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*HISTORICAL COMMENTARY ON THE EPISTLES
TO THE CORINTHIANS.*

XXXV. THE IMPERIAL POLICY AND THE PAGAN CLUBS.

IN order to complete the subject, it is necessary to notice certain difficulties and objections which may perhaps be suggested in reference to the interpretation advocated in §§ XXXI.-XXXIII. ;¹ and the consideration of these will at the same time bring out more clearly the nature of the question involved and its great importance in early Christian history.

We have seen in the case of Trajan (p. 432) that Augustus in particular, and the Imperial policy generally, were opposed to the associations: how then could these be so numerous and so strong as we have represented? Considering how much stress we have laid on the analogy between the Pauline and the Imperial attitude towards the associations, this objection must be examined.

The Imperial Government might regard the clubs with disfavour; it might forbid or restrict the formation of new associations, when the proposal was formally laid before it (as in the case quoted under Trajan's reign); but it was out of its power to destroy all associations, nor was the attempt ever made.

Julius Cæsar and Augustus had seen in the great Civil Wars that the centres of disturbance and the chief causes of disorder lay in the political clubs. Hence they discouraged them, and dissolved many in Rome, examining all, and allowing those only to continue that rested on positive enactments by the State or on prescriptive right. The most recently formed had been the most dangerous; and the Imperial policy watched jealously over the institution of new clubs. The Senate scrutinized each case for a

¹ By a mistake in order § XXXIV. was placed too early. It ought to follow § XXXVIII.

new club, and gave permission only after receiving Imperial authorization.¹ The necessary condition was that the new society must serve some useful purpose in the State. As all clubs had a religious character, each being bound together in the rites of a common worship, the Senate, as holding the control over the public religion, had to be consulted.

Moreover, the tendency to form associations was far too deep-rooted in Græco-Roman society to be eradicated by even the Imperial power. No government can change the engrained customs and ways of living among a people. The spread of Græco-Roman civilization, which was the unvarying aim of the Imperial policy, carried with it the institution of the clubs. It was where that civilization was least influential, where rusticity and ignorance and Orientalism were supreme, that the clubs were least important. Græco-Roman society was hardly possible without clubs. A revolution in the customs of society was needed before clubs could be abolished. Augustus, therefore, preferred to take this essential feature of society into the service of the State: it was a powerful element in society, and might be used to serve his purposes. Now, one of his aims was to renovate and strengthen the religious spirit in the State. This he could not achieve, as ancient society was constituted, except through the clubs: the spread of an ancient religion always proceeded through the institution of clubs to practise the worship in new places. Thus Augustus spread his new State religion—the worship of Rome and the Emperor as the God incarnate in human form on the earth. He founded associations which met in the practice of the State religion, and in that way he enlisted them in the support of his policy. So, for example, he formed those clubs in the Italian towns called *Augustales*, or *Cultores Augusti*.

In the same way the religions of the East spread over the

¹ *Auctoritas Augusti*.

Greek and Roman world under the form of religious clubs or associations (*collegia*). The synagogues of the Jews and the congregations of the early Christians were inevitably regarded by the Pagans as clubs for the practice of religion. Lucian calls a Christian congregation (*Peregr.* 11) a *θίασος* or religious association; and Celsus termed the Christians *θιασῶται*, members of a religious club (see Origen *c. Cels.*, iii. 23).

The early Emperors regarded religious clubs with varying mind. Augustus kept Isis outside of Rome: the reason was obviously political: Egypt and Egypt's queen were the great public enemy in the earlier part of his reign: therefore the religion of Egypt must be kept out. But he permitted the Jews to flourish, and did not exile other religions from Rome. Tiberius was hostile to the Jews and to foreign religions generally, while Caligula was more friendly. Claudius founded the first society of *Dendrophori* in the religion of Cybele; but in his later years he was opposed to the Jews. Nero, under the influence of Poppæa, favoured the Jews, and his action against the Christians was due to an accidental and personal cause, not to any objection in principle to that class of religious associations.¹ The opinion was formerly entertained, also, that he founded those loyal clubs called *collegia iuvenum*, which afterwards became so important, connecting the Imperial religion with the physical training of young men and the strong human interest involved therein.² This institution, however, was in the strictest spirit of the Augustan policy, and older than Nero; but he encouraged such clubs.

The whole system of Roman benefit societies, called

¹ See Maue's treatise, *Praefectus Fabrum*, p. 27: most of this paragraph is simply abbreviated from him.

