in favour of their agitation. So we are told expressly in Acts xv.; and a candid interpretation of this letter bears out the statements of Luke. In James and Peter, Paul and John, there were indeed "diversities of gifts and operations," but they had received the same Spirit; they served the same Lord. They held alike the one and only gospel of the grace of God.

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<sup>31</sup> We follow Lightfoot in reading the ποτὲ as in ch. i. 23, and everywhere else in Paul, as a particle of *time*.

## CHAPTER VII. *PAUL AND THE FALSE BRETHREN*

*"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, [asking them whether I am running, or had run, in vain: but not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. But it was<sup>32</sup>] 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." – Gal. ii. 1-5.*

"Fourteen years" had elapsed since Paul left Jerusalem for Tarsus, and commenced his Gentile mission.<sup>33</sup> During this long period – a full half of his missionary course – the Apostle was lost to the sight of the Judean Churches. For nearly half this time, until Barnabas brought him to Antioch, we have no further trace of his movements. But these years of obscure labour had, we may be sure, no small influence in shaping the Apostle's subsequent career. It was a kind of Apostolic apprenticeship. Then his evangelistic plans were laid; his powers were practised; his methods of teaching and administration formed and tested. This first, unnoted period of Paul's missionary life held, we imagine, much the same relation to his public ministry that the time of the Arabian retreat did to his spiritual development.

We are apt to think of the Apostle Paul only as we see him in the full tide of his activity, carrying "from Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum" the standard of the cross and planting it in one after another of the great cities of the Empire, "always triumphing in every place;" or issuing those mighty Epistles whose voice shakes the world. We forget the earlier term of preparation, these years of silence and patience, of unrecorded toil in a comparatively narrow and humble sphere, which had after all their part in making Paul the man he was. If Christ Himself would not "clutch" at His Divine prerogatives (Phil. ii. 5-11), nor win them by self-assertion and before the time, how much more did it become His servant to rise to his great office by slow degrees. Paul served first as a private missionary pioneer in his native land, then as a junior colleague and assistant to Barnabas, until the summons came to take a higher place, when "the signs of an Apostle" had been fully "wrought in him." Not in a day, nor by the effect of a single revelation did he become the fully armed and all-accomplished Apostle of the Gentiles whom we meet in this Epistle. "After the space of fourteen years" it was time for him to stand forth the approved witness and minister of Jesus Christ, whom Peter and John publicly embraced as their equal.

Paul claims here the initiative in the momentous visit to Jerusalem undertaken by himself and Barnabas, of which he is going to speak. In Acts xv. 2 he is similarly placed at the head of the deputation sent from Antioch about the question of circumcision. The account of the preceding missionary tour in Acts xiii., xiv., shows how the headship of the Gentile Church had come to devolve on Paul. In Luke's narrative they are "Barnabas and Saul" who set out; "Paul and Barnabas" who

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<sup>32</sup> The writer is compelled in this instance to depart from the rendering of the English Version, for reasons given in the sequel. See also a paper on *Paul and Titus at Jerusalem*, in *The Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. vi., pp. 435-442. The last three words within the brackets agree with the R.V. margin.

<sup>33</sup> These fourteen years probably amounted to something less in our reckoning, – say, from 38 to 51 A.D. Some six years elapsed before Paul was summoned to Antioch.

return.<sup>34</sup> Under the trials and hazards of this adventure – at Paphos, Pisidian Antioch, Lystra – Paul's native ascendancy and his higher vocation irresistibly declared themselves. Age and rank yielded to the fire of inspiration, to the gifts of speech, the splendid powers of leadership which the difficulties of this expedition revealed in Paul. Barnabas returned to Antioch with the thought in his heart, "He must increase; I must decrease." And Barnabas was too generous a man not to yield cheerfully to his companion the precedence for which God thus marked him out. Yet the "sharp contention" in which the two men parted soon after this time (Acts xv. 36-40), was, we may conjecture, due in some degree to a lingering soreness in the mind of Barnabas on this account.

