

WAS PAUL CONSISTENT
IN
HIS PLANS AND ACTIONS?

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DEDICATED

To My Wife

Whose Devotion

Has Made Possible

My Graduate Study

in the

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PREFACE

From early childhood I have had a great interest in the Apostle Paul. That interest grew with the study of his life in college and during my undergraduate course in the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Paul has always been and always will be one of my heroes.

Upon beginning my graduate study, the desire came to me to write a thesis dealing with some phase of Paul's work. Soon after starting that study, I began to ask myself some questions about the apostle's life. The Bible records very vividly the mistakes of great characters in Old Testament times, and it also sets forth the limitations of the early Christians. What about Paul? Was he not human too, and therefore subject to errors? This thesis is an effort to answer certain questions along this line, taken from the great period of the apostle's missionary activity, questions which have not heretofore been thoroughly investigated. It is not claimed that they are finally answered here, but it is hoped that some suggestions are made which will prove helpful to future students of the apostle's life.

I am especially indebted to Professor W. H. Davis of the Seminary for his encouragement and counsel in this study. Dr. E. A. McDowell, Jr., Dr. G. S. Dobbins, Dr. K. M.

Yates, and Dr. J. B. Weatherspoon, all of the Seminary Faculty, have also offered some valuable advice, which in many respects has been gratefully accepted and followed.

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INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM

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Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, has been the subject of more books than any other individual, excepting Jesus. Countless volumes have been produced, dealing with his birth, education, and background; studies on his conversion would constitute a fairly good-sized library; writings having to do with his missionary travels and accomplishments are innumerable. And such books continue to be produced by the score each year. But the critics have had more to say about Paul's work than they have had about the man himself, although, as will be seen, they have not been negligent in the latter respect.

1. Two Extreme Views about Paul

There are two extreme views that many writers have about the man Paul. On the one hand, most authors preface, conclude, and intersperse their works on the apostle with panegyrics; they place him on a pedestal, almost without fault or the capacity to err. Superlatives abound in writing about him, and no language is too strong to describe his greatness. An example of these statements is seen in the words of F. W. Farrar: "Paul the hero of unselfishness; Paul the mighty champion of spiritual freedom; Paul a greater

preacher than Chrysostom, a greater missionary than Xavier, a greater reformer than Luther, a greater theologian than St. Thomas of Aquinam."¹ The apostle is worthy of our highest admiration; he certainly towers far above most poor mortals in his character and in his achievements. But one wonders if such language should be referred even to Paul, or for that matter to any man.

Another noted New Testament scholar writes of Paul: "If he was chief of sinners, he became chief of saints."² In one sense this may be true, and yet that statement should certainly be modified in the light of the following considerations: Paul, even after he became a Christian, could consign an evil-doer to Satan (1 Cor. 5:5), pronounce a curse upon even an angel from heaven if he taught a gospel different from his own (Gal. 1:8,9), refuse to give a young preacher a second chance to make good (Acts 15:38), refer to his opponents as "false apostles, deceitful workers", even hinting that they were like Satan himself (2 Cor. 11:13,14), disparage the leaders of the Twelve (Gal. 2:6,9), and order the members of the Thessalonian Church to withdraw themselves from any one that did not walk after his teaching (2 Thess. 3:6,14). Paul took an opposite view about the matter himself in an least one instance. He writes: "Unto

1. The Life and Work of St. Paul, Vol. I, p. 12.

2. Robertson, A. T., Epochs in the Life of Paul, p. 1.

me, who am less than the least of all saints" (Eph. 3:8). In the same work of Dr. Robertson is also found this sentence: "Passing by Jesus Himself, Paul stands forever the foremost representative of Christ, the ablest exponent of Christianity, its most constructive genius, its dominant spirit from the merely human side, its most fearless champion, its most illustrious and influential missionary, preacher, teacher, and its most distinguished martyr."¹ All of this may be true, and yet here again one wonders if this sentence should not in some way have been qualified.

Many like quotations could be given, since such statements abound in most of the books on Paul. The authors no doubt are using what is called literary hyperbole, and they do not mean all these things literally to be true. Yet they leave the impression of Paul as a paragon, a matchless hero, an example of perfection or near perfection, to be honored and revered in all his acts and almost if not to be worshipped. X

On the other hand, there is another extreme view about the man Paul, which is fortunately not held by many. A few people regard him as a corrupter of the truth, a self-seeking schemer, and an intruder into the apostolic circle. According to this view, he was entirely without principle and cannot in any way be trusted. The German scholar, Paul de Lagarde, ungraciously says of the apostle:

1. Op. cit., p. 4.

"It is, however, incredible that any one acquainted with history should have any confidence in this Paul. In the first chapter of the book of Acts it is assumed as self-evident that one who desired to be an apostle must have lived with Jesus as a witness of his life. Paul never saw Jesus, not to speak of being his companion. His relations with Jesus were, first, that of hate toward the disciples, and, secondly, that of a vision: than which no more untrustworthy sources of historical knowledge could be named. ... All that Paul says of Jesus and the gospel is without assurance of accuracy."¹

To these cutting words may be added the cynical contempt of Nietzsche: "Who, except a few scholars, knows that in it [i.e., the Bible] is the story of one of the most ambitious and importunate of souls, a superstitious and crafty mind—the story of the apostle Paul?"² Nietzsche pictures Paul before his conversion as a fanatical champion of God and his Law. He also pictures him as passionate, sensual, melancholy, malicious, and guilty of enmity, murder, sorcery, idolatry, impurity, drunkenness, and carousing, with the implication that some of this might have been true after his conversion (Morgenrote, pp. 64-68).³

This last view is obviously incorrect, and we need not waste time with considering or refuting it. No one, who has studied the New Testament with an open mind, could possibly agree with such statements about the great apostle. He may

1. See Peabody, F. G., The Apostle Paul in the Modern World, pp. 14,15.

2. Ibid.

3. See Weinel, H., St. Paul: The Man and His Work, p. 86. Translation by Bienemann, G. A.

have made some mistakes, and may even have been guilty of some gross sins, but he could not possibly have been as bad as these scholars picture him, and still have influenced for the better the whole course of human history.

2. The Problem Stated

The purpose of this dissertation is to get a true view of the apostle as a man—to see him as he was. The problem may be stated in these words: Was Paul really human? was he subject to the weaknesses of other people? did he make mistakes? was he always consistent? was he always right, and were his enemies always wrong? particularly, were his actions and plans as recorded in the Book of Acts in harmony with his statements in the Epistles? We cannot believe that Paul was a perverter and an impostor, as the scholars mentioned in the foregoing discussion think. But was he really a paragon, a model of excellence in every particular, to be placed upon a pedestal and almost if not to be worshipped? An effort will be made in the following pages to answer these questions and to get a true view of the man Paul, which will most probably be somewhere in between these two extremes.

3. Work Done on the Problem

There has always appeared to be a difficulty about the relation between Acts and the Epistles of Paul. The two do

not seem to be in harmony in every particular; in fact, it has been thought that there is an outright conflict between them, especially between the account of events as given in Galatians 1 and 2 and that found in Acts 15. F. C. Baur felt this difficulty very keenly, and, because of the apparent discrepancies between the Pauline Epistles and the Acts, concluded that the latter was untrustworthy, and that many of the events it records were unhistorical. He thought that Acts was written in the second century, with the distinct purpose of covering up a supposed estrangement between Paul and the older apostles.¹ This was a part of the famous Tubingen theory that pitted Paul against the other apostles, especially Peter, and made the books of the New Testament tendency documents, evolving out of this hypothetical controversy. This theory, in its main lines, has long since been proved false, and is now held in its entirety by no scholar of repute.

There are, however, remnants of it still left. Orello Cone thinks that certain events recorded in the Book of Acts, such as the Decree of the Jerusalem Conference, the circumcision of Timothy, and Paul's taking the Naziritic vow on his last visit to Jerusalem, are so much out of harmony with Paul's statements in the Epistles, especially

1. Paul: His Life and Works, Vol. I.

Galatians 1 and 2, that they could not be historical.¹ A. C. McGiffert also doubts the truthfulness of Acts on several of these matters.² B. H. Streeter does not think that Paul ever agreed to the Apostolic Decree (Acts 15:29), written out in black and white; and that this Decree was promulgated and circulated by the Twelve later than the time of the Conference.³ All of this is an effort to solve the problem by denying the historicity of certain events in Paul's life, as recorded in the Book of Acts.

The problem must, however, be solved in some other way, since recent research has completely demonstrated the trustworthiness of Luke as a historian. He can be depended upon to tell the truth, as Adolph Harnack⁴ and Sir William Ramsay,⁵ both starting with a prejudice against him, have most conclusively shown. Some explanation, other than the untruthfulness of the Book of Acts, must be found of the two pictures of Paul, if there are two pictures.

What about the Pauline Epistles? It may be that they are mistaken and even not genuine, and, therefore, it might be thought that a solution of the problem could be found in this direction. This, however, is not possible, since there is now no point of New Testament criticism that we can be

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1. Paul: The Man, the Missionary, and the Teacher, pp. 146-175.
 2. The Apostolic Age, pp. 151-439.
 3. The Four Gospels, p. 550.
 4. Acts of the Apostles.
 5. The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament, pp. 79-208.

more certain of than the authenticity and reliability of at least the leading Pauline Epistles. Even F. C. Baur himself accepted 1 and 2 Corinthians and Galatians and Romans as the undoubted products of the apostle. The only Pauline writings that are seriously questioned now are the so-called Pastorals, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, and perhaps Ephesians, as Maurice Jones admirably shows in his summary of the present state of criticism on these documents of the New Testament:

"The outcome of improved methods of criticism and of the greater respect paid to the religious atmosphere of the first century has been to add to Baur's Hauptbriefe the Epistles to the Colossians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon, which are now accepted as genuine by all except the extreme left wing of New Testament critics. Some hesitation is still felt with regard to 2 Thessalonians, although its authenticity is guaranteed by scholars of the stamp of Julicher, Clemen, Bacon, and M'Giffert. This hesitation is more emphasized in the case of Ephesians, and the Pastoral Epistles still continue to form the storm centre of Pauline literary controversy."¹

Evidently, if Acts and the Epistles appear to be in conflict about the character of Paul, and about certain events in his life, we cannot explain the two pictures by saying that the writings of the apostle are not authentic or reliable.

We must accept the substantial accuracy of both Acts and the Epistles. If Paul's deeds in the one do not always harmonize with his statements in the other, or if there are

1. The New Testament in the Twentieth Century, p. 263.

other conflicts between the two, we must look elsewhere for a solution of the problem. Perhaps that solution can be found in Paul's own nature, and in the situations and conditions which he faced. May it not be that on certain occasions he acted in one way, and in later instances he talked and wrote in another, or vice versa? In short, may it not be that Paul was not always consistent? The answer to this question it is our purpose in this dissertation to seek to discover. Such an answer will help in getting a true view of Paul as a man, and subject, therefore, to the frailties of all humanity. It will also help in solving the problem of the apparent conflict between the Acts and the Epistles as to certain events in the apostle's life.

A few of the writers on Paul have hinted at the fact that he might have been subject to some weaknesses. Adolph Deissman in his great work on the apostle has a chapter, which he calls "St. Paul the Man".¹ In this chapter he writes: "It is unfortunately not superfluous to call emphatic attention to the true humanity of Paul. The traditional view has but too often made of him a parchment saint, unacquainted with the world, or else suffered the man to disappear behind the system."² In this connection he

1. St. Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History, pp. 57-83.

2. Ibid., p. 59.

also calls attention to and lists the "great polar contradictions observable in his [Paul's] nature."¹

Sir William Ramsay, the eminent authority on the apostle, has a chapter in one of his works on "The Charm of Paul",² in which he emphasizes his subject's "undeniable faults" and "extremes", even writing:

"We see, too, that—as is the case with all men—his difficulties and his failures almost always were the result of his own nature. It was his own faults and errors that caused the misconceptions and suspicions, by which he was continually pressed and perplexed. In the intense enthusiasm of his nature he often failed to recognize the proper limitations, and erred in the way of overstraining the present emotion. He was carried too far in act and in word; and at a later moment he became conscious that he had been over enthusiastic, and had not been sufficiently mindful of all the complex conditions."³

F. G. Peabody in his work has several sentences even suggesting that the apostle was not consistent. "Consistency is the last of virtues that Paul would claim."⁴ He refers to "the same splendid indifference to consistency which has made the letters of Paul so perplexing to the system-makers of the Church."⁵ Further, he says: "The letters, in short, must be taken just as they are, as the record of a singularly

1. Deissman, Adolph, op. cit., pp. 62-72.

2. Pauline and Other Studies, pp. 27-45.

3. Ibid., p. 30.

4. Op. cit., p. 109.

5. Ibid., p. 121.

many sided and responsive nature, which cared little for consistency and everything for reality."¹

There are a few other scattered references of this kind in the various books on Paul and in the commentaries and Bible dictionaries. But the idea has only been suggested, and no systematic work has been done upon it. No definite effort has been made to study particular events, plans, and movements in Paul's life with a view to determining whether or not they were consistent. Such a study will be undertaken in the following pages in an effort to know and to see the true Paul.

1. Peabody, F. G., op. cit., pp. 124,125.

CHAPTER I

THE JERUSALEM CONFERENCE

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The Conference at Jerusalem is the first of those events in Paul's life about which there may be a question. That is, there may be a question about the consistency of Paul's course during this Conference and his attitude afterward toward its findings. This Conference was just at the close of the First Missionary Journey, in which Paul started his work in a large way among the Gentiles. Most likely the work he did in Tarsus and Cilicia was in the range of the synagogue and its influence, or else the brethren in Judea, hearing of his work, would not have praised God for him (Gal. 1:24). The year at Antioch in Syria was spent partly among the Gentiles, and at Antioch of Pisidia Paul and Barnabas definitely turned to them (Acts 11:26). This influx of the Gentiles into the church, and their reception on an equal footing with the Jews, without requiring circumcision, brought on the Conference.

1. The Point at Issue

What was the disputed point in this Conference? The Jewish Christians from Judea taught the brethren at Antioch: "Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye

cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1). It appears from this that the point at issue was the conditions upon which Gentiles could be saved. This also seems to be the burden of Acts 15:5: "It is needful to circumcise them, and to charge them to keep the law of Moses." F. W. Farrar, commenting on this verse, thinks that the request of "certain of the sect of the Pharisees ... demanded obedience to the Law of Moses, especially the immediate acceptance of circumcision as its most typical rite; and it denied the possibility of salvation on any other terms."¹ In this connection Sir William Ramsay says: "The question, it must be clearly observed, was not whether non-Jews could be saved, for it was admitted by all parties that they could, but how they were to be saved."² It seems almost certain then that the purpose of the Conference was to determine the conditions upon which Gentiles could be saved, since "certain of the sect of the Pharisees" on the one hand and Paul and Barnabas on the other were seriously at variance in this respect. The former held that in order for non-Jews to be acceptable to God they must be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses; the latter held that faith in Jesus Christ alone was sufficient (Acts 13:38,39).

1. Op. cit., p. 400.

2. St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen, p. 157.

2. The Decree

The various speeches made by the different members of the Council, or the number of meetings held, need not be considered here. The important interest for this discussion is the decision, the way the matter was settled. Paul and the Three arrived at an agreement in the private meeting: that he and Barnabas should preach to the Gentiles, and they to those of the circumcision (Gal. 2:9,10). In the public meeting it was decided that circumcision should not be required of "them that from among the Gentiles turn to God", and that there should be laid upon them "no greater burden than these necessary things: that ye abstain from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication" (Acts 15:28,29).

The main point, that relating to circumcision, was gained all right. But what about these last named "necessary things"? Undoubtedly, they create many questions, and bring on many problems. Just what was the nature of this Decree? Was it a complete triumph for Paul and the party of Gentile freedom? If it was, then Paul's conduct in every particular relating to this Conference and its results is to be commended; if it was not, then it might be that Paul should be censured for agreeing to something that partook of the nature of a compromise. This question must be investigated further.

a. The two forms of the Decree.—It is a well known fact that the Decree has been handed down in two forms. One form, the Western, omits the "things strangled". The Greek word, *πνικτων*, is wanting in D, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Cyprian, Ambrosiaster, Pacian, and Hieronymous.¹ It is consistently omitted by D in Acts 15:20; 15:29; and 21:25.² *Αἷμα* can be interpreted as referring to murder. If this Western reading be the true form of the Decree, the prohibitions can be considered as entirely moral, and three in number—against idolatry, murder, and fornication. Adolph Harnack, after a careful examination of the Decree, and the evidence bearing upon the different readings, arrives at the conclusion that the Western is correct. He thinks that by following it everything in the narrative becomes "consistent and clear", and that we "can close whole libraries of commentaries and investigations as documents of the history of a gigantic error!"³

This theory was first put forth by a Continental scholar, G. Resch,⁴ and adopted by Harnack, by Kirsopp Lake,⁵ by W. M. Furneaux,⁶ and by others. If this form of the Decree be

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1. See Tischendorf, Constantinus, Novum Testamentum Graece, Vol. II.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Op. cit., pp. 248-263.
 4. Das Apostel decret nach seiner ausserkanonischer Textgestalt (Texte und Untersuchungen, N. F. XIII, 3, 1905).
 5. The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul.
 6. The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 240, 241.

correct, Paul and the Gentile Christians certainly won a complete victory. There is here no suggestion of a compromise, since prohibitions against idolatry, murder, and fornication would be universally recognized as binding on Jew and Gentile alike. The salvation of any one continuing to practice such gross sins could and would be seriously questioned.

