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knowledge of the manner in which they were arranged by St. Matthew. In a still larger number of passages, in which the first and third Evangelists give narratives and discourses that are in substance the same, there is no need to assume any common written element. Indeed the amount of differences seems to point clearly to the view that, though St. Luke may have derived what he gives from documentary records, these records and those contained or used in the First Gospel were the embodiment of the original oral accounts by different hands.

I have only professed in these papers to consider "some points in the Synoptic problem." I am not prepared to enter at present into the discussion of the difficult question of the composition of the First Gospel and its relation to a Hebrew original, and I am therefore unwilling to express any opinion upon the subject.

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PAUL'S CONCEPTION OF CHRISTIANITY.

V. THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS—ITS AIM.

THIS Epistle is distinguished from those already considered belonging to the same group by broadly marked characteristics. In the first place it is more placid in tone. If it be indeed a contribution to the vindication of Paul's Gentile gospel against Judaism, it contains few traces of the controversial spirit. Polemic passes into calm didactic statement. Then, secondly, while the present Epistle contains much in common with the Epistle to the Galatians, we find that the same truths are set forth here in a more expanded and elaborate form. In the third place, to the old materials amplified the Epistle adds a new phase of Pauline thought, in the important section in which an

endeavour is made to reconcile the Apostle's views of Christianity with the prerogatives of Israel as an elect people. This section, consisting of chapters ix.–xi., if not the most important, is at least the most distinctive part of the Epistle, presenting what has not inappropriately been called Paul's philosophy of history.

It is natural to assume that these characteristics are due to the circumstances amidst which the Epistle was written. The historical spirit of modern exegesis does not readily acquiesce in the view which, up till the time of Baur, had been almost universally accepted, that the Epistle to the Romans, unlike the Epistles to the Galatian and Corinthian Churches, is a purely didactic treatise on Christian theology, for which no other occasion need be sought than the desire of the writer to give a full connected statement of the faith as he conceived it. More and more it has been felt that such a production is hardly what we expect from an apostle, and that however didactic or systematic it may appear, the Epistle in question must have been, not less than its companion Epistles, an occasional writing.

There are indeed still those who lean to the old traditional opinion, and seek the initiative, not in any outward circumstances, whether of the Church at Rome, or of the Church generally, but solely in the Apostle's mind, and in his wish to draw up an adequate statement of the Christian faith. Among these is Godet, certainly a most worthy representative of the class, in all whose commentaries one discovers that faculty of psychological divination which is the sure mark of exegetical genius, and whose exposition of *Romans* cannot be charged with the "oppressive monotony"[1] that has been complained of as characterising expository treatises on this Epistle written in the interest of dogmatic

[1] Mangold speaks of the *drückende Monotonie* of the dogmatic commentaries. *Vide* his *Der Römerbrief und die Anfänge der Römischen Gemeinde*, p. 20 (1866).

theology. Godet's idea is that Paul was in the habit of giving such developed teaching as we find in *Romans* to all the Churches he had founded, and that he wrote an Epistle to the Church in Rome simply in order to give, in a written form, to an important body of Christians with which he had not come into personal contact, the instruction which he had given *vivâ voce* to the Churches in Ephesus, Thessalonica, Corinth, etc.[1] This is an assumption which readily suggests itself to minds familiar with theological systems, and accustomed to regard all the doctrines of an elaborate creed as essential elements of the faith. But the position is one which it is easier to assume than to prove. Godet offers no proof, but contents himself with referring to a work by Thiersch, published nearly fifty years ago, which, by mistake, he represents as having very solidly demonstrated the Apostle's practice to have been as alleged.[2] The assertion that the Epistle to the Romans is only a sample of the writer's ordinary teaching stands very much in need of proof. The presumption is all the other way. The two Epistles to the Thessalonians, we have seen, supply evidence to the contrary, and the occasional character of the Epistles to the Galatians and the Corinthians, which contain more advanced teaching, justifies the inference that the Epistle to the Romans also is an occasional writing containing special instruction called for by exceptional and urgent circumstances. To this it must be added that the whole notion of Godet and those who agree with him is not easily reconcilable with a just conception of the apostolic vocation and temper. An apostle is in spirit and mental habit a very different man from a systematic theologian.

[1] *Commentaire sur l'épitre aux Romains*, vol. i. pp. 122, 123.