The Apostle expresses himself with modesty, but in such a way as to show that *he* was regarded in this juncture as the champion of the Gentile cause. The "revelation" that prompted the visit came to him. The "taking up of Titus" was his distinct act (ver. 1). Unless Paul has deceived himself, he was quite the leading figure in the Council; it was his doctrine and his Apostleship that exercised the minds of the chiefs at Jerusalem, when the delegates from Antioch appeared before them. Whatever Peter and James may have known or surmised previously concerning Paul's vocation, it was only now that it became a public question for the Church. But as matters stood, it was a vital question. The status of uncircumcised Christians, and the Apostolic rank of Paul, constituted the twofold problem placed before the chiefs of the Jewish Church. At the same time, the Apostle, while fixing our attention mainly on his own position, gives to Barnabas his meed of honour; for he says, "I went up with Barnabas," – "*we* never yielded for an hour to the false brethren," – "the Pillars gave *to me and Barnabas* the right hand of fellowship, that we might go to the Gentiles." But it is evident that the elder Gentile missionary stood in the background. By the action that he takes Paul unmistakably declares, "I am the Apostle of the Gentiles;"<sup>35</sup> and that claim is admitted by the consenting voice of both branches of the Church. The Apostle stepped to the front at this solemn crisis, not for his own rank or office' sake, but at the call of God, in defence of the truth of the gospel and the spiritual freedom of mankind.

This meeting at Jerusalem took place in 51, or it may be, 52 A.D. We make no doubt that it is the same with the Council of Acts xv. The identification has been controverted by several able scholars, but without success. The two accounts are different, but in no sense contradictory. In fact, as Dr. Pfeleiderer acknowledges,<sup>36</sup> they "admirably supplement each other. The agreement as to the chief points is in any case greater than the discrepancies in the details; and these discrepancies can for the most part be explained by the different standpoint of the relaters." A difficulty lies, however, in the fact that the historian of the Acts makes this the *third* visit of Paul to Jerusalem subsequently to his conversion; whereas, from the Apostle's statement, it appears to have been the *second*. This discrepancy has already come up for discussion in the last Chapter (p. 92). Two further observations may be added on this point. In the first place, Paul does not say that he had never been to Jerusalem since the visit of ch. i. 18; he does say, that on this occasion he "went up again," and that meanwhile he "remained unknown by face" to the Christians of Judæa (ch. i. 22) – a fact quite compatible, as we have shown, with what is related in Acts xi. 29, 30. And further, the request addressed at this conference to the Gentile missionaries, that they should "remember the poor," and the reference made by the Apostle to his previous zeal in the same business (vv. 9, 10), are in agreement with the earlier visit of charity mentioned by Luke.

I. The emphasis of ver. 1 rests upon its last clause, —*taking along with me also Titus*. Not "Titus as well as Barnabas" – this cannot be the meaning of the "also" – for Barnabas was Paul's colleague, deputed equally with himself by the Church of Antioch; nor "Titus as well as others" – there were other members of the deputation (Acts xv. 2), but Paul makes no reference to them. The *also* (καὶ)

<sup>34</sup> Acts xiii. 2, 7, 13, 43, 45, 46, 50; xiv. 12, 14; xv. 2, 12.

<sup>35</sup> Comp. Rom. xi. 13; xv. 16, 17.

<sup>36</sup> *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 103. This testimony is the more valuable as coming from the ablest living exponent of the Baurian theory.

calls attention to the fact of Paul's taking *Titus*, in view of the sequel; as though he said, "I not only went up to Jerusalem at this particular time, under Divine direction, but I took along with me Titus besides." The prefixed *with* (συν-) of the Greek participle refers to Paul himself: compare ver. 3, "Titus who was with me." As for the "certain others" referred to in Acts xv. 2, they were most likely Jews; or if any of them were Gentiles, still it was Titus whom Paul had chosen for his companion; and his case stood out from the rest in such a way that it became the decisive one, the *test-case* for the matter in dispute.