It is, however, a large order to give the preference to D in the matter of the omissions of ΠΥΚΤΩΝ as against the evidence of all the other uncials. ΠΥΚΤΩΝ is present in ~~X~~, A, B, C, 61, 137, Sahidic, Coptic, Clement, Origen, and Cyril. ΠΥΚΤΟΥ is found in a corrector of ~~X~~, a corrector of A, in E, H, L, P, and many other uncials, in the Vulgate, Syriac, Armenian, Aethiopic, and in Constantine, Diodoret, Epiphanius, Chrysostom, Theodoret, and Athanasius.¹ With this evidence we almost certainly have to retain "the things strangled", and this is the form which appears in the Revised Version, and which is favored by most scholars.

Aside from the evidence bearing on the readings, which distinctly favors the retention of the ΠΥΚΤΩΝ, there are several considerations pointing strongly in that direction. For one thing, it would be difficult to understand the relevancy of James' reference to the Decree (Acts 21:25), in the connection which he did, if it referred solely to

1. Tischendorf, Constantinus, op. cit.

principles of morality. Maurice Jones is very emphatic in stressing this point:

"The matter under discussion is the observance of the ritual demands of the Mosaic Law, and, unless the decrees had something in common with this subject matter, it is difficult to understand the point of St. James' reference. To remind St. Paul, in the midst of a discussion concerning his observance or non-observance of the provisions of the ceremonial law, that the Apostolic Council had enacted certain moral requirements appears to be devoid of all meaning and purpose, whereas, if the decrees are taken in their usual acceptation, as containing a series of ritual directions, the reference is perfectly natural and presents no difficulty."¹

Another consideration, pointing in the direction of retaining *πικτύων*, is the continued existence of the Judaizing Controversy. The Judaizers must have received some sort of encouragement for their views in the Conference and its outcome, else they would not have followed Paul to Antioch, to Galatia, to Corinth, and to other places. And if they had followed him to those regions, it seems unlikely that they would have gained the hearing which they did, unless they could point to something in the decision of the Conference at least partially favoring their contentions.

The evidence is strongly on the side of the Neutral reading, keeping *πικτύων*. And if this be true, which is most probably the case, the Decree is at least partly ceremonial. The prohibitions against "things strangled" and

1. Expositor, VIII, 5, p. 252, Art., "The Apostolic Decrees in Acts XV: A Compromise or a Triumph?"

against "blood" are clearly ceremonial. The former refers to eating the flesh of animals killed by strangling, and is based on Leviticus 17:13,14; Deuteronomy 12:16,23; 15:23. The latter refers to eating blood, and is based on Genesis 9:6; Leviticus 17:11; 13:14; Deuteronomy 12:23,24. The blood was thought to be that which contained the "soul of the flesh". The "pollutions of idols" and "idolatry" most likely refer to the eating of meats offered to idols, and may also be ceremonial, based on Exodus 34:15. It is even possible but not probable that "fornication" is ceremonial, referring to marriage within the prohibited degrees.

b. Was this Decree a concession or a compromise?—

Whether or not these four requirements were a mere temporary concession to Jewish feelings and prejudice or an outright compromise is another one of those questions difficult to answer. A. T. Robertson thinks that the former was the case, and that there was in no way a sacrifice of principle.¹ This is, however, not entirely clear. These four requirements were probably intended by their promulgators merely to facilitate intercourse between the Jews and Gentiles. But if the Judaizers so wished, they might interpret them as necessary for the salvation of the latter, especially when this appears to be the main point at issue in the Conference (see pp. 14,15). In this connection Sir William

1. Op. cit., p. 133.

Ramsay says:

"Now, whether or not the last sentences [i.e., of the Decree] must bear the sense, they certainly may naturally bear the sense, that part of the Law was absolutely compulsory for salvation, and that the nations were released from the rest as a concession to their weakness."¹

It is not the negative aspects of a law that give it force; it is rather the positive enactments. These four requirements were on the positive side, and would naturally receive the emphasis. The word used with regard to them is certainly an emphatic one—*ἐπ'ἀναγκῆς*. J. H. Thayer says that this word literally means "on compulsion". The adjective, *ἀναγκαῖος*, means "necessary", "what one cannot do without", "indispensable", "what ought according to the law of duty to be done", "what is required by the condition of things". The verb, *ἀναγκάζω*, means "to necessitate", "to compel", "to constrain".² Liddell and Scott say that this word is from the same root as *ἀγχω*, *ango*, *angustus*, etc., meaning "to press tight", "to strangle", "to throttle".³

In view of this strong word, and in view of the fact that the requirements are spoken of as a "burden", even though they were not meant to be looked upon as essential to salvation, it seems best to think of the Decree as a compromise. The Jewish Christians on the one hand gave up the

1. St. Paul the Traveller and Roman Citizen, p. 172.
 2. Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament.
 3. Greek-English Lexicon.

demand for circumcision; the Gentile Christians on the other hand agreed to refrain from the four "necessary things".

A. C. McGiffert thinks that if this Decree was enacted at this time, it was distinctly a compromise, and opposed to Paul's principle of complete liberty:

"According to Acts 15:28, the Gentiles were not simply requested, but required by the action of the apostles and elders in Jerusalem, to abstain from the four things enumerated in the decree. The latter refrain from laying upon the converts from the heathen the burden of the whole law, but abstinence from these four things they regard as 'necessary'."1

Both J. B. Lightfoot² and Sir William Ramsay³ unhesitatingly declare the Decree to be a compromise. Considering all the complex conditions, it appears most likely that the Decree represents half-way ground between the Judaizers' position, demanding circumcision and the keeping of the whole Law, and Paul's position of complete freedom for the Gentiles from the Mosaic requirements.

3. Did Paul Assent to This Decree?

There are those who think that Paul did not agree to this Decree. Among these is H. Weinel, who is of the opinion that Acts 15:29 is entirely false, and that no such Decree

1. Op. cit., p. 211.

2. St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, pp. 142, 143.

3. St. Paul the Traveller and Roman Citizen, p. 172.

was promulgated at that time; however, he believes that Acts 21:25 is historical, and that the Twelve had arrived at that decision and had begun to circulate the Decree during the years of Paul's absence.¹ B. H. Streeter says: "I do not think Paul ever set his hand to the food-law compromise of the Apostolic Decree (Acts 15:29), written out in black and white."² F. C. Baur doubted that the Decree was even enacted so early as Acts 15 represents, and if it was, Paul could not possibly have agreed to it.³

Although these eminent men have opinions to the contrary, Paul most certainly did assent to the Decree. That is the testimony of Acts 15, and is the clearly implied fact in Galatians 2 in the agreement reached between Paul and the Three. As has been indicated (see pp. 8-10), both Acts and the Epistles must be accepted as trustworthy. Paul was present in all the discussions, and took, according to his own testimony (Galatians 2), a most prominent part. He must take his share of the responsibility for the result, at which the Conference arrived. Even if that result was a partial sacrifice of the principle of freedom in the gospel, whether under the pressure of the circumstances in the case or voluntarily, Paul did "set his hand" to it.

1. Op. cit., p. 234.

2. The Four Gospels, p. 550.

3. Op. cit., pp. 131-145.

4. Is This Decree in Harmony with Paul's Teaching?

One of the reasons the authors, mentioned in the preceding section, give for doubting that Paul agreed to this Decree is that it is out of harmony with his teaching and some of his statements in the Epistles. We must now see if this is true.

Paul certainly does say in Galatians 2:6, "They, I say, who were of repute imparted nothing to me." This appears to mean that they imparted nothing to him in the way of a gospel, or a plan of salvation. He had already emphasized that his gospel came not from men, but "through revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:12). Yet, in spite of this alleviating interpretation of that statement, the fact remains that something was imparted to Paul at Jerusalem, something in the way of four requirements or restrictions that were regarded as very necessary. It was considered as most important, too, by the Three and by the Judaizers, as is shown by James' reminding Paul of it years later (Acts 21:25). Paul undoubtedly accepted this something, and, at least for a short time, undertook to carry out its provisions (Acts 16:4). It might even be interpreted as having some bearing upon the salvation of the Gentiles, so that, in the light of these considerations, one cannot help but feel that perhaps Paul should have qualified his statement about the "imparting", or made a little more clear his meaning.

Again, we read in Galatians 4:9,10: "How turn ye back again to the weak and beggarly rudiments, whereunto ye desire to be in bondage over again? Ye observe days, and months, and seasons, and years." Paul charges the Galatian Christians with having "fallen away from grace" (Gal. 5:4). He chides them for having "begun in the Spirit", and now seeking to be "perfected in the flesh" (Gal. 3:3). But did not the Apostolic Decree, to which Paul agreed, and which he himself delivered to the Galatians (Acts 16:4), encourage them in this defection? In that Decree at least part of the ritual Law is said to be necessary, and even though Paul and the Three probably intended it as merely essential to fellowship, this is not made clear. Might not the Galatians have thought that if a part of the ritual Law is good and "necessary" the whole will be better? Very probably some of them thought just this, the Judaizers helping them so to think. The Decree no doubt gave the latter a strong argument to use.

Sir William Ramsay has some emphatic words along this line:¹

"This [i.e., the Decree] seemed to create two grades of Christians: a lower class of weaker persons, who could not observe the whole Law, but only the compulsory parts of it, and a higher class, who were strong enough to obey the whole Law. The Gentile Christians were familiar in the pagan religions with distinctions of grade; for stages of initiation into the Mysteries existed everywhere. It was almost

1. St. Paul the Traveller and Roman Citizen, pp. 172, 173.

inevitable that a Decree, which lays down no clear and formal principle of freedom, should in practice be taken as making a distinction between strong and weak, between more and less advanced Christians; and it is certain that it was soon taken in that sense."

Once more, the plan of salvation, according to Paul's teaching, is very plain. "Through this man is proclaimed unto you remission of sins; and by him every one that believeth is justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38,39). "Yet knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we believed on Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law; because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Gal. 2:16). "As many as are of the works of the law are under a curse" (Gal. 3:10). "For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory" (Eph. 2:8,9). In our modern minds we can easily harmonize the Decree with these verses by simply saying that the former was merely a matter of fellowship and good-will, and was in no way regarded as essential to salvation. But the Galatians and most of the other converts of that time were very immature and undeveloped Christians, and would not have understood this so readily. They probably had difficulty in harmonizing a Decree, purporting to be the results of a Conference, dealing with the conditions upon

which Gentiles could be saved, and setting forth that certain ceremonial matters were "necessary", even though it is not made clear just for what they were necessary, with statements like these, and a gospel of this kind.

By regarding the four requirements as merely having to do with intercourse between the Jews and Gentiles, the Decree now can be looked upon as entirely consistent with Paul's teaching. But it is not likely that it was so regarded by all the Christians at that time, and on the whole it brought on more problems than it settled, and was the source of considerable misunderstanding.

5. Paul's Subsequent Attitude Toward the Decree

References, later than Acts 15, to the Decree are very scanty. There are clearly only two such references: that of Acts 16:4, where Paul and his companions delivered the Decree in Galatia; and that of Acts 21:25, where James reminded Paul of its terms. The apostle, in his writings, never definitely refers to it. In Galatians 2, he does mention the agreement reached between him and the Three in the private conference, and this to some extent does imply the public meeting and the final decision.

This silence of Paul about the Decree is rather strange, especially when it is remembered that he considered at least two of the matters in his writings, with which it had

dealt. He discusses at considerable length the question of meats offered to idols, with never a word about what the Jerusalem Conference had said. In fact, his teaching on that subject is not altogether in line with the findings of that Conference. He says very emphatically: "Neither, if we eat not, are we the worse; nor, if we eat, are we the better" (1 Cor. 8:8). He advises eating what is sold in the shambles, asking no questions (1 Cor. 10:25); he thinks it all right to eat whatever is on the table in a pagan's home (1 Cor. 10:27); he is of the opinion that both the one eating such meats and the one not eating are received of God (Rom. 14:3). Certainly, according to Paul's way of thinking, as seen in these passages, the eating of meats offered to idols had nothing to do with one's salvation. H. C. Vedder says on this point:

"In that epistle [i.e. 1 Corinthians] the eating of meat offered to idols is treated as no sin in itself, not even the transgression of any rule that was accepted among the churches, but as a thing whereby a weak brother, who did not realize that an 'idol is nothing in the world' might be led back into the sin of idolatry. Therefore, the apostle does not say, 'Abstain from meats offered to idols because the Council at Jerusalem so ordered;' but, 'If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.'"¹

To Paul, according to 1 Corinthians 8-10 and Romans 14, the eating of meats offered to idols was an indifferent

1. The Dawn of Christianity, pp. 96, 97.

matter. It might even be done by stronger Christians, apparently either Jewish or Gentile, with perfect propriety, provided such eating did not lead a weaker brother to do something that violated his conscience. Paul's consideration for the weaker brother is in line with the provisions of the Jerusalem Decree, but his treatment of the question of eating meats offered to idols as an indifferent matter, even suggesting that it might be done by Christians under certain conditions, is at least slightly out of harmony with that Decree, stating emphatically that it was necessary for the Gentiles to refrain from this practice, and implying that they must do so under all circumstances.

Again, in treating of the matter of fornication (1 Corinthians 5), Paul never refers to the Jerusalem Conference. He certainly agrees to the fullest extent with the findings of the Conference in this matter, yet it seems that here the Decree, ordained of "the apostles and elders" at Jerusalem, would have been most pertinent.

Paul certainly had many excellent opportunities to refer to this Decree, opportunities where it would have been distinctly in his favor, as for example in writing to the Galatians on circumcision. Here it would have helped him greatly in proving that rite no longer to be necessary. But in no case does he definitely mention it. The reason for this silence is sometimes seen in the fact that the Decree was only addressed to "the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and

Cilicia" (Acts 15:23), thus indicating that it was only intended to be binding in those places. Yet Paul delivered it in Galatia (Acts 16:4), and this fact, along with the general context and situation, shows that more probably it was meant to have force among all "them that from among the Gentiles turn to God".

Rather does not Paul's silence about this Decree indicate that he came to regard it not very highly, and even to doubt that all of its provisions were consistent with his teachings and his gospel? Since it created many problems, and was the source of much misunderstanding, Paul no doubt came to believe that the least said about it, and the sooner it was dropped, the better.

6. Some Alleviating Suggestions

There are several things that might be said favoring Paul's conduct during this Conference and afterward with regard to its findings. For one thing, he probably at first did not see in the Decree any sacrifice of principle, regarding the restrictions as a sort of concession to the Jewish Christians, making social intercourse easier. He probably did not, under the stress of the moment, consider that this Decree might be interpreted wrongly, and that it would create many problems. Perhaps he should have thought about this possibility a little more. Again, it might be

said, with some truth, that, in the situation in which he was placed in Jerusalem, he was almost forced to concede something in order to gain his point on circumcision. Once more, it is even possible that an insistence on Paul's part for a complete triumph for the party of Gentile freedom at that time might have led to an absolute breach between the two branches of the Christian Church.¹ It might be said then that, under the circumstances, with the various angles of the matter to be considered, Paul did the best he could.

Yet, considering that these suggestions have to be offered, and other expedients resorted to in order to make the matter easier to understand, although one cannot point to any definite inconsistency in Paul's conduct at the Jerusalem Conference, or in his attitude afterward toward its results, there is still some question as to the wisdom of Paul's assenting to this doubtful Decree.

1. Cf. Jones, Maurice, Expositor, VIII, 5, Art., "The Apostolic Decrees in Acts XV: A Compromise or a Triumph?", pp. 242-255.

CHAPTER II

THE CIRCUMCISION OF TIMOTHY

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The doubts about the wisdom, and in this case the consistency, of Paul's conduct increase in the matter of the circumcision of Timothy. This occurred just after the Jerusalem Conference, and at the beginning of the Second Missionary Journey. Acts 16:3 gives the story: "Him [Timothy] would Paul have to go forth with him; and he took and circumcised him, because of the Jews that were in those parts; for they all knew that his father was a Greek." Timothy's mother was a Jewess (Acts 16:1). He was already a Christian (Acts 16:1), probably being converted upon the First Journey. Paul performed this act at the very time he was delivering the Jerusalem Decree, which expressly asserted that circumcision was no longer necessary for Gentiles. But was Timothy a Gentile? Or was he a Jew? This, and several other problems, connected with this act of Paul, must be investigated.

1. The Case of Titus

A study of the case of Titus will be helpful in properly evaluating the circumcision of Timothy. Titus was a full-fledged Greek, who was present at the Jerusalem Conference

(Gal. 2:3). He is not mentioned in Acts, but was one of Paul's most important helpers, as is shown especially by 2 Corinthians. Was he circumcised at Jerusalem? Paul's statement regarding his case (Gal. 2:3) is not very clear. Undoubtedly, certain "false brethren" demanded his circumcision (Gal. 2:4). Paul says, however, that "not even Titus ... was compelled to be circumcised" (Gal. 2:3). The word used, *ἀναγκάσθω*, is the same Greek word that is found in Acts 15:28, only here it is the verb form.