[2] *Commentaire*, vol. i. p. 120. The work of Thiersch referred to is *Versuch zur Herstellung des historischen Standpunkts für die Kritik der neutestamentlichen Schriften* (1845). Thiersch distinctly states that the Epistle to the Romans was called forth by the controversy with the Judaists. *Vide* p. 235 of the above-named work.

He deals in inspirations rather than in laborious theological reflection. He has neither the time nor the patience for system building. He may have in his mind many deep thoughts, but he keeps them till they are wanted. He utters his thoughts under constraint of urgent need. He speaks rather than writes, because speaking is more spontaneous than writing; and when he writes it is *currente calamo*, and under pressure of emergent demands.

What the precise situation, in all its details, was, which Paul had in view, when he wrote this Epistle, it may be difficult, or even impossible, to determine. But of one thing it does seem possible to be assured; viz., that the Epistle belongs to the literature, and deals with a phase of, the Judaistic controversy. One could even tell *a priori* what phase it must be with which the last of the controversial group of Epistles is occupied. Already Paul has discussed two aspects of the great quarrel, those relating to the perpetual obligation of the Jewish law, and the qualifications for the apostleship. The one topic remaining to be taken up is the prerogative or primacy of Israel. Without doubt it must have its turn. It had its own proper place in the dialectics of the debate, and it may be taken for granted that a dispute so keen about matters so vital will not stop till it has run its natural course. The fire will burn till the fuel is exhausted. The rapid development of Gentile Christianity made it inevitable that the question should arise, What does the existing state of matters mean? Gentiles are pouring in increasing numbers into the Church. Jews, with comparatively few exceptions, are holding aloof in sullen unbelief: are these facts to be construed as a cancelling of Israel's election; or if the election stands, does it not necessarily involve the illegitimacy of Gentile Christianity? The question may have suggested itself to some of the more reflecting at the very commencement of the Gentile movement, and to Paul

especially it may have been all along clear that it must come to the front ere long, but it could not become a burning question till conversions from heathendom had taken place on a great scale. The first effort of the Judaist would naturally be to nip the new departure in the bud, by compelling Gentile converts to comply with Jewish customs. The next would be to cripple a movement which could not be crushed by disputing the apostolic standing and assailing the character of its leader. When both attempts had been rendered futile, by the triumphant progress of the movement in spite of all opposition, the only course open would be to enter a protest in the name of the elect people, and pronounce the evangelisation of the Gentiles a wrong done to Israel.

It is to the temper which would enter such a protest, or to any extent sympathise with it, that Paul addresses himself in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters of the Epistle to the Romans. That this part of the Epistle at least has to do with the final phase of the Judaistic opposition to a free independent Christianity I take to be self-evident. The only thing that may seem open to doubt is whether it was worth while taking any notice of the sullen mood of the men who were disaffected, and out of sympathy with the cause Paul had so much at heart. Could he not have afforded to treat it with contempt as utterly impotent? For what could the protesters do; what would they be at? They had no practicable programme to propose. Could they seriously wish the work of Gentile evangelisation to be stopped till the bulk of the Jewish people had been converted to the faith, insisting on the principle *the Jew first*, not merely in the sense that the Jew should get the first offer, but in the sense that all the world must wait till the Jews *en masse* accepted the offer? If they had not the hardihood to make so absurd a demand, there was no course open to them but to accept the situa-

tion and reconcile themselves with the best grace possible to accomplished facts.

Had Paul been a man of the world, he might have adopted the attitude of silent contempt. But being a man of truly Christlike spirit, he could not so treat any class of men bearing however unworthily the Christian name. He knew well that a disaffected party was none the less formidable that it was conscious of defeat, and had no outlook for the future; that in such a case chronic alienation and ultimate separation were to be apprehended. He would do his utmost to prevent such a disaster. And it is obvious in what spirit such a delicate task must be gone about to have any chance of success. An irenical generous tone was indispensable. No bitter irritating words must be indulged in, but only such thoughts and language employed as tended to enlighten, soothe, and conciliate. The Epistle to the Romans fully meets these requirements by an entire absence of the controversial style. It has been customary to explain this feature of the Epistle by the fact of its having been written to a Church with which Paul had no personal relations, and this may count for something. But there is a deeper and a worthier reason for the contrast in tone between this Epistle and those written to the Galatian and Corinthian Churches. The whole situation is changed. Then Paul was fighting for existence with his back to the wall, now he writes as one conscious that the cause of Gentile Christianity is safe. Therefore while careful to do justice to his convictions, he expresses himself throughout as one who can afford to be generous. Thus in chapters ix.–xi., while maintaining that God had the right to disinherit Israel (ix.), and that she had fully deserved such a doom (x.), he declares the disinheritance to be only temporary and remedial, and anticipates a time when Jew and Gentile shall be united by a common faith in Christ (xi.). Then he not only abstains personally from a tone of triumph