The mention of *Titus'* name in this connection was calculated to raise a lively interest in the minds of the Apostle's readers. He is introduced as known to the Galatians; indeed by this time his name was familiar in the Pauline Churches, as that of a fellow-traveller and trusted helper of the Apostle. He was with Paul in the latter part of the third missionary tour – so we learn from the Corinthian letters – and therefore probably in the earlier part of the same journey, when the Apostle paid his second visit to Galatia. He belonged to the heathen mission, and was Paul's "true child after a common faith" (Tit. i. 4), an uncircumcised man, of Gentile birth equally with the Galatians. And now they read of his "going up to Jerusalem with Paul," to the mother-city of believers, where are the pillars of the Church – the Jewish teachers would say – the true Apostles of Jesus, where His doctrine is preached in its purity, and where every Christian is circumcised and keeps the Law. Titus, the unclean Gentile, at Jerusalem! How could he be admitted or tolerated there, in the fellowship of the first disciples of the Lord? This question Paul's readers, after what they had heard from the Circumcisionists, would be sure to ask. He will answer it directly.

But the Apostle goes on to say, that he "went up in accordance with a revelation." For this was one of those supreme moments in his life when he looked for and received the direct guidance of heaven. It was a most critical step to carry this question of Gentile circumcision up to Jerusalem, and to take Titus with him there, into the enemies' stronghold. Moreover, on the settlement of this matter Paul knew that his Apostolic status depended, so far as human recognition was concerned. It would be seen whether the Jewish Church would acknowledge the converts of the Gentile mission as brethren in Christ; and whether the first Apostles would receive him, "the untimely one," as a colleague of their own. Never had he more urgently needed or more implicitly relied upon Divine direction than at this hour.

"And I put before them (the Church at Jerusalem) the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles – but privately to those of repute: am I running (said I), or have I run, in vain?" The latter clause we read *interrogatively*, along with such excellent grammatical interpreters as Meyer, Wieseler, and Hofmann. Paul had not come to Jerusalem *in order to solve any doubt in his own mind*; but he wished the Church of Jerusalem *to declare its mind* respecting the character of his ministry. He was not "running as uncertainly;" nor in view of the "revelation" just given him could he have any fear for the result of his appeal. But it was in every way necessary that the appeal should be made.

The interjected words, "but privately," etc., indicate that there were *two* meetings during the conference, such as those which seem to be distinguished in Acts xv. 4 and 6; and that the Apostle's statement and the question arising out of it were addressed more pointedly to "those of repute." By this term we understand, here and in ver. 6, "the apostles and elders" (Acts xv.), headed by Peter and James, amongst whom "those reputed to be pillars" are distinguished in ver. 9. Paul dwells upon the phrase οἱ δοκοῦντες, because, to be sure, it was so often on the lips of the Judaizers, who were in the habit of speaking with an imposing air, and by way of contrast with Paul, of "the authorities" (at Jerusalem) – as the designation might appropriately be rendered. These very men whom the Legalists were exalting at Paul's expense, the venerated chiefs of the mother Church, had on this occasion, Paul is going to say, given their approval to his doctrine; they declined to impose circumcision on Gentile believers. The Twelve were not stationary at Jerusalem, and therefore could not form a fixed court of reference there; hence a greater importance accrued to the Elders of the city Church, with the revered James at their head, the brother of the Lord.