This statement can be interpreted to mean that Titus was not forced to be circumcised, but really was circumcised, submitting to the rite voluntarily. Several leading scholars hold that Paul, with Titus' consent, went ahead and circumcised his young companion, as a concession to the Judaizers, and in order to clear the way for further discussion. Among these is F. W. Farrar, who thinks this because of the involved and uncertain language of Galatians 2:3,4.¹ He also thinks that Paul regarded this particular case as being of no moment.² R. B. Rackham is another writer who holds this opinion: "Though it might appear to the Gentiles as a betrayal of their cause, though it would lay him open hereafter to a charge of inconsistency, yet for the peace of the church he [Paul] became 'to the Jews as a Jew', and circumcised Titus."³

1. Op. cit., pp. 412-420.

2. Ibid.

3. The Acts of the Apostles, p. 246.

Now if this be true, and if Paul indeed bowed to the storm in the case of Titus—if he, the champion of Christian uncircumcision, the foremost preacher of the truth that in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision is anything nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love, allowed an adult Gentile convert to submit to the Jewish rite, which had no meaning except as an acknowledgement that he was bound to keep the whole Mosaic Law—then indeed he might be truthfully charged with having sacrificed the very point at issue, and with being guilty of unsteadfastness and vacillation.

One writer on the subject, R. D. Hanson, goes even further in the matter. He thinks that Titus was circumcised; that Paul and Barnabas at first concealed the fact that he was not circumcised; that this fact was detected by the "false brethren"; and that his circumcision was then demanded and forced.¹ If this be true, neither Paul nor Barnabas merits any confidence whatsoever. But it cannot be thought very strongly that they would have stooped to such deception.

And in spite of the opinions of these eminent men to the contrary, it is extremely doubtful that Titus was circumcised. Paul no doubt made mistakes, and performed some very questionable acts, but it is not likely that he would

1. The Apostle Paul and the Preaching of Christianity in the Primitive Church, pp. 164-166.

have done this, even under the pressure brought to bear at Jerusalem. The most natural meaning of the language in Galatians 2:3 is that Titus did not submit to the rite. J. B. Lightfoot gives the following reasons for believing that Titus was not circumcised: (1) The incident is brought forward to show that Paul throughout contended for the liberty of the Gentiles—that he had not conceded, as his enemies said, the question of circumcision. (2) Individual expressions in the passage, such as, "we yielded, no, not for an hour". (3) The occasion was inopportune for such a concession.¹

Paul cannot justly be accused of going to the length of circumcising an adult Gentile convert, thus surrendering completely to the Judaizers, at least in that one instance, merely on the uncertainty of the language in Galatians 2:3,4. Most probably Titus was not circumcised.

2. The Case of Timothy

The case of Timothy is different. There can be no doubt that he was circumcised, even though some writers on the subject hold to the contrary. F. C. Baur believes that this act "belongs undoubtedly to the simply incredible side of the Acts of the Apostles".² He thinks it did not happen,

1. Op. cit., p. 232.

2. Op. cit., p. 129.

and could not have happened, giving as his reason for this view the fact that it is entirely out of harmony with Paul's actions and teachings generally.¹ But the author of Acts has been proved to be a most trustworthy historian (see p. 8), and his statement here must be accepted as true. Timothy was circumcised.

a. Timothy's uncertain status.—Just what was Timothy's status? His father was a Greek; his mother was a Jewess. He was at least in blood a half-Jew, and had been brought up to know the Jewish Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:15). According to the Talmud, a child certainly succeeded to the status of his mother, the rule being "partis sequitur ventram".² But why had not Timothy been circumcised heretofore? His father may have had some connection with this, opposing the performing of the rite on his son, and regarding it as a mere superstition.

At this time Timothy's father might have been dead, or Timothy may have just attained his majority, and was now able to decide for himself. In that case his circumcision might simply register his own determination to get away from his anomalous position and become a full-fledged Jew. Being

1. Baur, F. C., op. cit., p. 129.

2. Ubi sive gentilis, sive servus, concubuerit cum Israelitide, proles recta erit. Jehamoth, fol. 45, 2. Filius Israelitae susceptus ex ancilla aut ex gentili non vocatur filius Israelitae. Bechorim, i. 4. And so the Civil Law: Ingenui sunt qui ex matre libera nati sunt, Dig. i. 5, 5.

circumcised would definitely fix his status. But the whole tenor of the narrative is against this interpretation of the matter. Paul is the one who took the initiative: he actually did the circumcising himself, and his reason for the act is given, "because of the Jews that were in those parts" (Acts 16:3). And does not the emphasis upon the fact that his father was a Greek, and also the fact that he had never been circumcised up to this time, seem to indicate that Timothy chose to be reckoned as a Gentile like his father? In spite of the rule of the Talmud, which was not binding for any one except strict Jews and possibly some proselytes, he could have regarded himself as a Greek, and was probably so regarded by all peoples, unless the Israelites were an exception. The latter themselves, at least in modern times, do not always hold to the rule of "partis sequitur ventram", since the writer of this paper knows of one case, in which a Jew is married to a Gentile woman, and the children of this union are regarded as Jews by everybody, belong to the Jewish synagogue, and are full-fledged members of the Jewish community. Nowadays a child is generally thought of as taking the status of his father, and this was most probably true in ancient times.

According to all of Paul's teachings on circumcision (quotations from his writings on the subject will be given in a succeeding section), the rite could have no bearing upon one's relation to God. It could only be performed as

a racial matter, simply as a mark, distinguishing Jews from Gentiles, and even in this respect, as will be seen, it was to pass away.

Since the rite was only a racial matter, the thing would work both ways. That is, the fact that Timothy was uncircumcised marked him off as a Greek, and leaving him in that state would mean that he would continue as a Greek. Not circumcising him fixed his status almost as surely as performing upon him the rite. Circumcising Timothy would definitely mark him off as a Jew. Why do this? Why incur the risk of criticism and misunderstanding that ~~was~~ sure to follow just to have Timothy considered a Jew? Later on other Gentiles served very acceptably as missionaries both among their own people and among the Jews. But Paul did not have as much experience at the time of this visit to Lystra as he did later. Probably he did not think through the various angles of the matter, rather hastily concluding that fixing Timothy's status definitely as a Jew would make him more valuable.

b. The work that Timothy was to do.—Another circumstance, in addition to Timothy's uncertain status, making Paul's conduct in this matter more favorable, was the work which Timothy was to do, and the situation in which he would be placed. He was to go with Paul and Silas on a missionary tour, and their first work would usually be in the synagogues. Timothy, circumcised, would be more acceptable to

unconverted Jews, and could perhaps help win them more easily. This act then might be looked upon as a matter of expediency and for the work's sake.

In the light of these considerations it might appear at first sight that this act of Paul in circumcising Timothy was entirely consistent. Conybeare and Howson so argue in their monumental work.¹ They are followed in this by W. M. Furneaux, who says: "No principle was here at stake."² A. T. Robertson is of the same opinion: "No matter of principle was involved in his [Timothy's] case and prudential reasons ruled."³

3. What Paul Said about Circumcision

Yet it is not quite so certain about the consistency of this act, and also its wisdom. It was done just after the Jerusalem Conference, in which the main point of dispute was the matter of circumcision, and in which Paul had been very firm in the case of Titus. In this connection A. C. McGiffert says: "There is no time in his life when we should suppose him less likely to circumcise one of his converts."⁴ No pressure, so far as we know, was brought to bear upon Paul in this matter; no one forced him to perform this act. He

1. Life and Epistles of St. Paul, People's Ed., pp. 228-231.

2. Op. cit., p. 255.

3. Op. cit., p. 142.

4. Op. cit., p. 233.

might have been almost compelled to agree to the Jerusalem Decree, but that was not so in this case. Conciliation of the Jews seems to have been in his mind, and as B. H. Streeter says: "When conciliation was his mood, he would go to lengths—the circumcision of Timothy is an example—which principle could hardly justify."¹

It will help in judging this act to examine some of Paul's own statements about circumcision. "Behold, I Paul say unto you, that, if ye receive circumcision, Christ will profit you nothing. Yea, I testify again to every man that receiveth circumcision, that he is a debtor to do the whole law" (Gal. 5:2,3). These are indeed strong words. They almost amount to saying that the one who submits to the rite of circumcision has abandoned Christianity and gone back to Judaism. And no exception is made for a half-Jew or even a full Jew. It is at best a little hard to believe that the same Paul, who himself circumcised an adult Christian, even though he was a half-Jew, and even though the act was performed from motives of expediency, could have written these words.

"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith working through love" (Gal. 5:6). "For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature" (Gal. 6:15). These verses

1. The Four Gospels, p. 550.

do not go quite so far as the passage quoted in the preceding paragraphs, but they do amount to saying that circumcision is immaterial and unnecessary.

It is uncertain as to the exact date of Galatians, and the time when these words were written. This Epistle either preceded shortly Paul's second visit to Galatia and the circumcising of Timothy, or it followed within a short time, not over four or five years, afterward. If the former be the case, Paul's conduct in the matter becomes even more questionable. It does not appear that any one who could write such statements as quoted in the foregoing paragraphs, and then within a few weeks afterward circumcise an adult convert, even though he be of uncertain nationality, and do so among the very people to whom he wrote the letter, can, in that particular matter, be credited with any consistency. Probably, however, Galatians followed the events of Acts 16:1-5, and, if it was written several years later, conditions in the meantime may have changed. This change of conditions might justify to some extent Paul's act at the one time and his statements of a different tenor at the later time. And, too, in the heat of controversy, in the excited state of his feelings, Paul may not have meant quite all he wrote. Again, Paul is writing in Galatians of circumcision as an act of saving significance; his performing the rite upon Timothy did not have any bearing upon the latter's salvation, since he was already a Christian (Acts 16:1).

We find similar language in some of Paul's other writings. "Was any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Hath any been called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised" (1 Cor. 7:18). Now Timothy was certainly called in uncircumcision (Acts 16:1). Paul thinks it good for a man to remain before God in whatever state he was before his conversion, yet he himself was responsible for changing Timothy's state. Evidently, his case was an exception to this rule, which is the best we can say in reconciling these matters.

"Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but the keeping of the commandments of God" (1 Cor. 7:19). "Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all, and in all" (Col. 3:11). According to these passages and others of similar nature in the Epistles, circumcision with Paul was a useless rite, obsolete, valueless, and was to pass away. This is not altogether in harmony with his act at Lystra, even though, as has been mentioned, there were several alleviating circumstances with regard to that act.

And the motive of expediency in the matter does not quite justify what Paul did. Such a motive can be overworked. It can be carried so far that it may amount even to the sacrifice of principle. Paul did not consider it necessary for all his helpers to be circumcised. On this

same Second Journey, Luke joined the party at Troas (Acts 16:10), and it is very doubtful that he ever submitted to the rite. We have already seen that Titus was not circumcised, and he was one of Paul's most valued assistants on the Third Journey. Luke and Trophimus were with Paul at Jerusalem on his last visit, and the latter was a Greek (Acts 21:28,29) and uncircumcised. Evidently, if at one time, conditions made it necessary for Paul's missionary companions to be circumcised, those conditions soon changed. Or did Paul realize that he made a mistake in circumcising Timothy? And thus did he change his policy in this respect?

4. The Consequences of This Act

It will also be helpful in judging this act to examine its consequences. Paul's circumcising Timothy does not seem to have worked out as he expected, and later on certainly caused him considerable trouble. His enemies said that by so doing he had confessed the value of circumcision (Gal. 5:11). It gave them a strong argument to use against him in presenting their claims to the Galatians. R. B. Rackham says in this connection:¹

"This circumcision would be notorious in Galatia, and when the Judaizers arrived they soon laid hold of it. 'Why this apostle of Gentile liberty himself preaches

1. Op. cit., p. 263.

circumcision!' 'He is indeed a mere man-pleaser, utterly without principle!' And when St. Paul in his letter to the Galatians enters so fully into the question of Titus' circumcision, he is at the same time defending his action in Timothy's case also."

Very likely this act of Paul encouraged the Galatians in their defection. It looked as if he preached one thing and practiced another, valuing circumcision more highly than he said. Sir William Ramsay gives a most helpful discussion of this matter. In one work he writes: "He [Paul] even made the half-Jew Timothy comply with the Jewish law. No act of his whole life is more difficult to sympathize with; none cost him dearer. It was misunderstood by his own Galatian converts."¹ This act certainly gave rise to misunderstanding, since the Galatians in their immaturity did not perceive so readily, as we do now, that it had nothing to do with Timothy's salvation. It could be interpreted as a backdown on Paul's part from his firm stand at Jerusalem.

In another work Ramsay has some further words concerning this matter:²

"They [the Judaizers] pointed out that Paul himself recognized the principle that circumcision was needed for the higher grade of Christian service; for when he selected Timothy for a position of responsibility in the church, he, as a preliminary, performed the rite on him; and they declared that thereby he was, in effect,

1. Pauline and Other Studies, pp. 34, 35.

2. St. Paul the Traveller and Roman Citizen, p. 183.

'preaching circumcision' (Gal. 5:11). Further, they threw doubt on his sincerity in this act; and insinuated that he was reluctantly complying with necessity, in order to 'conciliate and ingratiate himself with' the mass of the Church (see Lightfoot on Gal. 1:10)."

He thinks also that this act helped the Judaizers in their argument about the existence of two grades of Christians (see p. 26), and in their urging the Galatians to strive to attain to the higher grade.¹

It looks as if Paul had himself partly to blame for the Galatians having "fallen away from grace". There are still many problems concerning this matter that are unsolved, and many circumstances that are unknown, and it might be that if all the facts were known a different judgment would be rendered. Yet, on the whole it must be concluded that, so far as we can tell from the present evidence, Paul's conduct in circumcising Timothy was certainly unwise; and it is apparently inconsistent with his conduct on other occasions and with his teachings elsewhere about the Jewish rite.

1. Ramsay, Sir William, St. Paul the Traveller and Roman Citizen, p. 183.

CHAPTER III

THE JUDAIZING CONTROVERSY

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The Judaizing Controversy was one of the most important events in Paul's life, requiring much of his attention from the time of the Jerusalem Conference to the close of the Third Missionary Journey, and even then it did not cease. In fact, it continued from the time of the Conference throughout Paul's life, although not in such violent form in the later years. Several of the matters connected with this Controversy have some bearing upon the subject of this paper, and must now be considered.

1. Paul a Man of Many Controversies

The Judaizing Controversy was the major conflict of Paul's life, although it was by no means the only one. He moved constantly in an atmosphere of conflict; he was usually fighting something or somebody, and most of the time he was being fought. In many of the places to which he went, strife of some kind soon followed; there were plots and counter-plots, scheming and misunderstanding, railing and harsh words. And Paul could not rise above this strife; he was usually in the midst of it, taking his part, and sometimes even causing much of it to happen. His was indeed a

tumultuous life, like the noisy trafficking in a city's narrow streets.

In this respect the great apostle was certainly different from his Master. Jesus was the subject of many attacks it is true, and he sometimes answered his opponents in scathing language (see Matthew 23). But there was an air of finality in everything that Jesus said. With murderous plots all about him, he somehow remained above the conflict. Unlike Paul, about Jesus there was an atmosphere of serenity, calmness, certainty, peace. He was far removed from the chicanery and schemes of his foes; he never seemed to care about their threats or designs.

"The tranquillity of nature broods over the Gospels; the confusion of the crowd is reproduced in Paul's stormy career. In Jesus, there is no divided allegiance, as of a 'twice-born' life. ... The soul of Jesus is like a star and dwells apart; the soul of Paul is like a man groping his way through the dark. ... Jesus walks on the waves of controversy and they are calmed; Paul struggles through them and wins his way to the shore."¹

Paul's very presence even appears to have been the cause of many of these disturbances. In Acts 9:31, there is a most significant statement: "So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being edified; and, walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, was multiplied." It is sometimes taken that

1. Peabody, F. G., op. cit., p. 7.

this happened because Paul was converted, and the persecution which he led had ceased. But the author of Acts places this statement about the peace immediately after his account of Paul's departure from those regions. Paul's conversion had taken place more than a year at least before this departure and this peace (Gal. 1:18). If the conversion had been the cause of "the peace", it seems that that blessed state should have come sooner. There was a plot at Damascus soon after Paul arrived there (Acts 9:23,24); there was an atmosphere of suspicion upon Paul's arrival at Jerusalem and a plot there (Acts 9:26-29). It looks as if "the peace" and the "edifying" and the "multiplying" came about in the places named in Acts 9:31 largely because of the apostle's departure.

This is suggestive of Paul's entire life. His presence was not usually conducive to complete harmony among the brethren and in the churches. It is instructive to note that, so far as the records indicate, Paul was the most persecuted Christian of his day. Oftentimes he was imprisoned, beaten, stoned, and his life was sought, when there were many other Christians present, and when none of them were molested.¹ Sometimes he had to leave town hurriedly, when it was safe and appropriate for other Christians to remain.²

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1. See Acts 14:19 for one example. Barnabas and "the disciples", the latter mentioned in verse 20, were unharmed at Lystra, while Paul was stoned and left for dead.
 2. One case is seen in Acts 17:14. Paul had to depart from Berea, while Silas and Timothy could and did stay there.

Certainly, in most respects these other Christians held the same beliefs and taught the same gospel as did Paul. Why were they not persecuted? And why, when they were persecuted, was it usually because at that particular time they happened to be associates of Paul?¹ Why was so much anger aroused against Paul alone?