in speaking of unbelieving Israel, but he earnestly warns the Gentile members of the Roman Church from indulging in a boastful spirit.[1] And the irenical tone, conspicuous in these three chapters, pervades the whole Epistle. In the first eight chapters stern things are said about Jewish moral shortcomings, and Judaism judged by its results is pronounced not less a failure than heathenism.[2] At the same time it is admitted that the Jewish people possessed eminent and valuable religious distinctions.[3] Similar is the treatment of the Jewish law. While it is declared to be of no value for the attainment of righteousness, not less peremptorily than in the Epistle to the Galatians, its ethical worth is recognised with a frankness which we miss in the earlier Epistle.[4]

The situation as above described explains not only the calm irenical didactic tone of the Epistle, but also its broad comprehensive method. At first sight it seems as if it were top-heavy. If the writer's aim be to deal with a new Judaistic objection to Gentile Christianity, based on the prerogative of Israel, why not content himself with making the statement in chapters ix.–xi.? To what purpose that elaborate argumentative exposition of the Gospel as he understood it in the first eight chapters?

Baur's answer to this question was in effect that these eight chapters are an introduction to the next three, which form the proper kernel of the Epistle.[5] I do not accept this statement as altogether satisfactory, though I frankly own that I would rather regard the three chapters as the *kernel*, than relegate them to the subordinate position assigned them by the dogmatic school of interpreters, that of a mere *appendix*. But the truth is that these famous chapters are neither kernel nor appendix, but an integral part of one great whole. They deal with a question of national privi-

[1] *Rom.* xi. 16–21. [2] *Rom.* ii. [3] *Rom.* iii. 1, 2. [4] *Rom.* vii. 12.
[5] *Paulus der Apostel*, i. 351.

lege. But there is a previous question involved, that as to the claims of Christianity. For the position taken up by opponents virtually is, the rights of Israel *versus* the rights of universal Christianity. The proper antithesis to that is, the rights of Christianity first, and Israel's rights only in the second place, and as far as compatible with the supreme interests of the true religion. The Epistle to the Romans is devoted to the advocacy of this position, the first eight chapters dealing with the larger, more general claims of Christianity, the next three dealing with the less important narrower question as to the real value of Israel's claim. Obviously both sections of the Epistle are essential to the purpose in hand. And that purpose guides the course of the Apostle's thought throughout. In brief what he says is this: Christianity is in its nature a universal religion. It is needed by the world at large, by Gentiles and by Jews alike. For both heathenism and Judaism, judged by their practical results, are failures. Christianity is not a failure. It solves the problem aimed at by all religion; brings men into blessed relations with God, and makes them really righteous. Christianity therefore must have free course: no prescriptive rights can be allowed to stand in its way. As for the Jewish people I am heartily sorry for them. They are my countrymen, they are also God's people. But their right is not absolute, and they deserve to forfeit it. Yet I do not believe they are permanently doomed to forfeiture. God will continue to love them, and in the course of His beneficent providence will give effect to their claims in a way compatible with Christian universalism and with Gentile interests.

Thus by a train of thought of which the foregoing is the gist, does Paul storm the last stronghold of Judaists without ever mentioning their name. The absence of any allusion to Judaistic opponents in the Epistle has been adduced as a reason for calling in question its connection with

the Judaistic controversy. The writer, we are told, betrays preoccupation in the treatment of his subject, but it is not relative to Judeo-Christians, or to Judaisers, but to the Jews and to Jewish incredulity.[1] As if the one reference excluded the other! The only effective way to meet Judaistic antagonism to Gentile Christianity in its final phase, was to form a just estimate of the true value of the pretensions of the Jewish people based on their national religion and their covenanted relation to God. It is in harmony with the irenical spirit of our Epistle that this is done without making the controversial reference manifest.