The Apostle, in bringing Titus, had brought up the subject-matter of the controversy. The "gospel of the uncircumcision" stood before the Jewish authorities, an accomplished fact. Titus was there, by the side of Paul, a sample – and a noble specimen, we can well believe – of the Gentile Christendom which the Jewish Church must either acknowledge or repudiate. How will they treat him? Will they admit this foreign protege of Paul to their communion? Or will they require him first to be circumcised? The question at issue could not take a form more crucial for the prejudices of the mother Church. It was one thing to acknowledge uncircumcised fellow-believers in the abstract, away yonder at Antioch or Iconium, or even at Cæsarea; and another thing to see Titus standing amongst them in his heathen uncleanness, on the sacred soil of Jerusalem, under the shadow of the Temple, and to hear Paul claiming for him – for this "dog" of a Gentile – equally with himself the rights of Christian brotherhood! The demand was most offensive to the pride of Judaism, as no one knew better than Paul; and we cannot wonder that a revelation was required to justify the Apostle in making it. The case of *Trophimus*, whose presence with the Apostle at Jerusalem many years afterwards proved so nearly fatal (Acts xxi. 27-30), shows how exasperating to the legalist party his action in this instance must have been. Had not Peter and the better spirits of the Church in Jerusalem laid to heart the lesson of the vision of Joppa, that "no man must be called common or unclean," and had not the wisdom of the Holy Spirit eminently guided this first Council of the Church,<sup>37</sup> Paul's challenge would have received a negative answer; and Jewish and Gentile Christianity must have been driven asunder.

The answer, the triumphant answer, to Paul's appeal comes in the next verse: "Nay, not even<sup>38</sup> Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised." Titus *was not circumcised*, in point of fact – how can we doubt this in view of the language of ver. 5: "Not even for an hour did we yield in subjection?" And he "was *not compelled* to be circumcised" – a mode of putting the denial which implies that in refusing his circumcision urgent solicitation had to be withstood, solicitation addressed to Titus himself, as well as to the leaders of his party. The kind of pressure brought to bear in the case and the quarter from which it proceeded, the Galatians would understand from their own experience (ch. vi. 12; comp. ii. 14).

The attempt made to bring about Titus' circumcision signally failed. Its failure was the practical reply to the question which Paul tells us (ver. 2) he had put to the authorities in Jerusalem; or, according to the more common rendering of ver. 2*b*, it was the answer to the apprehension under which he addressed himself to them. On the former of these views of the connection, which we decidedly prefer, the authorities are clear of any share in the "compulsion" of Titus. When the Apostle gives the statement that his Gentile companion "was not compelled to be circumcised" as the reply to his appeal to "those of repute," it is as much as to say: "The chiefs at Jerusalem did not require Titus' circumcision. They repudiated the attempt of certain parties to force this rite upon him." This testimony precisely accords with the terms of the rescript of the Council, and with the speeches of Peter and James, given in Acts xv. But it was a great point gained to have the liberality of the Jewish Christian leaders put to the proof in this way, to have the generous sentiments of speech and letter made good in this example of uncircumcised Christianity brought to their doors.

To the authorities at Jerusalem the question put by the delegates from Antioch on the one side, and by the Circumcisionists on the other, was perfectly clear. If they insist on Titus' circumcision, they disown Paul and the Gentile mission: if they accept Paul's gospel, they must leave Titus alone. Paul and Barnabas stated the case in a manner that left no room for doubt or compromise. Their action was marked, as ver. 5 declares, with the utmost decision. And the response of the Jewish leaders was equally frank and definite. We have no business, says James (Acts xv. 19), "to trouble those from the Gentiles that turn to God." Their judgement is virtually affirmed in ver. 3, in reference to Titus, in

<sup>37</sup> Acts xv. 28: "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us." This was in the Early Church no mere pious official form.

<sup>38</sup> For this use of ἀλλ' οὐδὲ compare Acts xix. 2 (here also after a question); 1 Cor. iii. 2; iv. 3. We observe a similar instance of the phrase in Æschylus, *Persæ*, l. 792. Ἀλλ' opposes itself to the expectation of the Judaistic "compellers," present to the mind of Paul and his readers.

whose person the Galatians could not fail to see that their own case had been settled by anticipation. "Those of repute" disowned the Circumcisionists; the demand that the yoke of circumcision should be imposed on the Gentiles had no sanction from them. If the Judaizers claimed their sanction, the claim was false.