Part of the answer to these questions may be found in the fact that Paul was the acknowledged leader of the party of Gentile freedom. But perhaps much of the answer may also be seen in such acts as that at Corinth, in which Paul "shook out his raiment and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles" (Acts 18:6). Such an act was certainly not conducive to making friends, and was probably most exasperating to the Jews. Surely the matter is partly to be explained in Paul's own nature: he was possessed of a high temper, to which he sometimes gave expression (see Gal. 2:11-15); he was guilty at times of passionate outbursts (see Acts 23:3); he was known to call his foes by some very bad names, one example of such names being "dogs" (Phil. 3:2). To a Jew such a term was like waving a red flag in the face of a bull. Even though such vehemence was partly justified by the

1. See Acts 17:6 for one instance. Jason and the brethren were seized because Paul had lodged in the former's home. See Also Acts 19:29 for another case. Gaius and Aristarchus suffered because at that particular time they happened to be Paul's "companions in travel".

situations in which Paul was placed, it could not help but make enemies and precipitate attacks upon him.

2. The Judaizers Not Due All the Blame

It is usually thought that in the Judaizing Controversy Paul was entirely right and his enemies were entirely wrong; that his conduct in the Controversy was throughout impeccable, while they were guilty of intriguing, falsehood, and base motives. But the matter needs to be re-examined.

a. The Judaizers' position strong.—Let it be remembered that the Judaizers had some very strong arguments for their position, arguments which in that day were most telling. Much can be said in their favor. For one thing, the Old Testament was on their side, certainly in letter if not always in spirit. God had given the covenant of circumcision to Abraham (Gen. 17:9-19), and had there expressly said that it was an "everlasting covenant", to be kept "throughout their generations". The Divine Law had been given through Moses, and no where had it been definitely abrogated. The Old Testament Scriptures had promised many times a Jewish Messiah, and Jesus was a Jew and that Messiah of promise.

Again, Jesus himself could be interpreted as being on the side of the Judaizers. He was circumcised the eighth day (Luke 2:21), as were all of his immediate disciples. He had said that he came not to destroy the Law, but to

fulfill it, and that not one jot or tittle of it should pass away (Matt. 5:17,18). He had observed the Law, had kept the Passover, had paid the Temple-tax (Matt. 17:24-27), had told the healed leper to offer the prescribed gifts to the priests (Matt. 8:4; Mark 1:44; Luke 5:14), had said that he was not sent "save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel", and that it was "not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs" (Matt. 15:24,26). Most of Jesus' work had been confined to the limits of the Jewish land and the Jewish population.

There were other things which Jesus said, qualifying and explaining these statements and acts, as for example the hints of the coming extension of his Kingdom (John 10:16; 12:20; Matt. 8:11; 13:29). In spirit Jesus was certainly not with the Judaizers, but they could argue very plausibly for their side from many things which he said and did. They could say, with some show of truth, that their position was in line with Jesus' attitude.

Once more, the Judaizers could even argue for their side from Paul's own conduct. Had not he agreed to the Jerusalem Decree, which set forth certain ceremonial matters as "necessary", and actually delivered that Decree to some of the churches? Had not he himself circumcised Timothy? It must be admitted that at that time the Judaizers had the better arguments on their side, although the logic of history has proved Paul and his doctrine of complete freedom in the

gospel to be right.

The Judaizers derived their position from the Old Testament, and from the essentially more conservative relation of Jesus to the Law; they might even, with some justice, claim the Twelve and James as favoring their teachings. The Twelve had been with Jesus, and, therefore, had met the requirements for apostleship as laid down in Acts 1:21,22. Paul could only appeal to his visions and revelations for his authority. No other apostle was clearly and enthusiastically on Paul's side of the Controversy.

b. Charges against Paul by the Judaizers.—The mistakes and the hard words were not altogether on the side of the Judaizers. Their sins were certainly many: they were guilty of misrepresentation and of using underhanded methods; they dealt in personalities, saying some very mean things about the apostle himself. But on the other hand, Paul used some cutting and sarcastic language about them. This is seen on both sides in the various charges made against Paul by the Judaizers, and in the counter-charges which he made against them. Some of the former were:

- (1) He did not do many miracles (2 Cor. 12:12).
- (2) He did not have enough visions (2 Cor. 12:1-10).
- (3) He was not really an apostle (2 Cor. 11:7-11).
- (4) He was of inexcusably mean appearance (2 Cor. 10:7,10).

- (5) He sought to please men (Gal. 1:10).
- (6) He did not write as he felt (2 Cor. 1:13).
- (7) He tricked people with his cunning (2 Cor. 12:16).
- (8) He was impulsive and showed signs of being wrong in the head (2 Cor. 5:13).
- (9) His letters were weighty, but his presence was weak (2 Cor. 10:7).
- (10) He was fickle (1 Cor. 4:18; 2 Cor. 1:17).
- (11) He was rude in speech (2 Cor. 11:6).
- (12) He did not take pay for his preaching (2 Thess. 3:8; 2 Cor. 11:7).
- (13) He preached and taught circumcision (Gal. 5:11).
- (14) He was not an apostle on par with the Twelve (Galatians 1 and 2).
- (15) He preached license (Romans 5 and 6; 3:8).
- (16) He commended himself (2 Cor. 3:1; 5:12).
- (17) He took unfair advantage by his messengers (2 Cor. 12:17).
- (18) He taught Jews to forsake the Law (Acts 21:21).
- (19) He kept his converts in a lower stage of Christianity (Galatians).
- (20) He was covetous (Acts 20:33).
- (21) He stirred up sedition among the Jews (Acts 24:5).
- (22) He desecrated the Temple (Acts 24:6).
- (23) He feathered his own nest and made money out of the gospel (2 Cor. 11:7-11).

In most of these charges against Paul there can be no shadow of truth. But, in cases of this kind, in which an inspired apostle is not involved, it is usually thought that, where there is so much smoke, there is some fire. And Paul's conduct at least lent color to some of these charges: his opponents could argue that (5) and (13) were true, since he himself circumcised Timothy; they could say that (10) was true, since he promised to go to Corinth several times but did not (2 Cor. 1:15-17). There is some truth in (18), as will be shown in Chapter Seven; probably (4) and (11) were true, although this is nothing against the apostle's character or conduct. Of these charges against Paul R. D. Hanson says:

"And we can perceive that there is a consciousness in his own mind of the seeming justice of some of the accusations made against him; for the vehemence of his asseverations and the motives he assigns for his conduct are not the expressions of a man who feels that he has been wronged by a baseless suspicion, which will be removed by an open statement of the circumstances, but rather of one who is conscious, indeed, of his own rectitude, but aware also that his behaviour has given colour to the charge."¹

c. Accusations Paul made against the Judaizers.—Paul also kept up his part of the fight. He had much to say about his opponents, and sometimes he said it in very harsh language. Some of the charges he made against them were:

1. Op. cit., pp. 304, 305.

- (1) They commended themselves (2 Cor. 10:12).
- (2) They measured themselves by their own standards (2 Cor. 10:12).
- (3) They corrupted Christians and beguiled them as the serpent did Eve (2 Cor. 11:3).
- (4) They were false apostles (2 Cor. 11:13).
- (5) They were guilty of deception and misrepresentation (2 Cor. 11:13).
- (6) They acted like Satan, when he fashioned himself into an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14).
- (7) They pretended to be the chiefest of apostles (2 Cor. 11:5; 12:11).
- (8) They stirred up trouble among the Christians (Gal. 1:7).
- (9) They perverted the gospel of Christ (Gal. 1:7).
- (10) They were false brethren (Gal. 2:4).
- (11) They were guilty of spying (Gal. 2:4).
- (12) They sought Christians in no good way and desired to shut them out (Gal. 4:17).
- (13) They did not keep the Law (Gal. 6:13).

Paul in substance called Barnabas and Peter "hypocrites" at Antioch (Gal. 2:11-15). They may have been guilty of the charge, but such an accusation against one's fellow ministers is certainly not very wise. In this same Galatian Epistle he called down a curse upon any one who preached a different

gospel from that which he had preached, and to make the anathema doubly strong he repeated it (Gal. 1:8,9). Mention has been made of the term "dogs" in Philippians 3:2, and in that same verse there is a strict warning against the "evil workers" and they "of the concision". There were strong words of contempt used on both sides of this Controversy.

The Judaizers were certainly guilty of many of these charges, perhaps even of them all. And as we have seen, they had not said very complimentary things about Paul. But the Judaizers were supposed Christians; at least they held that Jesus was the Messiah of Old Testament promise. They had some very strong arguments on their side. They seem to have merited a little more consideration than Paul gave them in some of his writings, and a little more effort on his part to understand their position and motives. In this connection Orello Cone says: "There was a vein of intolerance in his [Paul's] nature, which rendered him severe and unsparing in his judgment of those who represented a point of view opposed to his."¹ H. Weinel thinks that Paul used language of his opponents that was not justified, and that he did not try to understand their motives or to do them justice.²

The Judaizers were undoubtedly guilty of great sins,

1. Op. cit., pp. 29, 30.

2. Op. cit., p. 232.

certainly much greater than any of which Paul was guilty after he became a Christian; and they were fighting for a mistaken and antiquated idea, as has been proved by the whole course of history. But the mistakes were not all theirs, since Paul in some of his acts and statements connected with the different phases of this Controversy laid himself open to criticism. His conduct gave the Judaizers some ground for their charges against him, and his language was not quite in line with the spirit and teachings of his Master.

CHAPTER IV

PAUL'S CHANGES IN PLAN

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Paul changed his plans many times, being compelled to do so in some cases by the Holy Spirit. In fact, sometimes Paul seems to have been without any immediate program of activity, and depended upon circumstances of the moment or revelations to direct him. For a clearer understanding of this matter, some of these many changes in plan will be examined.

1. Changes in Plan on the First Missionary Journey

There is only one matter of interest in this connection on the First Journey, and that is what happened at Perga. Exactly what happened at Perga is not quite clear. The record says very briefly: "Now Paul and his company set sail from Paphos, and came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departed from them and returned to Jerusalem. But they, passing through from Perga, came to Antioch of Pisidia" (Acts 13:13,14). Why was there no work done at Perga? Evidently, it was a suitable field, as the word was preached there on the return journey (Acts 14:25). Sir William Ramsay, in commenting on Acts 13:13, says: "The sense is 'they proceeded to Pamphylia, to the special point Perga;' and the intention is to define

their next sphere of work as being Pamphylia."¹ But the record indicates that they did not preach in Pamphylia at this time, leaving that province soon after their arrival.

Why did John Mark go back to Jerusalem? The original plan seems to have been that he should accompany the party until the missionaries returned to Antioch (Acts 13:5). Various suggestions have been made as to why John Mark deserted the mission at Perga, such as his being afraid of the mountains or robbers ahead, or his wanting to see his mother or his sweetheart back at home. But the most probable answer to the question is that there was a change made here in the original plans of the party, a change which John Mark did not like. This change involved several matters: (1) Paul became the leader of the party instead of Barnabas. (2) Paul was preparing now to preach directly to the Gentiles.² (3) Perga and Pamphylia were to be left as a sphere of operations. All of these things might have been distasteful to John Mark.

Commenting on this incident at Perga, W. M. Furneaux agrees with this opinion:

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1. St. Paul the Traveller and Roman Citizen, p. 89.
 2. In Cyprus they had proclaimed the word in the "synagogues of the Jews" (Acts 13:5). Only at Paphos is there definite mention of an effort being made to reach a Gentile. Perhaps the fact that the work in Cyprus, up to the arrival at Paphos, was among the Jews, with Barnabas as the leader, explains to some extent Luke's silence about this part of the First Journey.

"He [Mark] may have been offended at the change which had been silently effected in the leadership. ... Or it may have been genuine alarm on the part of a disciple of the church at Jerusalem, brought up in the atmosphere of Judaism, at finding himself associated with one who, as he only now realized, was preparing to preach directly to Gentiles."¹

Sir William Ramsay holds this same view. "They went to Pamphylia to preach there, and, as they did not actually preach there, something must have occurred to make them change their plan."² Ramsay thinks that this something was Paul's sickness, possibly malaria fever (see Gal. 4:13).³

Whether or not it was made necessary by Paul's having an attack of malaria fever, there was most probably a change of plan here at Perga. And this change very likely had something to do with John Mark's withdrawal from the party, the whole incident bringing on a lengthy estrangement between the apostle and his young associate.⁴ In this case, as in some other instances, a remark of T. R. Glover is pertinent: "Did his [Paul's] abrupt changes of plan ... confuse and upset his friends?"⁵

2. Changes in Plan on the Second Missionary Journey

There were a number of changes in Paul's plans on the

1. Op. cit., pp. 203, 204.

2. St. Paul the Traveller and Roman Citizen, p. 90.

3. Ibid.

4. Possibly John Mark gave a report of Paul's proceedings at Jerusalem, and this may have hastened the coming of the "certain men" (Acts 15:1) from Judea to Antioch.

5. Paul of Tarsus, p. 181.

Second Missionary Journey. In fact, it was on this Journey that the apostle seems to have been partly guided by circumstances. The Holy Spirit here, too, played a most important part in vetoing certain places Paul wished to go and in directing him to other places.

a. Instances where changes were certainly made.--In the following cases there were definite changes in plan involved.

- (1) Turning aside from Asia (Acts 16:6). Asia seems to have been the goal Paul had in mind all along through this Journey, but he was positively forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach there.
- (2) Giving up the purpose to go into Bithynia (Acts 16:7). In at least these two cases Paul wanted to go where the Holy Spirit did not want him to go. In this connection Sir William Ramsay says: "The whole point of the paragraph is that Paul was driven on against his own judgment and intention to that city [Troas]." ¹
- (3) Leaving Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea, in each case in a rather hurried manner (Acts 16:40; 17:9; 17:14). The withdrawal from these Macedonian cities was caused in every instance by circumstances, that is, by the opposition which arose to Paul. But that withdrawal represents a definite change of

1. St. Paul the Traveller and Roman Citizen, p. 201.

plan, since Paul regarded Macedonia at this time as his proper field of work (1 Thess. 2:17,18; 3:10), the field to which he had been led by a direct revelation (Acts 16:9,10).

- (4) Departing from Athens rather suddenly (Acts 18:1). This, too, was a definite change in plan, since the record clearly states that Paul was waiting for Silas and Timothy at Athens (Acts 17:15,16), hoping that they might bring news that the way was now open for him to return to Macedonia (1 Thess. 2:17,18). The preaching at Athens was not definitely in Paul's purpose when he came there; it was brought on by his spirit being "provoked within him as he beheld the city full of idols" (Acts 17:16). Timothy did come to Athens (1 Thess. 3:1), but apparently did not bring the desired news. The wait continued, and Paul's withdrawal before that news came, or before the arrival of Silas and Timothy, represents a change of program.

b. Instances where changes were probably made.—In the following cases there were probably changes in plan involved:

- (1) The separation from Barnabas (Acts 15:39). This came about as a result of the contention which arose between Paul and Barnabas over Mark, and no doubt had as a background Paul's withstanding Peter to the face (Gal. 2:11), and also by implication

Barnabas, who "was carried away with their dissimulation" (Gal. 2:13). But this appears to be a change in plan, since Barnabas was the intended companion of Paul, at least the one chosen by the Holy Spirit for the First Journey (Acts 13:2). However, this may not have been intended as a permanent arrangement.

- (2) Going farther than Galatia (Acts 16:6,7). The original purpose of this Journey, according to Paul's words to Barnabas (Acts 15:36), was revisiting the territory formerly entered. After the separation, Barnabas and Mark took part of this territory—Cyprus; Paul, choosing Silas as a companion, took the other part—Galatia. When this original purpose was accomplished, the seeking to go into Asia and the coming over against Mysia were certainly an addition to it, or a new plan formed at this juncture, if it cannot be called an actual change.
- (3) The vision at Troas (Acts 16:9). Paul arrived at Troas with no definite purpose. He had been forbidden to go in two other directions, and on that account he just came to Troas, and was waiting there for further guidance, not knowing what else to do.
- (4) Omitting Thessaly (Bezan Text, Acts 17:15). The

Bezan Text of Acts 17:15 reads: "But they that conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens: (and he neglected Thessaly, for he was prevented from preaching the word unto them)."¹ The Bezan addition is in the parentheses, and it seems to be trustworthy, since Thessaly lay right in Paul's path, and since there was at least one important city in that district—Larissa. What was it that prevented Paul from preaching in Thessaly? Was it another revelation of some kind? If so, and if the Bezan Text be correct, the Holy Spirit here again changed Paul's plans.

- (5) The vision at Corinth (Acts 18:9,10). This occurred soon after Paul had shaken out his raiment against the Jews and had definitely turned to the Gentiles (Acts 18:6). Much success followed Paul's efforts after this, even the ruler of the synagogue himself being converted (Acts 18:8). Yet, just at this point it was necessary for the Lord himself to appear to Paul and to say to him: "Be not afraid, but speak and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to harm thee: for I have much people in this city" (Acts 18:9,10). Why did the Lord say this to Paul, in effect

1. See Tischendorf, Constantinus, op. cit.

commanding him to continue his work in Corinth? Had Paul been thinking of leaving Corinth, and perhaps even formed a plan to do so? This might have been the case, since immediately after this incident it is emphatically stated that Paul remained at Corinth a year and a half (Acts 18:11).