But if Judaistic tendencies were the real though hidden foe, where were they to be found? Within the Church of Rome; or without, and threatening to invade that church and work mischief there as elsewhere; or merely in Paul's own mind, prompt to conceive new possible forms of antagonism, and restless till it had seen its way to intellectual victory over these, and found solutions of all religious problems arising out of the Pauline conception of Christianity? All three views have found influential advocates, and it is by no means easy to decide confidently between them. As to the last of the three, which has been adopted by Weiss,[2] there is no objection to be taken to it on theoretical or *a priori* grounds. As I have already stated in the second article of the present series, I believe that Paul was his own severest critic, and that he did not need external antagonism to indicate to him the weak points of his religious theory, or to suggest the relative apologetic problems, and that when once these presented themselves, both his reason and his conscience would imperiously demand solutions. Of these problems the last to suggest itself might well be that relating to Jewish prerogative, as it naturally arose out of the extensive development of

[1] So Oltramare, *Commentaire sur l'épitre aux Romains* (1831), vol. i. p. 48.

[2] *Vide* his *Introduction to the New Testament*, vol. i. p. 306.

Gentile Christianity. And it is not inconceivable that when Paul had thought himself clear on this final apologetic topic, he might feel an impulse to reduce his thoughts to writing, and in doing so to work out in literary form his whole religious philosophy from that point of view, and so "bring as it were the spiritual product of the last years to his own consciousness."[1] Nor does it seem incredible that he might send such a writing in epistolary form to the Roman Church without any urgent external occasion, simply because he deemed it fitting that a church presumably Gentile for the most part in its membership, and situated in the metropolis of the world, should be the recipient of a work containing a statement and defence of Christianity as a universal religion from the pen of its Apostle.

While recognising the legitimacy of the theory propounded by Weiss, I can hardly regard it as probable, or as justified by any supposed impossibility of giving any other account of the matter. I doubt in the first place if the question discussed in chapters ix.–xi. was so new to Paul's mind as the theory implies. I rather incline to think that all the possible issues involved in the Judaistic controversy were clear to his view from an early period, and also the answers to all possible objections to his conception of Christianity. Then, on the other hand, I think, that he would keep these answers to himself, till a need arose for communicating them to others. One fails to see why he should trouble others with his thoughts on the comparatively speculative topic of the prerogatives of Israel, if nobody was stirring the question. Why deal with a difficult problem like that, not vital to faith, before it had arisen? At the very least Paul must have regarded it as possible that the question would be raised ere long in the Church to which he sent the letter treating it. That this would happen was not only possible but probable. Assuming

[1] Weiss, *Introduction*, i. 306.

with Weiss, and the majority of recent writers on the Epistle, that the membership of the Roman Church was mainly of Gentile extraction, how natural that men connected with the Judaistic propagandism should regard with envy and chagrin a flourishing Christian community in the capital of the empire! How unwelcome to their mind these increasing signs that the stream of spiritual life was cutting out for itself a new channel, and leaving Palestine, formerly the centre of religious influence, high and dry! What more likely than that the impulse should arise in their hearts to make a last effort to recover lost power, and if possible win over to their side a church which, though Gentile, might not yet be decidedly Pauline? An attempt of this kind, however desperate, was by no means improbable. It might even have been in contemplation when Paul wrote his Epistle, and as Weizsäcker suggests, the fact coming to the Apostle's knowledge may have been what determined him to take that step as a means of frustrating by anticipation the sinister scheme.[1]

If the membership of the Roman Church was mainly of *Jewish* birth, the mischief would not need to be imported. What the actual fact was in the matter of nationality has since the days of Dr. Baur been a *quæstio vexata* for theologians. Baur himself was a strenuous advocate of the Jewish hypothesis, and through his influence, reinforced by that of Mangold, it became for a time the prevailing view. But the weighty interposition of Weizsäcker in behalf of the opposite hypothesis changed the current of opinion, and now it may be said to be the generally accepted theory that the Church of Rome, at the time our Epistle was written, was predominantly Gentile. In absence of information from other sources as to the origin and composition of the Church, disputants are obliged to rely on the general impression which the Epistle makes on their minds, and on

[1] Vide *Das apostolische Zeitalter*, p. 441.