² Maue, *loc. cit.*, repeats that wrong statement. See Rostovtsew in *Revue Numismatique*, 1898, p. 282 f. Nero dissolved certain clubs in Pompeii, but that was because they had misdirected their fellowship and aims and had fostered disorder: Tacitus, *Annals*, xiv. 17.

collegia tenuiorum, may perhaps be as old as Augustus. They were permitted to hold monthly meetings for the purpose of a monthly subscription, and such other meetings as they needed for religious purposes. Tertullian says, *Apologet.* 39, that the Christian congregations also collected monthly subscriptions, not, however, fixed in amount, nor obligatory like those in Pagan *collegia*, but purely voluntary; and he contrasts the Christian use of the money for charitable purposes with its employment for feasting and sensuality in the Pagan clubs.¹

This sketch brings out clearly how far removed the Imperial policy was from abolishing clubs, though Trajan enforced so strictly in Bithynia the general principle that no club dangerous to public peace and order could be permitted, and regarded any new club as an evil or likely to become so. But Bithynia then had been in an exceptional and disturbed condition, and exceptional strictness was needed in preventing or removing all possible causes of disorder.

Yet even in that province Trajan recognised the right of Amisus to maintain its *collegia*, so long as they did not produce dangerous or disorderly results, because Amisus was a free city and enjoyed its own laws. That introduces us to another principle of the Imperial policy. In the eastern provinces the Emperors did not press the Roman law so strictly as in the west. They allowed the Greek laws great scope.² Especially was this the case in the senatorial provinces, such as Asia and Achaia, in which the government was conducted not by the Emperor's own representatives, but by officials sent by the Senate.

Only in the case of soldiers was the Imperial policy resolute against clubs. No military clubs were permitted. The soldier must not be allowed to come under any bond

¹ See Maue, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

² *Hist. Comm. Galatians*, §§ XVII. ff. and XXIII. ff.

except that to the Emperor, nor to belong to any association except his regiment; and the regiment had its own religious bond, the religion of the Emperors and the regimental Gods.

In fact, while the membership of the clubs was not restricted to the upper classes in society, yet, beyond all doubt, the institution was far more important among those who were at least moderately well off, who made some pretensions to education, good breeding, and knowledge of the world.

The spirit of ancient society was represented in its most concentrated form in the associations. To hold aloof from the clubs was to stamp oneself as a low-class person, as a curmudgeon, almost an enemy of society, alien to every generous impulse and friendly feeling towards neighbours.

The question, then, before St. Paul was whether Christianity could be permitted to grow up in the forms accepted by ancient society, whether it could adapt itself safely to those forms, and let them guide¹ its outward social development, or whether it must reject the prevailing forms absolutely. The latter alternative meant, with an energetic and progressive body like the Christians, that they must re-create ancient society after new forms.

In this statement we have the answer to an objection which might be taken to St. Paul's judgment. It might perhaps seem that he was led too far by the analogy which he evidently makes between the Common Meal of the Pagan clubs and the Sacrament of the Christians, and that, from an exaggerated and almost superstitious regard for the sanctity of the Sacrament, he discouraged any participation in a ceremony which had a strong superficial resemblance to it. But we now see that in this subject there was involved the momentous issue, whether or not it was possible to clothe Christianity in the robes of existing society.

¹ This guidance was what Paul feared (1 Cor. xi. 21; below, § XXXVIII.).

If I may venture on such a subject to state personal impressions, I must confess, on the one hand, that no reconciliation was possible at that time between Christian principles and present social forms. No dispassionate student of history, who refuses to be misled by the glamour and charm of ancient civilization, who studies society as it existed in its reality, can come to any other conclusion.

But, on the other hand, I must also confess that a strong inclination attracts me to the side of those who were trying to effect the reconciliation, and to combine Christian spirit with the existing institutions of society and civilization. That this was impossible we may allow, and yet sympathize with those who were bent on the attempt, and who soon became almost a definite and recognised sect, spread widely among the cities of the Ægean lands, under the title of Nicolaitans.¹

In another work² I have described a similar attempt, made at a later time, when success was not so impossible amid the changed circumstances of the third century. In the scanty evidence the probability seems to be that the first Christian city, the Phrygian Eumeneia, had effected successfully such a reconciliation; and that the auspicious result was destroyed in the blood and fire of Diocletian's persecution. But the strength of the Christian feeling among that people, who had gone to considerable lengths in the direction of the old Nicolaitans, was proved by the facts: they all chose death, and were burned with their church, "appealing to the God over all."

¹ The origin of this name is unknown: its connotation is clear: the Nicolaitans claimed the right to remain in ordinary Pagan society and to continue to be members of the clubs.

² *Cities and Bishoprics of Phrygia*, ii. pp. 502-508; see also *Contemporary Review*, September, 1896, p. 435 ff.

XXXVI. IMPORTANCE OF THE QUESTION IN THE EARLY GENTILE CHURCHES.

The subject treated in §§ XXX.-XXXV. was a most serious question in the development of Christian society and religion. It is of such importance for the New Testament writings and the early Christian times generally that we may profitably follow it further, and notice some other references to it.