3. Changes in Plan on the Third Missionary Journey

There were several changes in plan on the Third Journey, which must be considered. These were:

(1) Altering the purpose to go directly to Corinth from Ephesus (2 Cor. 1:15,16; 1 Cor. 16:5). Paul's original plan was to go from Ephesus to Corinth, from there to Macedonia, and then back to Corinth (2 Cor. 1:15,16). But he later changed this, purposing to go to Macedonia first (1 Cor. 16:5). The latter plan was the one actually carried out (Acts 20:1,2). However, it is possible to reconstruct these Scriptures in the following manner:

(a) First plan: Via Macedonia to Corinth (1 Cor. 16:5).

(b) Second plan: To visit Corinth directly, then Macedonia, and return to Corinth (2 Cor. 1:15,16).

(c) Again the plan was changed back to (a), and thus carried out. This reconstruction would mean two

changes here instead of one. But it is not near so likely as that already proposed, involving only one change.

About this time Paul may have made the so-called "sorrowful visit" to Corinth (2 Cor. 2:1; 12:14; 13:1). Also, either during his stay at Ephesus or immediately afterward, he seems to have written a letter now lost, or incorporated into 2 Corinthians (2 Cor. 2:4; 7:8). All the facts concerning Paul's relations to Corinth at this time are not clear.

But in any case, in his proposing to go to Corinth and then changing his plans and not going immediately, he laid himself open to charges of fickleness (2 Cor. 1:17). His enemies seized the opportunity to accuse him of inconsistency, and it may be that some of his friends at Corinth found difficulty in explaining his conduct.

- (2) Leaving Ephesus before Pentecost (Acts 20:1). Paul told the Corinthians, as one of his reasons for not coming to them immediately, that he intended to "tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost" (1 Cor. 16:8). He was going to do so because "a great door and effectual" was open to him. It is not certain that he left before Pentecost, but the whole tenor of the narrative in Acts 19:23 to 20:1 indicates that he departed from Ephesus rather suddenly, and sooner

than he had expected, because of the uproar made by Demetrius and his craftsmen. It is implied in 2 Corinthians 2:12,13 that Paul came to Troas sooner than had been planned, which was the reason Titus did not meet him there. Paul had good reason to leave Ephesus hurriedly, since his life was in danger. But his doing so may have again given the Corinthians an occasion to complain.

- (3) Returning through Macedonia from Greece (Acts 20:3). Paul started in this case to sail directly to Syria, but he changed his plan on account of a plot, which "was laid against him by the Jews". No one, however, could possibly blame him for this show of prudence.
- (4) Purposing to go to Jerusalem (Acts 19:21; Rom. 15:25). In this connection two verses in 1 Corinthians are often overlooked: "And when I arrive, whomsoever ye shall approve, them will I send with letters to carry your bounty unto Jerusalem: and if it be meet for me to go also, they shall go with me" (1 Cor. 16:3,4). Here it is very clearly stated that, when the collection was first conceived and launched, Paul did not definitely plan to take it to Jerusalem himself. He even thinks that possibly he will send others to take it. He may go himself, if circumstances permit, and if it seems fitting, but he has no set purpose to do so. The later

strong expressions of determination to go are certainly in contrast to the simple and indefinite words here—"if it be meet for me to go also."

4. Matters upon Which These Changes Have Bearing

There are several matters upon which these many changes in plan have bearing. These matters must now be considered.

a. Was Paul consistent in these changes?—Whether or not these many changes in plan were always consistent is hard to say. All the conditions which Paul faced, and all his reasons for his actions, are not now known. Sometimes to change the plans in any kind of undertaking is necessary, and contributes to the success of the undertaking. What missionary—or pastor, or lawyer, or physician, or teacher, or merchant, or statesman, or any one else for that matter—has not been forced or led by the Holy Spirit to change his plans? Who has not at times sought to go against the wishes of the Holy Spirit?

In these changes, therefore, Paul is not now open to much criticism. For some of them he is to be highly commended. It is, however, certain that his many changes in plan, brought on sometimes by the chafing of solitude and inactivity, sometimes by his revelations, involved him at that time in several difficulties. They laid him open to charges of fickleness by his enemies; they were sometimes

hard for his friends to understand; they even contributed at times to estrangements and separations between him and his companions, as has been indicated in the case of John Mark at Perga. This latter was also perhaps true in the case of Barnabas at Antioch and even Silas at Corinth.

b. Paul's life plan of work.—Undoubtedly, these many changes in the immediate program of activity have a very close connection with Paul's life plan of work. This latter was to go as a missionary to the Gentiles. Clearly, he was called for that particular work; from the very time of his conversion that was his definite mission in the world. This is seen in the words of the Lord to Ananias: "He [Paul] is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15). The word "Gentiles" in that verse has the place of prominence. Paul himself adds to this that the Lord told him in the Temple in Jerusalem: "Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles" (Acts 22:21). Again, he told King Agrippa that the Lord said to him that day on the road to Damascus: "Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee" (Acts 26:17). His agreement with the leaders at Jerusalem was that he and Barnabas "should go unto the Gentiles, and they unto the circumcision" (Gal. 2:9). He was peculiarly the Apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46; 18:6; 28:28; Gal. 2:7; Col. 1:24,25; Eph. 3:1,2; and many other references). That was the work to which God had

called him, and for which he was best fitted.

It has sometimes been said that Paul had a definite plan to conquer the Roman Empire for Christ. This is one of the main conclusions at which Sir William Ramsay arrives in his book, "St. Paul the Traveller and Roman Citizen". He there points out that Paul, whenever he came to any non-Roman territory, omitted that, always taking a Roman region or a Roman province as a sphere of operations. This latter statement seems to be true, but it is not altogether certain that Paul from the very first definitely planned to go to the Roman Empire. There is no announcement of such an intention early in Paul's work, and no certain hint of it either in the Acts or the Epistles until the close of the Third Missionary Journey. It is implied in Acts 19:21,22 and Romans 15:22-33, in the announcement of Paul's journey to Rome as his next intention, but this is only after several years in Aquila's company at Corinth and Ephesus, and almost at the end of the apostle's great period of missionary activity. Aquila's having lately come from Rome may have had something to do with Paul's decision to go there. Sir William Ramsay says of Paul's program at this time:¹

"Paul mentions in writing to the Romans, 15:24, that he intended to go from Rome to Spain. Such an intention implies in the plainest way an idea already existent in Paul's mind of Christianity as the religion of the

1. St. Paul the Traveller and Roman Citizen, p. 255.

Roman Empire. . . . From the centre of the Roman world Paul would go on to the chief seat of Roman civilization in the West, and would thus complete a first survey, the intervals of which would be filled up by assistants, such as Timothy, Titus, etc."

This is true enough, but it is only at the close of the Third Journey that such an idea is plainly indicated.

Paul's life work, definitely pointed out at his conversion, was to go as a missionary to the Gentiles, and there was no distinction made between Roman and non-Roman territory. If he gradually in the course of his travels formed the intention of conquering the Roman Empire for Christ, that plan was subsidiary to and contributory toward his great life purpose of winning the Gentiles, whoever they might be, or wherever they might live, to faith in Jesus.

Some of the many changes in plan, mentioned in the preceding pages, may appear inconsistent with certain previously announced intentions, but for the most part all of them are in harmony with Paul's great life purpose. In fact, in most cases they furthered that great life purpose, since each change appears to be more in the direction of going to the Gentiles. There is only one exception, which may appear to be doubtful as fitting in with this life program—the change of plan resulting in the last journey to Jerusalem, and this will be discussed in Chapter Six. For the most part, Paul consistently carried out his life purpose of going as a missionary to the Gentiles, the work to which he was God-called.

c. The revelations.—Another important matter that must be noted in this connection is the revelations that Paul received. Paul certainly believed himself to be the recipient of direct revelations from the Lord (1 Cor. 7:10; 11:23). A number of the changes in plan already mentioned were brought about in this manner; some of them were caused by commands of the Holy Spirit, some of them by visions, and some of them by other Divine manifestations. This is certainly reason enough for a change, even though the change is not quite in harmony with a previously arranged program, or with intentions already announced. The change may appear to be inconsistent, but if it is Divinely ordered, one had best make it, even at the risk of criticism and misunderstanding. Some of Paul's changes in plan then are certainly to be commended, since by doing so he was carrying out the immediately revealed will of God.

All of this brings up the question of inspiration. What really is inspiration? And what kind of inspiration did Paul have? Manifestly, these questions cannot be thoroughly discussed here, since such a discussion might itself constitute a doctor's dissertation. But just a word might be said. Judging from these various changes of plan, from the many revelations that Paul received, from the mistakes he sometimes made in the work, and from the growth in his ideas as seen in the Epistles, it was a matter of life. It was a matter of development—of God gradually working out

his purposes in and through the man himself. Not all the truth was revealed to Paul at once; the fact that he was inspired did not necessarily mean that he was able at any one time to say the final word on any subject. The ability to speak immediately the final word belonged to the Son of God, but not to his followers. About some matters Paul admitted that he had no word of any kind from the Lord (1 Cor. 7:12). Further, all of God's purposes were not made known to Paul at any one time; all of the details of God's program were not revealed to him immediately. Even though Paul was inspired, he was still a man and subject to the limitations of all humanity. Inspiration with him was not a mechanical thing, but a matter of life, working itself out gradually in the situations, conditions, and circumstances which he faced.

CHAPTER V

THE VOW OF ACTS 18:18

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The cutting of the hair at Cenchræe and the vow mentioned in Acts 18:18 constitute another one of those problems in the study of Paul's life, which come within the purview of this paper. What kind of a vow was this? Who took it? What were his reasons for doing so? And if Paul did it, was it consistent with his statements and actions elsewhere? In this chapter we shall consider briefly these questions.

1. Naziritic Vows

The custom of taking Naziritic vows goes back to the early history of the Israelites, and probably the idea of separation or devotion existed among other peoples even before their time. The term "Nazirite" etymologically means "one separated", or "one who separates himself", or, even more definitely, "one devoted". In usage it is perhaps an abbreviation of the full phrase, נְזִירִיתִּים , which occurs in Judges 13:5,7; 16:17. The chief Old Testament passages, dealing with these vows are: Numbers 6; Judges 13:5-7; and Amos 2:11,12.

Numbers 6 gives the regulations regarding these vows, dealing especially with the vows taken for a limited time.

Such a vow could be taken by either a man or a woman (v. 2). The one taking it must leave off wine or strong drink and any fruit of the vine during the entire period (vv. 3,4). He must not cut his hair (v. 5), and he must not come near to a dead body, nor make himself unclean in any way (vv. 6,7). If he became accidentally defiled during the time of the vow, he must go through certain purificatory rites, requiring eight days, making necessary sacrifices on the eighth day, and the time he had already served on the vow was void (vv. 9-12).

The rules concerning the completion of these vows were most exacting and complicated. According to Numbers 6:13, the Nazirite must terminate his vow at "the door of the tent of meeting". There he must make his offering, consisting of "one he-lamb a year old without blemish for a burnt-offering, and one ewe-lamb a year old without blemish for a sin-offering, and one ram without blemish for peace-offerings, and a basket of unleavened bread, cakes of fine flour mingled with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and their meal-offering, and their drink-offerings" (vv. 14,15). The priest must take these sacrifices and present them unto Jehovah (vv. 16,17), after which the Nazirite shaved his head "at the door of the tent of meeting", and put the hair on the fire "under the sacrifice of peace-offerings" (v. 18). Certain parts of the sacrifices were then declared "holy for the priest", and after that the Nazirite might

drink wine, and his vow was officially at an end.

The length of time for which the vow was taken is not stated in the Old Testament. The Mishna prescribes thirty days, and sometimes double periods of sixty days, or even triple periods, were allowed. It may be also that the hair was cut on the initiation of the vow, and allowed to grow during the period of it, being shaved at the conclusion. This is an inference from Numbers 6:9, which states that if a Nazirite became accidentally defiled, he must cut his hair on the seventh day, and start the vow over again.

Neither are the reasons for taking such vows clearly stated in the Old Testament, so that they must be inferred from other sources. It seems that men undertook to become Nazirites in return for some special manifestation of the Divine favor shown, such as the restoration of health, or the birth of a child (Josephus, Wars ii. 15. 1; Nazir ii.7), and probably also for a safe journey or the deliverance from some danger. Indeed, the Nazirite vow appears sometimes to have degenerated into a bet (Nazir v. 5), as for example of two men walking together, and seeing some one at a distance, one says to the other, "I'll be a Nazirite if that man is not so and so." Such trivial uses of these vows probably did not prevail in earlier times, it only being later that they degenerated from their public and religious significance.

Clearly, there were also Nazirites for life. Samson is named as one (Jdgs. 13:5-7); Samuel was another, not called

so in the Old Testament, but named in that sense in Ecclesiasticus 46:3. The case of John the Baptist is not certain, but it is probable that he was a lifelong Nazirite, as is shown by the manner of his living, and by the words: "He shall drink no wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb" (Luke 1:15). If he was a Nazirite, this may have had something to do with introducing the custom among the early Christians, for this custom did exist among them (Acts 21:23). However, it appears that the Nazirites for life were not bound by all the restrictions that were upon those taking the vow temporarily, since Samson did not observe the regulations regarding the avoiding of uncleanness through contact with a dead body (Jdgs. 14:19; 15:8).

The passage in Amos 2:11,12 does not contribute much of importance to the discussion. It does show that the Nazirites were numerous in the Eighth Century B.C., and that at that time they were forbidden to drink wine, since in this passage Amos inveighs against the sin of causing them to break this regulation.

One further circumstance must be mentioned about the temporary vows. The sacrifices made at their termination were rather expensive, and for this reason poor men sometimes found it difficult to conclude their vows, and may even have been in a few cases unable to bring them to an end. On account of this the custom arose of rich men paying

the expenses necessary for the sacrifices, when the Nazirites themselves could not provide the money. This was done for a number of poor Nazirites by Agrippa I, upon his visit to Jerusalem, after he had been appointed king over Herod the Great's dominions (Josephus, Ant. xix. 6. 1). There was not a more charitable act in the estimation of the Jews, nor one more calculated to acquire popularity, than the assisting of these poor Nazirites by supplying the necessary funds. The case of Paul and the four men at Jerusalem (Acts 21:23,24) is an instance of this same beneficence, and it will be thoroughly considered in Chapter Seven.

This extensive discussion of the Nazirite vows may have seemed superfluous, but it was necessary for the better understanding of the "shearing" of the hair at Cenchreae and also of the events at Jerusalem on Paul's last visit to that city. We must now consider the former matter.

2. Did Paul Shear His Hair at Cenchreae?

It is uncertain whether the shearing of the hair is to be referred to Paul or to Aquila. The record reads: "And Paul, having tarried after this yet many days, took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila: having shorn his head in Cenchreae; for he had a vow" (Acts 18:18). The Greek in this sentence is ambiguous. The aorist participle used, *κεφαλιουτος*, could

refer, so far as gender, number, and case are concerned, either to *Παῦλος* or to *Ἀκύλας*. H. A. W. Meyer thinks that the order of the names in this verse, Priscilla coming first, shows that the cutting of the hair is to be referred to Aquila.¹ Ordinarily in ancient literature, both sacred and secular, the man's name is written before the woman's. Meyer thinks that this custom is here violated in order for *ἡ κεφαλὴν* to appear next to the *Ἀκύλας*, and modify that name.² But in three other cases Priscilla's name is written first (Acts 18:26; Rom. 16:3; 2 Tim. 4:19). In four out of the six cases in the New Testament, in which this pair is mentioned, the order is "Priscilla and Aquila", so that nothing can be made out of this circumstance in Acts 18:18.

In a case of this kind the context, the situation itself, and one's own common sense must decide, if it can be decided at all. Luke in this paragraph and in this part of Acts is largely telling the story of Paul, and, when he does relate the deeds of others, it is only because those deeds have some bearing upon Paul's work. *Παῦλος* occupies the prominent place in Acts 18:18. Luke would scarcely have thought it necessary to mention that Aquila had taken a vow. This would have been purposeless, since no one cared anything about whether or not Aquila went out of his way to observe

1. Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Acts of the Apostles, Vol. II, pp. 137, 138.
 2. Ibid.

an old Jewish custom. He was not the outspoken champion of Gentile freedom. Apparently the only thing of much interest about Aquila to the early Christians was that he was overshadowed—and perhaps ruled—by his wife.

Another circumstance seems to indicate that Paul was the subject of the hair cutting. This act was connected in some way with Jerusalem; it either had to be done there, or the hair had to be taken there and burned on the altar, if it were a Nazirite vow (Num. 6:13,18). There is some doubt as to the exact nature of this vow; it may not have been that of a Nazirite. This uncertainty as to the nature of this vow tends to nullify this argument, yet it is true that Paul soon after this went to Jerusalem (Acts 18:22), while Aquila did not go. This fact at least makes it more probable that Paul was the one who cut his hair.

This incident is the subject of much division on the part of the commentators: "The shearing of the head is referred to Paul by Augustine, Beda, Erasmus, Luther, Beza, Calvin, Spencer, Reland, Wolf, Bengel, Rosenmuller, Morus, Olshausen, Zeller, de Wette, Baumgarten, Lange, Hackett, Lechler, Ewald, Lepp, and Bleek. To Aquila by Vulgate, Theophylact, Castalio, Hammond, Grotius, Alberto, Valckener, Heinrichs, Kuinoel, Wieseler, Schneckenburger, and Oertel."¹ Conybeare and Howson are certain that Aquila was the one

1. Meyer, H. A. W., op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 137, 138.

took the vow;¹ F. J. A. Hort,² W. M. Furneaux,³ R. B. Rackham,⁴ R. D. Hanson,⁵ and R. J. Knowling,⁶ are just as certain that Paul was the one who took it. And so on ad infinitum. There is no way of definitely settling the matter, but the considerations already mentioned point to Paul as the one who cut his hair at Genchreae; he has the best of the argument anyway for this doubtful honor, the nature and propriety of which must now be investigated.