individual texts and phrases. The advocates of either hypothesis are able to explain away to their own satisfaction the passages founded on by the champions of the opposite hypothesis. Thus, "all the nations among whom are ye,"[1] seems beyond dispute to make for a Gentile constituency. But the supporter of the rival opinion contends that it suited the Apostle's purpose in the connection of thought to include the Jews among the peoples to which his commission extended. In like manner the expression, "I speak to you that are Gentiles,"[2] is disposed of by the remark that if the membership of the Church had been mainly Gentile, it would not have been necessary to state that he addressed himself to such. On the other hand, the pro-Jewish allusions are disposed of by patrons of the Gentile hypothesis with at least equal facility. "Abraham our father"[3] finds its parallel in the phrase "our fathers" occurring in the first Epistle to the Corinthians,[4] and "ye are become dead to the law through the body of Christ,"[5] might be said to Gentile believers in Rome with as much propriety as that God sent His Son "to redeem them that were under the law" to Gentile Christians in Galatia.[6] I do not mean to suggest, however, that the balance is even between the two parties. The weight of argument inclines to the Gentile side. While I say this I must acknowledge that my own mind is influenced not so much by particular texts, but rather by the general consideration that the hypothesis of a Gentile constituency best fits in to the situation required by the Epistle. In that case the Roman Church becomes the proof and symbol of that triumph of Gentile Christianity which *ex hypothesi* is the occasion of the complaint wherewith the Apostle feels called on to deal.

It is important to observe that the determination of the question as to the nationality of Roman Christians is in no

[1] *Rom.* i. 6. [2] *Rom.* xi. 13. [3] *Rom.* iv. 1. [4] 1 *Cor.* x. 1.
[5] *Rom.* vii. 4. [6] *Gal.* iv. 4, 5.

way necessary to the understanding of Paul's Epistle to the Roman Church. The one thing indispensable is to grasp firmly the fact that the Epistle was meant to deal with the final manifestation of Judaistic sentiment, the jealousy awakened by the progress of Gentile evangelisation. That is far more certain than either of the views as to the composition of the Church, as is shown by the fact that the advocates of both are at one as to the aim of the Epistle. Who the Roman Christians were may for ever remain doubtful; but that jealousy for the prerogative of Israel existed when Paul wrote his Epistle to the Romans may be regarded as beyond doubt, and that the Roman Church was somehow connected with it may be inferred from the simple fact of the Epistle which handles the topic being addressed to it.

Besides his chief aim in writing the Epistle, Paul might have other subordinate ends in view, and among these one arising out of his new mission plans doubtless had a place. To these plans he refers in chapter xv. 22–33. He had wound up one chapter of his mission history by the settlement of the Corinthian troubles. He was about to visit Jerusalem, carrying the gifts of the Gentile churches founded by himself to the poor saints of the holy city. That done, he will be ready and eager to break new ground, and to visit the regions of Western Europe, bearing to the nations the Gospel of peace. For this new campaign Rome will form the natural base of operations. He must make the acquaintance of the Church there, and get her good will and cordial support in his new enterprise. In view of this great missionary project, our Epistle may be regarded as a pioneer, or preparer of the way; a first step towards the execution of the contemplated operations. In the circumstances it was almost a matter of course that the Apostle should write a letter of some sort to the Church in Rome. But something more than mission-schemes is needed to account for the actual character and contents of the letter

he did write. Possibilities of misunderstanding due to sinister influences, threatening to appear or actually at work, must have been in his view.

It is not an altogether idle fancy that in composing this remarkable letter the Apostle's mind was influenced by the thought that he was writing to a church having its seat in *Rome*. His religious inspiration came from above, but it is permissible to suppose that his theological genius was stimulated by the image of the imperial city presenting itself to his susceptible imagination. The Epistle is truly imperial in style. It deals in large comprehensive categories: Jew and Gentile, Greeks and barbarians, wise and unwise. It draws within the scope of its survey the whole human race, throughout the entire range of its religious history. It breathes the spirit of a truly imperial ambition. The writer aspires to the conquest of the world, and holds himself bound to preach the gospel to all nations for the obedience of faith, that Christ may become in the spiritual sphere what Cæsar was in the political. And he is animated by a magnanimity becoming the ambassador of One whom he regards as by Divine right and destiny the universal Lord. He believes in no unconquerable enmities or final alienations. He will have all men be saved, all peoples reconciled to God and to one another. Jew and Gentile united in a common brotherhood, and living peaceably together under the benign rule of King Jesus. The leading aim of the Epistle, as we have seen, required Paul so to write, and apart altogether from the exigencies of the situation, the grand style of thinking came natural to him. But the consciousness that his letter was going to Rome made it all the easier for a man of his kingly temper. Before the majesty of the greatest city in the world meaner natures might feel abashed. But Paul was not ashamed or afraid either to preach there or to send a letter thither. He could rise to the occasion, witness this magnificent Epistle!

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