Here the Apostle pauses, as his Gentile readers must have paused and drawn a long breath of relief or of astonishment at what he has just alleged. If Titus was not compelled to be circumcised, even at Jerusalem, who, they might ask, was going to compel *them*? – The full stop should therefore be placed at the end of ver. 3, not ver. 2. Vv. 1-3 form a paragraph complete in itself. Its last sentence resolves the decisive question raised in this visit of Paul's to Jerusalem, when he "took with him also Titus."

II. The opening words of ver. 4 have all the appearance of commencing a new sentence. This sentence, concluded in ver. 5, is grammatically incomplete; but that is no reason for throwing it upon the previous sentence, to the confusion of both. There is a transition of thought, marked by the introductory *But*,<sup>39</sup> from the issue of Paul's second critical visit to Jerusalem (vv. 1-3) to *the cause which made it necessary*. This was the action of "false brethren," to whom the Apostle made a determined and successful resistance (vv. 4, 5). The opening "But" does not refer to ver. 3 in particular, rather to the entire foregoing paragraph. The ellipsis (after "But") is suitably supplied in the marginal rendering of the Revisers, where we take *it was* to mean, not "Because of the false brethren *Titus was not* (or *was not compelled to be*) *circumcised*," but "Because of the false brethren *this meeting came about*, or, *I took the course aforesaid*."

To know what Paul means by "false brethren," we must turn to ch. i. 6-9, iii. 1, iv. 17, v. 7-12, vi. 12-14, in this Epistle; and again to 2 Cor. ii. 17-iii. 1, iv. 2, xi. 3, 4, 12-22, 26; Rom. xvi. 17, 18; Phil. iii. 2. They were men bearing the name of Christ and professing faith in Him, but Pharisees at heart, self-seeking, rancorous, unscrupulous men, bent on exploiting the Pauline Churches for their own advantage, and regarding Gentile converts to Christ as so many possible recruits for the ranks of the Circumcision.

But where, and how, were these traitors "privily brought in?" Brought in, we answer, to the field of the Gentile mission; and doubtless by local Jewish sympathisers, who introduced them without the concurrence of the officers of the Church. They "came in privily" – slipped in by stealth – "to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus." Now it was at Antioch and in the pagan Churches that this liberty existed in its normal exercise – the liberty for which our Epistle contends, the enjoyment of Christian privileges independently of Jewish law – in which Paul and his brother missionaries had identified themselves with their Gentile followers. The "false brethren" were Jewish spies in the Gentile Christian camp. We do not see how the Galatians could have read the Apostle's words otherwise; nor how it could have occurred to them that he was referring to the way in which these men had been originally "brought into" the Jewish Church. That concerned neither him nor them. But *their getting into the Gentile fold* was the serious thing. They are the "certain who came down from Judæa, and taught the (Gentile) brethren, saying, Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved;" and whom their own Church afterwards repudiated (Acts xv. 24). With Antioch for the centre of their operations, these mischief-makers disturbed the whole field of Paul and Barnabas' labours in Syria and Cilicia (Acts xv. 23; comp. Gal. i. 21). For the Galatian readers, the terms of this sentence, coming after the anathema of ch. i. 6-9, threw a startling light on the character of the Judean emissaries busy in their midst. This description of the former "troublers" strikes at the Judaic opposition in Galatia. It is as if the Apostle said: "These false brethren, smuggled in amongst us, to

<sup>39</sup> This particle is a serious obstacle in the way of the ordinary punctuation, which attaches the following clause to ver. 3. The δὲ is similar to that of ver. 6 (ἀπὸ δὲ τ. δοκούντων); not of κατ' ἰδίαν δὲ in ver. 2, nor of θανάτου δὲ σταύρου (Phil. ii. 8), which are parenthetical qualifications. And to say, "Because of the false brethren Titus was not compelled to be circumcised," is simply an inconsequence. Would he have been compelled to be circumcised if they had *not* required it? This is the assumption implied by the above construction.

filch away our liberties in Christ, wolves in sheep's clothing – I know them well; I have encountered them before this. I never yielded to their demands a single inch. I carried the struggle with them to Jerusalem. There, in the citadel of Judaism, and before the assembled chiefs of the Judean Church, I vindicated once and for all, under the person of Titus, your imperilled Christian rights."