3. Was This a True Naziritic Vow?

Whether or not this was a true Naziritic vow is also uncertain. The fact that the hair was required to be shaved in such vows "at the door of the tent of meeting" (Num. 6:18), i.e. at the Temple, argues against this being the case. But in some instances it may be that a Jew, if he was in a foreign land at the expiration of the period, might shave his head, and keep the hair until he reached Jerusalem, and burn it there on the altar with his sacrifice.⁷

The Greek word used in Acts 18:18, *κεκράμενος*, is distinctly for "cutting" or "shearing"; on the other hand the

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1. Op. cit., p. 367.
 2. Judaistic Christianity, p. 91.
 3. Op. cit., p. 302.
 4. Op. cit., pp. 332, 333.
 5. Op. cit., p. 208.
 6. The Acts of the Apostles, p. 392.
 7. Cf. Rackham, R. B., loc. cit.

word used in Acts 21:24, *γυρᾶσονται*, is for "shaving". This indicates that there may have been some difference in the act performed at Cenchreae, and in the act of the four men at Jerusalem. It is altogether possible that the "cutting" or "shearing" at Cenchreae marked the beginning of the period of the vow (see p. 80), which was to be terminated later at Jerusalem. In either case (i.e., at the beginning or at the close of the period), if a Naziritic vow, a visit to Jerusalem would be necessary. Now Paul made such a visit to Jerusalem (Acts 18:22), which points both to him as the one taking the vow, and to this being a true Naziritic vow.

It has been suggested that Paul at Cenchreae took the vow and cut his hair, signifying the initiation of the period, the vow being terminated at Jerusalem on his last visit there with the four men (Acts 21:26).¹ But this is hardly possible, since at least three years elapsed between those events, and the periods of these vows did not last near so long. The liberal Paul, with all his efforts at conciliation, and even compromise, would not likely have been willing to appear that length of time in Ephesus, Philippi, Corinth, and other Gentile cities, with his hair growing long, thus advertising to all the world that he was under some ancient Jewish vow.

1. See Christie, W. M., I. S. B. E., art., "Nazirite".

The critics in this matter are also divided: G. S. Duncan,¹ R. B. Rackham,² T. Lewin,³ R. D. Hanson,⁴ and many others of high standing think that this is the vow of the Nazirite; Conybeare and Howson,⁵ W. M. Furneaux,⁶ D. Eaton,⁷ and more of like calibre just as emphatically assert the contrary. There is no way of deciding positively, but, in the light of the foregoing suggestions, the probabilities are in favor of its having been that same ancient votive rite. If it was not, then it was certainly a private vow of some type, analogous to the Naziritic vow, and would have had much the same bearings and implications.

4. Estimating This Act

It has not been conclusively shown that Paul took this vow, nor indeed can it be. But the probabilities are in that direction; and if he did, it is again one of those acts in his life of doubtful propriety or worth. It could only mean that he himself in his personal life still observed, at least on some occasions, the ancient Jewish customs, "the weak and beggarly rudiments"; and even did that about the

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1. St. Paul's Ephesian Ministry, p. 25.
 2. Op. cit., pp. 332, 333.
 3. The Life and Epistles of St. Paul, Vol. I, pp. 294, 295.
 4. Op. cit., p. 208.
 5. Op. cit., p. 366.
 6. Op. cit., p. 302.
 7. Hastings' Bible Dictionary, Art., "Nazirite".

time, either just before or soon after, he was having so much to say in Galatians against "circumcision", "the works of the law", "the days, and months, and seasons, and years". This was also during the time of the Judaizing Controversy, when his opponents might use this act as an argument for their contention about the higher and lower grades of Christians (see pp. 25, 26, 46).

a. The act voluntary.—It may be that in the case of the Jerusalem Decree Paul could not very well avoid giving his assent; in the case of Timothy's circumcision, there is a definite reason for the act given, "because of the Jews that were in those parts"; at Jerusalem the last time some pressure was probably exerted on Paul by the "elders". But in the matter of the vow at Cenchreae or Corinth no compulsion is mentioned; so far as the record indicates, no pressure was brought to bear upon Paul; it appears to be entirely a voluntary act on his part. Whatever may be said of this incident, if Paul took this vow, "it could not but at all events be very strange to see the liberal Paul thus, entirely without any higher necessity or determining occasion given from without ... voluntarily engaging himself in a Jewish votive ceremony."¹ "Certainly, no one who reads his letter to the Galatians, or that to the Romans, could conceive of

1. Meyer, H. A. W., op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 137, 138.

him [Paul] as voluntarily submitting himself to a rite of this nature."¹

b. Possible reasons for Paul's taking the vow.—The strangeness of this act, and its being hard to explain on the basis of Paul's performing it, are among the reasons for some writers' (example H. A. W. Meyer himself²) attributing it to Aquila. G. S. Duncan has advanced one suggestion as to why Paul did it, if he did:

"In undertaking this Nazirite vow Paul wished on his arrival in the Holy City to dedicate himself afresh to the worship and service of the God of his fathers ... he would also realize that it would afford to his opponents a practical demonstration of his loyalty to the traditions of the ancestral faith."³

Later in his work he adds more to the same effect:

"It was partly in the hope of vindicating himself in the face of his nation that, at the conclusion of his stay at Corinth, Paul shaved his head as a Nazirite and proceeded to Jerusalem to keep the feast."⁴

Paul may have had something like this in his mind when he performed this act. On the other hand it may have been a private religious exercise of his own, because of some danger escaped at Corinth or Cenchreae, and was not intended to have any public significance.

1. Hanson, R. D., op. cit., p. 208.
 2. Op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 137, 138.
 3. Op. cit., p. 25.
 4. Op. cit., p. 258.

c. Paul still a Jew.—One consideration must be remembered here: that is, that Paul, even though a Christian, was still a Jew. When no matter of principle was at stake, it was certainly appropriate for him to live as other Jews. Apparently there were no Christian Gentiles at Cenchreae to be influenced in any way by this vow; there would likely be none at the places to which Paul was going—Ephesus and Jerusalem. However, there were Gentile believers at Corinth, and if the vow was taken there, they might have been affected by it.

It would certainly be wrong for a Christian Gentile to cut his hair for a vow, or be circumcised, or keep any other part of the ceremonial Law, if he regarded such an act as necessary for his salvation. A Gentile would hardly do such a thing for any other reason; when he performed one of those acts, it was usually equivalent to "falling away from grace". But was it wrong for Paul, a Christian Jew, to perform one of these acts? Certainly not, if he did not in any way regard the matter as necessary for his salvation. Paul could hardly have so regarded this vow at Cenchreae or Corinth. Most probably he took it as a Jew, and did not consider it as in any way contributing to his eternal welfare. Looking at the matter from this point of view, it was entirely all right for Paul to take the vow, when it would not have been all right for a Christian Gentile to have done so, since the latter would not likely have entered into such a vow as a matter indifferent.

This consideration is favorable to Paul in judging the propriety of this vow. As a Christian Jew he could legitimately take it; whereas Christian Gentiles could not have done so, since they would hardly go to the length of observing old Jewish customs, unless they regarded those customs as in some way essential. Still, on this consideration of the vow being an indifferent matter, the act was useless and unnecessary, and could not gain Paul anything, unless it might allay some of the Jewish prejudices against him. It may have had some worth in this last respect; but, at the same time, if any Gentiles did happen to know or to hear about it, they might easily have misunderstood Paul's motives in taking such a vow.

The matter is involved in many doubts and uncertainties; yet on the whole it appears that this act, if not actually inconsistent with Paul's principles, was of very questionable value, in that it could have been laid hold of by the Judaizers and used in support of their position, and in that it could have been misinterpreted by the Gentile converts.

CHAPTER VI

THE LAST JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM

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The incidents and events connected with Paul's last visit to Jerusalem are among the most perplexing occurrences of his life. Why did Paul go to Jerusalem on this visit, especially when the Holy Spirit so clearly predicted that by his going his life would be in danger (Acts 20:23)? What part did the Holy Spirit play in this journey? And what happened when Paul arrived in Jerusalem? An effort must be made in this and the following chapter to answer these and similar questions, since the answer to them is most important for the subject under consideration.

1. The Purpose of This Visit

Paul said that he must go to Jerusalem (Rom. 15:25; Acts 20:22), and he said it most emphatically—he went "bound in the spirit". Why did Paul think this journey so necessary? Several matters are involved in the answer, matters which must now be considered.

a. To take the collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem.—In keeping with Galatians 2:10, Paul had initiated and carried forward in his churches a great collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem (Rom. 15:26). His purpose in

going to Jerusalem was partly to take this collection (Rom. 15:25,28; Acts 24:17). But this alone cannot account for the urgency and determination which Paul expressed about this journey. The envoys mentioned in Acts 20:4 and in 2 Corinthians 8:17,18,22 could easily have taken care of this matter. In fact, when the collection was first initiated, it was thought that the messengers, whom the churches were to appoint, would take the money to Jerusalem (1 Cor. 16:3). It was not even certain that Paul would go at that time, and not at all deemed necessary (1 Cor. 16:4).

b. To observe the Feast of Pentecost at Jerusalem.— Acts 20:16 gives this reason: "He was hastening, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost." But neither does this consideration completely explain Paul's urgency in the matter. He had already determined to go to Jerusalem independently of the Feast of Pentecost, and, since he was going to the Holy City anyway, thought it well to be there on the day of that Feast, or at least at the time of some important festival.

c. To conciliate his enemies.—To conciliate his enemies within the church, especially the extreme Judaizers, is probably the real reason why Paul went to Jerusalem. This is not definitely stated anywhere in the Scriptures, but is indicated in these expressions: "So that I may accomplish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24);

"When therefore I have accomplished this, and have sealed to them this fruit" (Rom. 15:28); "That I may be delivered from them that are disobedient in Judea" (Rom. 15:31). It is seen in the whole course of the narrative, and especially in Paul's conduct at Jerusalem. Along this line A. T. Robertson says: "It is now supremely important that something be done to conciliate the Jewish Christians who have had their minds poisoned against Paul and his work."¹ A. C. McGiffert thinks that Paul went to Jerusalem that "the bond between the Jewish and Gentile wings of the church might be finally cemented, and thus the foundation laid for the realization of his dream of the salvation of all Israel."²

d. To bring "offerings".—Paul told Felix, the Roman governor, that he came to Jerusalem "to bring alms" to his nation, "and offerings" (Acts 24:17). What part did the "offerings" play in his purpose? This looks very much like offerings to be made in the Temple. Did Paul have in mind the making of offerings according to the Jewish Law, when he arrived at Jerusalem? Or was he under some vow when he came to Jerusalem, and were the offerings a part of the process of terminating that vow? This matter must be investigated further, when we come to consider Paul's conduct upon arriving at the Holy City.

1. Op. cit., p. 214.

2. Op. cit., p. 345.

Paul's purpose then in going to Jerusalem was to conciliate the Jewish Christians there, and to get rid of the cankering sore that was behind him. These other matters--the collection for the poor saints, the observing of the Feast, and the "offerings", whatever their nature--were involved in and contributed toward that purpose.

2. The Holy Spirit in This Journey

The Holy Spirit was very active in this journey, although his voice seems to have been interpreted in one way by Paul and in exactly the opposite way by all his friends. That is, Paul thought the Holy Spirit said to go; all of his friends thought he said not to go.

a. Indications of Divine leadership, directing Paul to go.--Some of these were:

- (1) Paul's own words: "And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there" (Acts 20:22). But this was hardly the Holy Spirit; this verse simply expresses an inner feeling of the apostle that he should go.
- (2) Other expressions of Paul such as: "Accomplish my course" (Acts 20:24); "For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21:13). This is

again, however, merely an assertion of Paul's own determination.

- (3) The words of the Christians at Caesarea: "The will of the Lord be done" (Acts 21:14). This may amount to saying that it is the Lord's will for Paul to go; but it looks more like mere resignation on the part of the Christians, or a hope that the Lord's will, whatever it may be—and it does not seem to be clearly known in this case—might be done.
- (4) Paul's vision at Jerusalem and the Lord's own words: "Be of good cheer; for as thou hast testified concerning me at Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome" (Acts 23:11). This may mean that the Lord himself was placing his seal of approval upon what Paul had done in coming to Jerusalem, and while there; on the other hand it more probably means that the Lord was seeking to comfort and encourage Paul in his difficulties, and to overrule what had happened, so that it would all work out for his glory.

b. Indications of Divine leadership, directing Paul not to go.—Some of these were:

- (1) The plot against Paul at Corinth. This plot was connected in some way with his sailing for Syria (Acts 20:3), probably being a plan to murder Paul at sea. This, of course, had nothing to do with

the Holy Spirit. But this journey began under inauspicious circumstances, and this fact alone would have been sufficient to turn back a more prudent man.

- (2) The Holy Spirit's warning to Paul. Paul said to the elders at Miletus: "Save that the Holy Spirit testifieth unto me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me" (Acts 20:23). But this might have been simply information about what might happen to Paul at Jerusalem, and not a prohibition against his going there.
- (3) The words of the disciples at Tyre. "And these said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not set foot in Jerusalem" (Acts 21:4). This appears to be a direct command of the Holy Spirit to Paul not to go, at least as interpreted by the disciples. This is the most definite indication of the Divine will in the matter, and it is clearly on the side of Paul's staying away from Jerusalem. But was Paul himself more fully and correctly aware of the will of the Spirit? He must have thought so anyway, deciding that the disciples were mistaken in their interpretation of what the Spirit had said.
- (4) The mention of the four virgin daughters of Philip and their prophesying (Acts 21:9). The most probable reason for Luke's mentioning them is that they had something to say about Paul's fate at Jerusalem, and

very likely they implied that he should not go.

(5) The action and prediction of Agabus. The prophet's taking Paul's girdle and binding his own hands and feet with it (Acts 21:11) was a most dramatic performance. And the words the prophet spoke made the matter more emphatic: "Thus saith the Holy Spirit, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles" (Acts 21:11). Any one less determined than Paul would have concluded from this action and these words that the Holy Spirit wanted him to stay away from Jerusalem. But here again Paul took the prediction as information and not as a prohibition.

(6) One other circumstance must be mentioned in this connection. The Lord many years before had appeared to Paul in the Temple and said: "Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem; because they will not receive of thee testimony concerning me" (Acts 22:18). This does not necessarily mean that Paul was never to return to Jerusalem. On one occasion after this he went there "by a revelation" (Gal. 2:2). But the last clause of Acts 22:18 is characteristic of the attitude of the people at Jerusalem, both Christians and non-Christians, toward Paul. They were never willing to receive of him

"testimony" concerning Jesus. He could hardly hope for better treatment this time.

c. Interpreting the Divine Voice.—Now what can be made of all these expressions of the Divine Voice? At times that Voice seemed to say, "Go"; at other times it seemed to say, "Stay". But judging from the foregoing summary in each case, the command "to stay" was sounded a little more clearly, and certainly more dramatically, than the command "to go". And, since the Divine Voice could be interpreted in either way, Paul might have obeyed the command just as well, and perhaps better, by not going as by the course he pursued.

Since the matter of what was God's will in the case was at least open, if not positively on the side of remaining, might not Paul have exercised more prudence? Were not his life and work of more value to the Cause just at that time than any possible "conciliation", or "cementing", or harmony he might bring about at Jerusalem, especially when his efforts in that direction, judging from past experiences, appeared so likely to prove futile? On other occasions Paul did not needlessly expose himself to danger (Acts 17:10; 17:14; 19:30). In this connection F. W. Farrar asks the question: "Since the Spirit had given him [Paul] so many warnings, might there not be even something of presumption in thus exposing himself in the very stronghold of his most embittered enemies?"¹

1. Op. cit., Vol. II, p. 289.

Of course, we cannot be certain as to just what the Holy Spirit said to Paul in his inner consciousness; he may have had a direct revelation in the matter, and in this revelation the Lord may have said to him very definitely that he should go. Yet it seems that one should judge a call of God to a certain duty, if he feels that he has such a call, in the light of past experiences in similar cases and the probabilities of success in the present undertaking, and also in the light of the revelations made to others and of their feelings regarding the matter. God's calls certainly do not supersede the duty of personal judgment, and also the duty of considering all of the circumstances bearing upon the case.

3. Was This Journey in Harmony with Paul's Mission?

Paul's life work, as has been pointed out (see pp. 72-74), was to go as a missionary to the Gentiles. This was the peculiar task for which God had called him, and it is notable that his success among the Jews was for the most part negligible. This clearly meant that his work was not to be in Jerusalem, since few Gentiles dwelt there. Others were to minister in that community (Gal. 2:9). In two cases Paul had gone to Jerusalem by a particular revelation for each case (Acts 11:28; Gal. 2:2), and for specially designated tasks. On another visit to the Holy City he had merely "saluted the church" (Acts 18:22), and perhaps terminated

in some manner the vow taken at Corinth or Cenchreae, apparently undertaking no public service of any kind. But these were manifestly exceptional cases, and even they had not always been attended by pleasant circumstances. In each instance Paul found it best to leave soon. Paul was not called to minister in Jerusalem, and any efforts he might make there to set right "the disobedient" appear to be out of harmony with his lifelong mission and Divinely appointed work—"far hence unto the Gentiles".