But as the Apostle dilates on the conduct of these Jewish intriguers, the precursors of such an army of troublers, his heart takes fire; in the rush of his emotion he is carried away from the original purport of his sentence, and breaks it off with a burst of indignation: "To whom," he cries, "not even for an hour did we yield by subjection, that the truth of the gospel might abide with you." A breakdown like this – an *anacoluthon*, as the grammarians call it – is nothing strange in Paul's style. Despite the shipwrecked grammar, the sense comes off safely enough. The clause, "we did not yield," etc., describes in a negative form, and with heightened effect, the course the Apostle had pursued from the first in dealing with the false brethren. In this unyielding spirit he had acted, without a moment's wavering, from the hour when, guided by the Holy Spirit, he set out for Jerusalem with the uncircumcised Titus by his side, until he heard his Gentile gospel vindicated by the lips of Peter and James, and received from them the clasp of fellowship as Christ's acknowledged Apostle to the heathen.

It was therefore the action of Jewish interlopers, men of the same stamp as those infesting the Galatian Churches, which occasioned Paul's second, public visit to Jerusalem, and his consultation with the heads of the Judean Church. This decisive course he was himself inspired to take; while at the same time it was taken on behalf and under the direction of the Church of Antioch, the metropolis of Gentile Christianity. He had gone up with Barnabas and "certain others" – including the Greek Titus chosen by himself – the company forming a representative deputation, of which Paul was the leader and spokesman. This measure was the boldest and the only effectual means of combatting the Judaistic propaganda. It drew from the authorities at Jerusalem the admission that "Circumcision is nothing," and that Gentile Christians are free from the ritual law. This was a victory gained over Jewish prejudice of immense significance for the future of Christianity. The ground was already cut from under the feet of the Judaic teachers in Galatia, and of all who should at any time seek to impose external rites as things essential to salvation in Christ. To all his readers Paul can now say, so far as his part is concerned: *The truth of the gospel abides with you.*

## CHAPTER VIII. *PAUL AND THE THREE PILLARS*

*"But from those who were reputed to be somewhat (what they once 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 saw 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); 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." – Gal. ii. 6-10.*

We have dealt by anticipation, in Chapter VI., with several of the topics raised in this section of the Epistle – touching particularly the import of the phrase "those of repute," and the tone of disparagement in which these dignitaries appear to be spoken of in ver. 6. But there still remains in these verses matter in its weight and difficulty more than sufficient to occupy another Chapter.

The grammatical connection of the first paragraph, like that of vv. 2, 3, is involved and disputable. We construe its clauses in the following way: – (1) Ver. 6 begins with a *But*, contrasting "those of repute" with the "false brethren" dealt with in the last sentence. It contains another *anacoluthon* (or incoherence of language), due to the surge of feeling remarked in ver. 4, which still disturbs the Apostle's grammar. He begins: "But from those reputed to be something" – as though he intended to say, "I received on my part nothing, no addition or qualification to my gospel." But he has no sooner mentioned "those of repute" than he is reminded of the studied attempt that was made to set up their authority in opposition to his own, and accordingly throws in this protest: "what they were aforetime,<sup>40</sup> makes no difference to me: man's person God doth not accept." But in saying this, Paul has laid down one of his favourite axioms, a principle that filled a large place in his thoughts;<sup>41</sup> and its enunciation deflects the course of the main sentence, so that it is resumed in an altered form: "For to me those of repute imparted nothing." Here the *me* receives a greater emphasis; and *for* takes the place of *but*. The fact that the first Apostles had nothing to impart to Paul, signally illustrates the Divine impartiality, which often makes the last and least in human eyes equal to the first.

(2) Vv. 7-9 state the *positive*, as ver. 6 the *negative* side of the relation between Paul and the elder Apostles, still keeping in view the principle laid down in the former verse. "Nay, on the contrary, when they saw that I have in charge the gospel of the uncircumcision, as Peter that of the circumcision (ver. 7) – and when they perceived the grace that had been given me, James and Cephas and John, those renowned pillars of the Church, gave the right hand of fellowship to myself and Barnabas, agreeing that we should go to the Gentiles, while they laboured amongst the Jews" (ver. 9).

(3) Ver. 8 comes in as a parenthesis, explaining how the authorities at Jerusalem came to see that this trust belonged to Paul. "For," he says, "He that in Peter's case displayed His power in making him (above all others) Apostle of the Circumcision, did as much for me in regard to the Gentiles." It is not human ordination, but Divine inspiration that makes a minister of Jesus Christ. The noble Apostles of Jesus had the wisdom to see this. It had pleased God to bestow this grace on their old Tarsian persecutor; and they frankly acknowledged the fact.

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<sup>40</sup> For this rendering of *ποτέ* comp. ch. i. 13, 23; and see Lightfoot, or Beet, *in loc.*

<sup>41</sup> Comp. Rom. ii. 11; 1 Cor. i. 27-31; xv. 9, 10; Eph. vi. 9; Col. iii. 25.

Thus Paul sets forth, in the first place, *the completeness of his Apostolic qualifications*, put to proof at the crisis of the circumcision controversy; and in the second place, *the judgement formed respecting him and his office by the first Apostles and companions of the Lord*.

I. "To me those of repute added nothing." Paul had spent but a fortnight in the Christian circle of Jerusalem, fourteen years ago. Of its chiefs he had met at that time only Peter and James, and them in the capacity of a visitor, not as a disciple or a candidate for office. He had never sought the opportunity, nor felt the need, of receiving instruction from the elder Apostles during all the years in which he had preached Christ amongst the heathen. It was not likely he would do so now. When he came into conference and debate with them at the Council, he showed himself their equal, neither in knowledge nor authority "a whit behind the very chiefest." And they were conscious of the same fact.

On the essentials of the gospel Paul found himself in agreement with the Twelve. This is implied in the language of ver. 6. When one writes, "A adds nothing to B," one assumes that B has already what belongs to A, and not something different. Paul asserts in the most positive terms he can command, that his intercourse with the holders of the primitive Christian tradition left him as a minister of Christ exactly where he was before. "On me," he says, "they conferred nothing" – rather, perhaps, "*addressed no communication* to me." The word used appears to deny their having made any motion of the kind. The Greek verb is the same that was employed in ch. i. 16, a rare and delicate compound.<sup>42</sup> Its meaning varies, like that of our *confer*, *communicate*, as it is applied in a more or less active sense. In the former place Paul had said that he "did not confer with flesh and blood"; now he adds, that flesh and blood did not confer anything upon him. Formerly he did not bring his commission to lay it before men; now they had nothing to bring on their part to lay before him. The same word affirms the Apostle's independence at both epochs, shown in the first instance by his reserve toward the dignitaries at Jerusalem, and in the second by their reserve toward him. Conscious of his Divine call, he sought no patronage from the elder Apostles then; and they, recognising that call, offered him no such patronage now. Paul's gospel for the Gentiles was complete, and sufficient unto itself. His ministry showed no defect in quality or competence. There was nothing about it that laid it open to correction, even on the part of those wisest and highest in dignity amongst the personal followers of Jesus.

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<sup>42</sup> We cannot explain προσανέθεντο here by the ἀναθέμην of ver. 2, as though Paul wished to say, "I imparted to them my gospel; they imparted to me nothing *further*." For προς- implies *direction*, rather than *addition*. See Meyer on this verb in ch. i. 16.

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