However, the consequences of any course of action must play an important part in determining its wisdom. What happened to Paul at Jerusalem, and the results of this visit, will help in deciding whether or not it was a mistake for him to go, and these events will also help in judging the consistency or inconsistency of all of Paul's plans and actions. To the consideration of this matter the next chapter will be devoted.

CHAPTER VII

THE EVENTS IN JERUSALEM

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In spite of all the warnings of the Holy Spirit as to his fate upon arriving, Paul went to Jerusalem. The brethren received him and his party gladly (Acts 21:17), no doubt because of the money he brought. The next day a public meeting was held, with James presiding and all the elders present (Acts 21:18). Paul "saluted them", delivered the collection, and "rehearsed one by one the things which God had wrought among the Gentiles through his ministry" (Acts 21:19). After the delivering of the money, the atmosphere underwent a decided change; the elders were suddenly not near so cordial. And they had a little "suggestion" to make to Paul, which must now occupy our attention.

1. The Charges Against Paul

James and the elders mentioned politely the "myriads" of "Jews of them that have believed" (Acts 20:20), adding: "And they have been informed concerning thee, that thou teachest all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs" (Acts 20:21). From the point of view of the elders that was a deadener. Perhaps the "myriads"

is to be taken as literary hyperbole, and may have actually been only a few hundred. They had heard some disturbing things about Paul and his work, things which apparently they strongly suspected to be true. And it may be that James and the elders also partly believed those things.

Now were these charges against Paul true? Just here we must investigate this question. Paul had certainly preached to the church at Corinth and to the churches of Galatia, and probably to all other groups to which he ministered: "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing" (1 Cor. 7:19); "If ye receive circumcision, Christ will profit you nothing" (Gal. 5:2); "I testify again to every man that receiveth circumcision, that he is a debtor to do the whole law" (Gal. 5:3); "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision" (Gal. 5:6); "As many as are of the works of the law are under a curse" (Gal. 3:10); "How turn ye back again to the weak and beggarly rudiments, whereunto ye desire to be in bondage over again? Ye observe days, and months, and seasons, and years" (Gal. 4:9,10); "There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free ... for ye are all one man in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28); "The old covenant ... is done away in Christ" (2 Cor. 3:14). And there is much more to the same effect.

B. H. Streeter has some words most pertinent to this matter:

"Paul was one of those great men who are a source of anxiety to their friends. His language at times was most 'impolitic'. Some of the things he said about the Law were enough to make the hair of a pious Jew positively stand on end. Suppose a modern preacher were to say something like this: 'The Bible had its function in the Divine economy, but the salvation it offered was always unreal. The Bible is now obsolete; there is no longer such a thing as a revealed moral code; henceforth you are free from the bonds of the old religion. Believe, and do what you will—that is the good news I bring you.' Such a man would be promptly ejected from the ministry. But if for the Bible we write 'Law', and for 'salvation' 'justification'—and to a Jew these are true equivalents—that is exactly what Paul did say. And to the average Jew the fact that Paul tempered these statements with qualificatory remarks, as that 'the Law is just and holy and good', or that he insisently exhorted men to a life of righteousness, did not much affect the issue. If the Law is abrogated, it is abrogated, it matters little how politely it is bowed out.¹

It may be urged that all such statements as these were intended for Paul's Gentile converts, and were not meant to apply to the Jews. But in no case does Paul make any exception for the latter. That there were Jewish converts in the churches to which he wrote is evident from more than one passage (Gal. 3:28; 5:1; Acts 18:8). In the public and private reading of these Epistles, these Jewish Christians would most naturally think that the entire contents applied to them as well as to their Gentile brethren.

What would Paul have told Christian parents, who were Jews, to do about circumcising their children? Such cases must have arisen, since sooner or later babies that were boys

1. Op. cit., pp. 549, 550.

would have been born into Jewish Christian homes. Most likely he would have told them that if they wanted to perform the act as a racial matter, simply because the child was a Jew—and circumcision was a characteristic mark of the Jews as a nationality and a people—they might do so. But, according to his principles, he must have insisted that the act was an indifferent matter, and he may even have mentioned that sooner or later it would pass away. Judging from his statements about circumcision in the Epistles, as quoted in the foregoing pages (see pp. 41-44, 105), with Paul the act was merely a racial matter, and it certainly had no bearing upon one's relation to God. He must have said something like this when a case involving the circumcision of the son of Jewish Christian parents arose.

But statements of this kind, under whatever circumstances they were made, would be very unsatisfactory to an orthodox Jew; they would just about set his hair on end. From his point of view, whoever made such statements would be guilty of teaching "all the Jews who are among the Gentiles ... not to circumcise their children". Such temporizing would be about as bad as outright opposition to circumcision for Jewish children.

In the face of this striking evidence there can be no conclusion but that the charges against Paul were at least partly true. This is the almost unanimous verdict of the critics. William Paley, commenting on Galatians 3:23-25, says:

"Our epistle [i.e., Galatians] goes further than any of St. Paul's Epistles; for it avows in direct terms the supersession of the Jewish law, as an instrument of salvation, even to the Jews themselves. Not only were the Gentiles exempt from this authority, but even the Jews were no longer to place any dependency upon it, or consider themselves as subject to it on a religious count."¹

R. D. Hanson says most emphatically: "He [Paul] regarded the Law as abrogated. It had no relation to the Gentiles; it had ceased to be binding on the Jews."² A. C. McGiffert sums the matter up thus:

"It is certain also that Paul had preached for years the doctrine that not the Gentile Christian alone but the Jewish Christian as well is absolutely free from all obligation to keep the law of Moses, and though such teaching might not always result in a disregard of that law by his Jewish converts, it must have a tendency to produce that effect and doubtless did in many cases. It is clear therefore that both accusations had much truth in them."³

Nowadays Paul is commended for his stand in these matters. His doctrines of justification by faith in Christ Jesus alone and of complete freedom in the gospel have been proved by the whole course of history to be right. Men must be eternally grateful to Paul for being partly guilty of the charges brought against him at Jerusalem. No criticism is intended against Paul in showing these charges to be true; in that respect he is only to be praised. The matter

1. Horae Paulinae, p. 101.
 2. Op. cit., p. 337.
 3. Op. cit., p. 340.

questioned in this paper is that Paul undertook to do something to prove the charges untrue, when the case was so clearly otherwise.

2. The Elders' Suggestion

The elders now mentioned that all these believing Jews—and were non-Christian Jews, too, in their thoughts?—would hear that Paul had come (Acts 21:22), and suggested that something should be done to satisfy them. Probably the elders also, irrespective of the "myriads", wanted to be satisfied. Their suggestion as to what should be done was: "We have four men that have a vow on them; these take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges for them, that they may shave their heads; and all shall know that there is no truth in the things whereof they have been informed concerning thee; but that thou thyself walkest orderly, keeping the law" (Acts 21:23,24).

This is politely referred to as a "suggestion" in the preceding paragraph; but it was more than that, being almost if not a command. Certainly, the implication was that Paul must follow the "suggestion", if he kept in the good graces of the church at Jerusalem. It is even very doubtful that he ever was in those good graces. Would the performing of this act help matters any? That remains to be seen.

That these four men were under the Naziritic vow is shown

by the purification, the charges for and the necessary sacrifices, and the shaving of the heads. The regulations regarding such vows have been thoroughly discussed and set forth (see pp. 78-82), and the situation of these four men conforms to those regulations. Paul himself may have taken such a vow at Corinth or Cenchreae, as has been indicated and discussed in Chapter Five.

Some critics think that Paul had taken another such vow, and had it upon him, when he arrived in Jerusalem this last time. This is the opinion of T. Lewin, who definitely states this to be the case.¹ G. S. Duncan believes that Paul had the intention of taking this vow, and carrying it out, before he came to Jerusalem.² F. J. A. Hort thinks that Paul, when he came to the Holy City, was already proposing to offer sacrifices in the Temple on his own account, possibly in connection with a previous vow.³ This is entirely possible, and is definitely suggested by the words of Paul to Felix: "I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings" (Acts 24:17). The underscored phrase suggests that Paul came to Jerusalem with the fixed purpose of making offerings in the Temple of some kind, either to discharge a vow or for some other reason.

Whether or not Paul already had this vow upon him, when he arrived in Jerusalem, or was already proposing to take it,

1. Op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 140-142.

2. Op. cit., p. 52.

3. Op. cit., p. 109.

the elders now suggested that he engage in it, at least to the extent of purifying himself with the four men and paying for the necessary sacrifices to discharge their vows. And he was to do it to prove to the people of Jerusalem that there was no truth in the charges against him.

3. Paul's Acquiescence

In spite of all Paul had said in Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans about the Law, and circumcision, and the "weak and beggarly rudiments" (see pp. 24-27, 41-43, 105 for definite references and quotations), he tamely acquiesced in the elders' suggestion. "Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them went into the temple, declaring the fulfillment of the days of purification, until the offering was offered for every one of them" (Acts 21:26). If Paul already had the vow upon him, or if he came to Jerusalem voluntarily proposing to take it, his acquiescence becomes a little easier to understand. But the matter needs to be considered further, before any verdict is rendered.

a. Had Paul "walked orderly"?—Paul was a Jew, and it may be urged on that account that it was entirely all right for him to take any Jewish vows or observe any Jewish ritual which he wished. He could do so without regarding the act as in any way contributing to his salvation. Gentile Christians, as has been pointed out (see pp. 90, 91), would hardly perform

such an act as a matter indifferent; they would regard it as having some saving value. This consideration made such an act prohibitory for Gentile Christians, whereas it was entirely all right for Paul. However, Paul's motives in performing such acts could have been and very probably were misunderstood by the Gentile Christians. And notice again the reason for which Paul entered into this vow—to prove that he "walked orderly" and had not taught "all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs." Granting that Paul had already voluntarily taken the vow, his discharging it now, under the public conditions suggested, with the four men, definitely took on that color and became for that purpose.

Now Paul had not always "walked orderly", according to the Jewish way of thinking. During his missionary career he had certainly eaten with Gentiles and had associated with them freely under all circumstances and conditions. This was distinctly contrary to the Law (Acts 10:28). Paul had set forth provisions concerning meats offered to idols, which certainly strained to the utmost the Jewish Law and even the Jerusalem Decree, saying that it was all right to eat such meats, provided that in doing so "weaker brethren" were not led to violate their conscience (1 Cor. 8). One's own relation to God was not affected by eating such meats; one should refrain from doing so merely out of a consideration

for the "weaker brethren". From the Jewish point of view Paul's preaching and carrying out his doctrine of complete freedom in the gospel was not "walking orderly", and, as has been shown, he was partly guilty of the charges against him.

b. Paul's relation to the four men.—If Paul did not actually discharge a vow of his own, which he had previously taken, what did he do? What relation did he bear to the four men? Undoubtedly, Paul entered into a personal participation in their vow, which is shown by the ἀγνίσθητε τὸν αὐτοῖς (Acts 21:24) and ἀγνίσθητε (Acts 21:26). This verb in the aorist passive means "to purify one's self". J. H. Thayer says of this word: "The passive has a reflexive force, 'to take upon one's self a purification', and is used of Nazirites or those who had taken upon themselves a temporary or a life-long vow to abstain from wine and all kinds of intoxicating drink, from every defilement and from shaving the head." H. A. W. Meyer states that the full phrase, τὸν αὐτοῖς ἀγνίσθητε, means "having entered into participation of their Nazirite state".² R. B. Rackham adds that the technical meaning of "purifying" is "being under a vow".³

That Paul entered into a personal participation in the vows of the four men is also shown by his accompanying them into the Temple. The phrase, "until the offering was offered

1. Op. cit., p. 7.

2. Op. cit., p. 207.

3. Op. cit., p. 415.

for every one of them", indicates that he remained there with them for some time, thus completely identifying himself with them. The later rabbis legally allowed that a benefactor of poor Israelites in discharging their vows was himself to be regarded as consecrated (Nazir ii. 5ff.). This is shown by the case of Agrippa I, who "offered all the sacrifices that belonged to him, and omitted nothing that the law required; on which account he ordained that many of the Nazirites should have their heads shorn" (Josephus Ant. xix.6.1). Agrippa seems in offering these sacrifices to have been considered as consecrated along with the Nazirites being liberated. Whether or not Paul was under a vow when he came to Jerusalem, there can be no doubt that, by paying the expenses of the four men and purifying himself with them, he entered into full participation in their vows, and for all practical purposes was regarded as a Nazirite. He was in this act conforming to the old Jewish ritual and the Jewish Law.

c. Estimating this act.—In giving in to the demands of the Jerusalem elders, does it not look as if Paul was sacrificing the very principle for which he had fought all these years, the principle of complete freedom in the gospel? Doing it for the reason he did, does it not at least savor of a recantation? Certainly, Paul might be interpreted as saying by this act: "The doctrine of complete freedom in Christ is not so important after all. I did not really mean

all those things I said about 'circumcision', and 'weak and beggarly rudiments', and 'days', and the 'Law'. I was mistaken when I said them; the important thing it to observe the old Jewish ritual." It may be possible to justify Paul in this act by saying that no principle was at stake in the matter. But was not the principle of complete freedom in Christ for Jews as well as for Gentiles at stake? At least the matter of whether or not Paul had actually preached a doctrine of that kind was at stake, since this act was to deny that he taught Jews such a gospel.

This is the most questionable act of Paul's life; it is the subject of much doubt among the critics. W. M. Furneaux thinks that there is no real inconsistency in Paul's action. But he says further:

"At the same time it must be confessed that his action in consenting surprises us, especially as he was accompanied by delegates from his Gentile churches. He was not perfect, and he appears on this occasion to have been unduly influenced by considerations of expediency. He was not the scrupulous observer of the ceremonial law which the elders wished him to appear to be. We know that he did not mean to imply by his action that such ceremonial observance was in the least degree necessary to salvation. But what did he intend by it? Clearly, to convey to the Christians at Jerusalem something more than that he considered it a matter of indifference."¹

Orello Cone thinks that both James and Paul are blameworthy in the matter:

1. Op. cit., pp. 346, 347.

"Under the circumstances, Paul's tame and humiliating acceptance of the advice of the elders can be regarded according to the record as nothing short of an acknowledgement that he was, contrary to 1 Corinthians 9:20, *ὑπο τὸν νόμον* as a *φυλάττων τὸν νόμον*. For 'all apologetic efforts go to pieces upon the fact that no act of accomodation, but a confession is reported, and turn moreover into charges as well against James as against Paul, to the effect that the advice of the former was unsatisfactory, unfitting, untimely, and the following of it on the part of the latter a weakness and undue haste' (Hand Commentar, I, p. 407). Apropos of the fact that Calvin thought that he must excuse the one as well as the other for participation in the superstitious vow, Hausrath remarks that it is rather credible that Calvin on his death-bed should have vowed a golden robe to the Mother of God than that Paul should have gone in the way indicated."¹

H. Weinel thinks that if Paul did take upon himself the vow of a Nazirite, "then once again he had wished to become a Jew unto the Jews (1 Cor. 9:20) from a false love of peace and in order to save his work."² He even refers to the matter as a compromise.³ R. D. Hanson coldly refers to this act as "Paul's public submission to his enemies in the church at Jerusalem".⁴ Later in his work he adds:⁵

"We may regard the actual concession as inconsistent with his principles.

 It is not easy to acquit Paul of something like duplicity. Admitting that he might regard the act as indifferent in itself, this was one of the cases in which an indifferent act becomes all-important, because it is a test of principle. It was suggested to him as a means of proving that he had not walked disorderly,

1. Op. cit., pp. 155, 156.

2. Op. cit., p. 235.

3. Ibid.

4. Op. cit., p. 323.

5. Ibid., pp. 282, 283.

but had kept the Law; and it must have been performed by him with that object. But the accusation was well founded, and the denial an untruth.

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The ceremony, therefore, was an acted falsehood; and more than this, it proclaimed to the whole church that Jews, even those who had been made new in Christ, were still debtors to keep the Law. And it would even seem to justify Judaizing teachers in urging upon Gentile converts, as essential parts of the Christian life, such observances and abstinences as might appear expedient."

d. Circumstances in Paul's favor.—Several things might be said in Paul's favor that make his course less culpable and easier to understand. For one thing, he was in a close place, where to refuse would have been most difficult, and the act was partly forced upon him. For another thing, as has been pointed out, he was a Jew, and had the right to engage in any Jewish ritual which he wished, so long as he performed it as a matter indifferent. With him, no doubt, this was a matter indifferent, and under the stress of the moment he probably did not consider all the complex conditions and circumstances involved. Still again, Paul had come to Jerusalem with the very purpose of conciliating his enemies, and this act seemed calculated to bring about that conciliation. He may have thought that if it would only accomplish that purpose, it would be worth the price.

Finally, Paul may have meant to convey by this act that he kept a modified form of the Law, that modified form allowing eating with Gentiles and the disregarding of certain other minor restrictions. Or he may have meant that he kept

the spirit of the Law, although not quite the letter. Or he may have had in mind that he kept the true Law of God, which is spiritual, found in the inner life, and does not consist in ceremonies and ritualism. But by "keeping the Law" the Jews at Jerusalem, even the Christian Jews, understood the Mosaic ritual, all the ceremonies and statutes laid down in the Pentateuch. And the Pharisaic Jews, including those who were Christians, would also have understood the oral traditions, the accretions of the centuries handed down by word of mouth, known as the "Midrash", and later when written down as the "Talmud". Paul's act would not convey to them that he kept any inner spiritual Law, but that he kept in every particular the external Mosaic Law, so that his act conveyed to the Jews at Jerusalem something that was not quite true.

All these suggestions are rather tame, and they do not appear to quite justify Paul in a deed, which seems to be either an act of duplicity—a denial of his being guilty of something of which he was guilty—or a surrender of one of his cherished principles—complete liberty in Christ—or both. One thing is certain: The Paul who stood before the altar at Jerusalem probably with shorn locks and certainly with the offerings of a Nazirite in his hands, for whatever reason he did it, is not the Paul who has influenced the whole course of human history. Such was not the conduct of Luther at Worms; nor was it the conduct of the Two Thousand

who submitted to be ejected from their benefices rather than comply in matters indifferent in themselves, when such compliance was enforced as a duty; nor was it the conduct of Paul himself at Antioch when he withstood Peter and Barnabas to the face, as Paul "contra mundum".

4. Paul's Arrest

The immediate result of Paul's act in participating in this Naziritic vow was his arrest. "And when the seven days were almost completed, the Jews from Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the multitude and laid hands on him, crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man that teacheth all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place; and moreover he brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath defiled this holy place" (Acts 21:27,28). It is altogether possible that Paul would have been arrested anyway, since the animosity against him at Jerusalem was very bitter, even before his arrival; yet it appears that his presence in the Temple, along with his having been seen in the city with an Ephesian (Acts 21:29), led to this charge against him and to his being seized. And perhaps if he had not gone into the Temple to make the offerings, he would not have been arrested at all.

The meaning of the "seven days" is not very clear. It could not refer to the length of time required for the Feast,

since Pentecost did not last so long. It has been suggested that this "seven days" was the time which must elapse between the announcement to the priest of the termination of the vow and his formal declaration that it had been legally completed.¹ But such a week is not mentioned either in the Talmud or the Pentateuch. R. B. Rackham suggests that Paul went into the Temple four days for the sacrifices, one day for each man, and that the offerings for the last man fell on a day, completing a week, since his arrival in Jerusalem.² These "seven days" may refer to the time required for the purification and the presentation of the necessary offerings. But all these suggestions are uncertain, and seem to be ruled out by the fact that Paul only spent seven days in Jerusalem altogether (Acts 24:1; 24:11).

Anyway toward the close or during a period of seven days of some kind Paul was seized by a mob, as a direct result of his being in the Temple. He was rescued from this mob and detained by Claudius Lysias, the Roman officer in charge of affairs at Jerusalem. On the day of his arrest he made a lengthy speech in his defense to the mob (Acts 22), and on the next day he was brought before the Sanhedrin.

5. Paul Before the Sanhedrin

Paul does not appear in a very good light in his trial

1. Cf. Farrar, F. W., op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 295, 296.

2. Op. cit., p. 415.

before the Sanhedrin. He started rather defiantly: "I have lived before God in all good conscience until this day" (Acts 23:1). That statement savors just a little of self-righteousness, and certainly was not calculated to make friends for himself, as is shown by Paul's being struck on the mouth (Acts 23:2). Paul cannot be blamed much for his blaze of anger over this kind of treatment (Acts 23:3), and he is certainly to be commended for his humble apology to the high priest for his words (Acts 23:5).

His next statement is, however, surprising. "I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees: touching the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question" (Acts 23:6).

R. B. Rackham, commenting on this statement, says:

"Certainly after reading the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians, it is startling to hear St. Paul, when set for the defence of the gospel, exclaim, 'I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees'; and declare it is the doctrines of Pharisaism which are at stake—the hope and resurrection of the dead."¹

Undoubtedly, the Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead, although they would probably have parted company with Paul on the "just and the unjust" (Acts 24:15). But was Paul's belief in this respect really the reason for his arrest? The mob, in seizing Paul, brought an entirely different charge against him. The mob accused him of teaching "all

1. Op. cit., p. 430.

men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place" (Acts 21:28); and they also charged him with defiling the Temple. Really the fury against Paul was kindled by questions arising out of his doctrine of the nullity of the Law, and his admission of the Gentiles to equal privileges with the seed of Abraham. This is shown by the context in this part of Acts and by the whole story of Paul's life. It is also shown by the fact that the other Christians in Jerusalem, believing exactly as Paul did about "the hope and resurrection of the dead",¹ were not molested. If this had been the true charge, all the other Christians should have also been brought before the Sanhedrin.

Paul's own later words to Felix (Acts 24:20, 21) imply that he himself felt some misgivings about this utterance. He admitted to Felix that his statement to the Sanhedrin might have been a wrong-doing. And it may be that Paul brings in the "just and the unjust" in Acts 24:15 in order to define his position with regard to the resurrection more exactly. It is probable that all the Pharisees did not hold to a resurrection of the "unjust", especially if that term referred to Gentiles. The Jewish books are not clear on this point; it was a disputed matter among the doctors of the Law.¹ Paul very definitely included the Gentiles in his resurrection

1. The extreme Judaizers may have had some doubts about the "unjust".

2. Cf. Rackham, R. B., op. cit., p. 446.

(1 Corinthians 15), so that he was not altogether a Pharisee in this respect. Perhaps he realized that his statement in Acts 23:1 was misleading and not quite true, and later before Felix admitted and sought to correct his error (Acts 24:15,20,21). In this connection F. W. Farrar asks the question: "Could he [Paul] worthily say, 'I am a Pharisee?' Was he not in reality at variance with the Pharisees in every fundamental particular of their system?"¹

Of course, Paul could not expect justice at the hands of this court. Any tribunal, the members of which would become accomplices to a plot to murder him (Acts 23:15), would hardly give him a fair trial. It may be said then that it was all right for Paul to resort to a slight artifice of this kind in order to procure his safety. But, even after this consideration is allowed, Paul's conduct on this occasion appears to be more adroit than honorable. His statement in Acts 23:6 should certainly have been qualified in some way, since, as it stands, it is at least open to the charge of being based on policy and not on principle.

David Smith, in discussing the Lord's appearance to Paul that night, comments as follows on Paul's experiences since his arrival in Jerusalem:

"There [i.e. in the castle as a prisoner] he passed a troubled night. He could have little satisfaction in

1. Op. cit., Vol. II, p. 327.

reviewing the day's proceedings or indeed the part which he had played ever since his arrival in Jerusalem. His initial blunder had been his acquiescence in the political proposal of the Presbytery. This involved indeed no compromise of principle, but, it was alien from the spirit of 'simplicity toward Christ'. Once before, when he had circumcised Timothy in deference to Jewish prejudice, he had resorted to diplomacy, only to discover its unprofitableness; and now again he had essayed it, and it had failed him disastrously. It was perhaps his chagrin that prompted him to assume so defiant an attitude before the Sanhedrin, forgetful of 'the meekness and sweet reasonableness of Christ'. This also had proved futile; and then in his desperation he had resorted to an ignoble trick, enkindling the mutual animosity of his enemies, and it was only the intervention of Lysias that had extricated him from his embarrassment."¹

6. The Results of This Visit

The immediate result of Paul's visit to Jerusalem, as has been seen, was his arrest and imprisonment, and this result had been predicted by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:23). Paul remained in prison some five years before he was released (Acts 24:27; 28:30), and there is even a slight doubt that he was ever released. Paul was busy those five years, preaching, teaching, and writing Epistles; somehow God overruled any mistakes he may have made in going to Jerusalem, and the time was not wasted. During these years, in the Providence of God, he came to Rome, a goal he had set on the Third Missionary Journey (Acts 19:21). God used the things that happened unto him, so that they fell out "unto the progress of the gospel"

1. Life and Letters of St. Paul, p. 477.

(Phil. 1:12). On the other hand how much work Paul might have done if during these years he had been free; how many churches he might have organized; how many provinces he might have visited; how many new places he might have evangelized; how much more "progress of the gospel" there might have been. Still this is a matter about which one cannot be dogmatic; it is one of the "ifs" of history. Be that as it may the result to Paul personally of this visit to Jerusalem was five valuable years spent in prison.

And did this visit to Jerusalem accomplish its main purpose, that of conciliating Paul's enemies, of cementing the Jewish and Gentile branches of the church, and of removing the cankering sore at Jerusalem? A. T. Robertson thinks that this purpose was accomplished.¹ But a closer scrutiny of the facts bearing upon the matter leaves it very doubtful that such was the case. The collection was delivered, and the offerings were made in the Temple, but Paul's foes do not appear to have been placated. Paul did not make many friends if any by this visit, which is shown by the fact that James and the other Christians at Jerusalem, so far as the record indicates, did not undertake in any way to help him in his predicament. It seems that they should have done something for Paul, especially since his troubles were largely brought on by his following their suggestion. Surely if they had

1. Op. cit., pp. 254, 255.

been friendly toward Paul, they would have tried to help him in some way, even though it might have meant danger for themselves.

Paul's visit to Jerusalem and his act in the Temple did not satisfy his foes within the church, which is shown by the fact that the opposition to Paul and his principles continued. The Judaizing party remained on at Jerusalem and elsewhere, still active and still bitterly hostile to Paul. He found it necessary to inveigh against them in the Imprisonment Epistles (Phil. 3; Col. 2:16,21,22); he had to fight Jewish teachers in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim. 1:4; Titus 1:10,14; 3:9). Evidences of their existence and activity are seen in the Catholic Epistles, as A. T. Robertson himself shows in another of his great works.¹ Paul's visit to the Holy City and his act in the Temple made very little change in the views and attitude of the church at Jerusalem; that church maintained much the same policy afterward as before.

Eusebius preserves a tradition of the withdrawal of the Christians from Jerusalem to Pella in Peraea during the Jewish War (H. E. iii. 3. 5). He says (Section 3): "The people of the church in Jerusalem, by a certain oracle given by revelation *τοῖς αὐτῶν σοκίμοις*, had been ordered to remove before the war and inhabit Pella, a city of Peraea." Some of the Jewish Christians—the aged, the timid, and the

1. Chronological New Testament, Introduction to the Catholic Epistles.

women and children—may have gone to Pella, but it seems very probable that many of them joined the Zealot army in fighting Romans, and some of them no doubt lost their lives in that manner.

The history of these Jewish Christians is uncertain, but it appears that after the war, they drifted more and more back into the doctrines of Judaism. Along in the second century a sect arose, called Ebionites, and they were found not only in Pella and Palestine, but in Rome and in other centers of the Dispersion (Epiphanius, *Haeres.* xxx. 18). They held the Law to be binding on all Christians, rejected the authority and writings of Paul, and denied the divinity of Jesus. In these beliefs they were the spiritual descendants of the Judaizers and the church of the circumcision at Jerusalem,¹ although it is uncertain as to whether or not there was any direct relation between the two groups. The Ebionites may not have come from the Judaizers at all, but in spirit the two parties were alike. The Ebionites disappeared along in the fifth century (Theodoret, *Haeres.* Fab. ii. 2), most of them probably being absorbed into the Jewish synagogue.

The Ebionites do not concern us especially in this paper, except that their existence and their beliefs show that the spirit which Paul went to Jerusalem to conciliate

1. Cf. Lightfoot, J. B., op. cit., pp. 159-183.

and to overcome continued on even centuries after his death. The history of the church of the circumcision in Jerusalem, going much its individual way apart from the main stream of Christianity, and the activity of the Ebionites show that the Jewish and Gentile wings of the church were not cemented by Paul's visit to Jerusalem or by his acts while there. It appears from these considerations that, in accomplishing his main purpose, Paul's visit to the Holy City was practically a failure.

CHAPTER VIII

A NEW ESTIMATE OF PAUL

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After this rather imperfect survey of a number of the main events in Paul's life, especially those connected with the full tide of his missionary activity, it can be fairly well concluded that Paul was inconsistent in some of his plans and actions. And this, as has been hinted in the Introduction, helps to explain the apparent lack of agreement between the Acts and the Epistles in giving two different pictures of the apostle.

A brief recapitulation will be helpful. Paul's agreeing to the Jerusalem Decree is open to question, since that Decree is not quite in line with the gospel which he preached. His circumcision of Timothy appears to be out of harmony with his actions in other cases and with his statements about circumcision in the Epistles. In the Judaizing Controversy all the fault was not on the side of the Judaizers: Paul did not give due regard to the strength of their position, nor to the arguments upon which their position was based, and his remarks about them were almost as unchristian as any of their statements. Paul's many changes of plan confused his friends, laid him open to charges of fickleness, and sometimes were even contrary to the wishes of the Holy Spirit. The vow at

Corinth or Cenchreae, if Paul took it, was a very doubtful act, appearing to be either a mere superstition or a Jewish votive ceremony, and it seems strange to see the educated, liberal Paul engaging in a rite of either nature. The last journey to Jerusalem was not ~~divinely~~ divinely commanded in any express manner, at least outwardly, and there are even some fairly definite indications that the Holy Spirit did not wish Paul to go. Paul's act in agreeing to the demands of James and the elders in Jerusalem, associating himself with the four men under the Naziritic vow, and to all intents and purposes taking that vow, if not actually under it on his own account, is not in harmony with his doctrine of complete liberty in Christ. Performing this act for the reason which he did (Acts 21:24), it appears to be either an acted falsehood or a surrender of one of Paul's most cherished principles. It was certainly out of line with all he had said about "circumcision", "the Law", "weak and beggarly rudiments", freedom in the gospel, etc., throughout the Epistles. Paul's conduct before the Sanhedrin is also a little surprising, being not quite what one would expect of the great Apostle to the Gentiles.

Paul then was very human, and very much like all other men. He was inconsistent at times, and he did make mistakes, for which he suffered, at least in one case by spending five years in prison. "Like the rest of us, he [Paul] was sometimes heedless and made mistakes, and had to correct his

errors, and complete his deficiencies, and pay for his blunders."¹ Paul was not perfect; he was a man like other men, with the same longings and aspirations and hopes and weaknesses and shortcomings. He fell into some of the temptations that beset him, and he is not in every case to be held up as an example or taken as a model.

There is danger, however, of passing too hasty a judgment upon Paul. Let it be remembered that all the circumstances of the various incidents reviewed, and all the conditions which Paul faced, are not now known. If those things were known, and all the details of Paul's life clear, a different verdict might be rendered. Perhaps under the existing conditions and circumstances Paul was doing the best he could. And in all probability he did far better than most people would have done in similar situations.

Let it also be remembered that Paul was a Jew, and he could never quite get away from that fact. "By birth and education he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and the traditions and feelings of his race held him in honourable captivity to the very last."² In spite of all his liberal attitude, he was still of the stock of Israel, and during all of his ministry he had an intense longing for the salvation of his own people. "I could wish that I myself were anathema [a

1. Jefferson, Charles E., The Character of Paul, p. 158.

2. Lightfoot, J. B., op. cit., p. 184.

votive offering] from Christ for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:3). In this verse we have a partial explanation of some of Paul's acts that principle could hardly justify. Those acts were performed with the hope that they might lead some of his "kinsmen according to the flesh" to faith in Jesus. The key to the inconsistencies in Paul's life is 1 Corinthians 9:22: "I am become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some." One illustration of this will be helpful. As has been shown, the last visit to Jerusalem and the events connected with the Naziritic vow were for the purpose of reconciling Paul's own countrymen. This effort failed, as all similar efforts before that time by Paul and since then by others have largely failed. History has shown that the Jews for the most part will not unreservedly accept Jesus as Messiah and Redeemer. But that longing for the salvation of Israel explains to a large extent the inconsistency of Paul's conduct at Jerusalem.

Once again, let it be remembered that a great man is not troubled by questions of consistency. He goes on doing his work as best he can, and does not use his valuable time in harmonizing all his plans and actions. Ralph Waldo Emerson has very wisely said: "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines. With consistency a great soul has

simply nothing to do."¹ Others of the apostles made mistakes: Peter was certainly inconsistent in the case of his three denials the night of Jesus' trial (Mark 14:54, 66-72; Matt. 26:58, 69-75; Luke 22:54-62; John 18:15-18, 25-27); John was inconsistent when he sought to call down fire from heaven upon the Samaritans (Luke 9:54), since he himself was peculiarly the apostle of love; Thomas was inconsistent when he doubted the resurrection of Jesus (John 20:25), after Jesus had so clearly predicted that event (Mark 8:31; Matt. 16:21; Luke 9:22; and many other references). History finds questionable acts in the lives of all great men. And there can be no doubt that this was true in Paul's life. As Charles E. Jefferson well says: "He [Paul] had no ambition to be consistent. His mind was fixed on more important things."²

If this discussion has contributed slightly toward a truer picture of the great apostle as he was, its purpose is accomplished. In that picture there appears what would be called in an uninspired man pride, jealousy, disdain, invective, obstinacy, and even time-serving and intolerance; but on the other hand there appears faith, hope, love, zeal, knowledge, ability, courage in confronting danger, persistence in the face of opposition, and an assertion of the

1. Macmillan's Pocket Classics, Emerson's Essays, p. 73.
 2. Op. cit., p. 153.

inalienable rights of the reason and the conscience in defiance of authority. The realization that even Paul was guilty of inconsistencies and made mistakes should be an encouragement to any troubled servant of God, when he is humiliated over his errors and failures and tempted to give up the fight. In spite of these things--and perhaps partly because of them--Paul's achievements are imperishable, and his contribution to the uplift of struggling humanity was such that he certainly merited the "crown of righteousness."

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