It may, perhaps, have seemed that on p. 431 f. we were too hasty, when we set aside the theory which explained "sitting in an idol's temple" (1 *Cor.* viii. 10) as referring to participation by Christians in the ordinary regular celebration of the public and recognised Pagan ritual. There were afterwards, of course, certain sects which went to great lengths in their attendance upon Pagan religious ceremonies; and it might be, and has been, maintained that we have here in germ the principle which was carried out by those later sects. We have, however, been convinced that there was no such fully developed tendency in Corinth to false principle. There was thorough good intention to abide by Paul's teaching in the great principles; and that was absolutely inconsistent with overt participation in idolatrous worship for its own sake.

But, apart from the question whether that interpretation of viii. 10 offers a sufficient explanation of the words there used and the situation there described, it can hardly be doubted that that interpretation does not suit the paragraph x. 14-22, which obviously alludes to the same acts of Corinthian Christians. Let us consider that paragraph fairly in its context.

An explanatory paragraph (x. 1-11) leads up to it. The experiences of the Jews our fathers are intended to be an example, so that we Christians may learn wisdom.

x. 1-4: Just as you are now all brought out of Paganism,

and become members of the Christian Church, sharing in all the opportunities and privileges which it offers, so the whole body of our fathers the Jews were brought out of Egypt and equally favoured. They were baptized in sea and cloud, as you have been baptized. They all were fed with spiritual food: they all were given to drink of spiritual drink: as you receive the spiritual food and drink of the Sacrament. 5-11: But some of them slipped back into the idolatrous practices of the Pagans, and into the impure life of the tribes around them; and were punished with death on that account. Their action and its results are typical for us Christians.

x. 12, 13: Take warning from that example. Be not over-confident. You are now tempted, as our fathers were tempted. But God does not permit the temptation to be too strong for you; with the evil and the danger He has given the antidote and preservative; but you must be careful, for the temptation is pressing hard on you.

14: Be careful, then, always to avoid and keep far away from idolatry. 15: I put the case to you as reasoning, prudent men, that you judge for yourselves as to what you should do. 16: The Cup of the Blessing,¹ over which we say the word of blessing and thanks every time we celebrate the rite—does it not constitute our fellowship in the blood of the Christ? The Bread which we break—is it not our fellowship in the body of the Christ? 17: Because the Bread (which we share, and break, and divide) is one, we, the many members, are one body and one brotherhood. 18: Look (you who are the spiritual Israel) at the nation of the Jews (the natural, fleshly Israel): does not their common ritual bind them together in a fellowship whose close cohesion is the marvel of the Greek and Roman world? is not that intimate union due to their taking part in the common sacrifice?

¹ "The Blessing" from the first institution still accompanies it.

19: But what is my meaning (you may here object)? Do I mean that an idol is a real thing, or that idol-sacrificed meat is a real category (*i.e.* different in character from meat not so sacrificed)? 20: Certainly not; but I mean that what the Pagans sacrifice, they sacrifice to Dæmonic Powers and not to God, and I do not wish that you should enter into a fellowship cemented in and through Dæmonic Powers. 21: It is impossible and contradictory to drink the Cup of the Lord and the Cup of Dæmonic Powers, or to partake in the Table of the Lord and the Table of Dæmonic Powers (you must choose one or other). 22: (If we try to combine these two mutually contradictory rites), we merely provoke the Lord, who refuses to share with Dæmonic Powers in your devotion; and that, of course, we are resolved not to do, are we not? We do not imagine—do we?—that we are stronger than He.

It is peculiarly unfortunate that the critical expression in *v.* 20, though fully explained in 21, is mistranslated, in both the Authorized and the Revised Version, “communion with devils” (“dæmons,” in margin). Canon Evans’s notes ought to be carefully read. It follows beyond question from what he says, that a Pagan ceremony is meant, which was not merely a performance of a religious rite, but was felt to be the cementing of a fellowship or communion in and through a ritual meal. No other explanation of this passage seems possible except that which we have proposed.¹

Further, our explanation restores consistency, coherence, and reason to Paul’s opinions about the eating of sacrificial meat. It is not possible without it to gather any clear

¹ I had the advantage of discussing 1 *Corinthians* viii. and x. for several days with my friend Prof. Sayce, in the end of October. The run of the thought long puzzled us. With his usual insight he pointed out that the heart of the question lay in the “communion of daimonia, x. 20.” When at last the suggestion was made that the sacrificial meal of the Thiasoi was meant, everything seemed to us to become clear forthwith.

conception of what was his position on that question: after apparently protesting in the most vehement and impassioned terms against eating it in x. 20-22, he proceeds, in 23 ff., to discuss it in a cool and almost indifferent tone, as an act which might be done without hesitation, except that kindly feeling towards some weak and rather painfully scrupulous Christian impels one to abstain from an act which in one's own judgment is quite indifferent. But now we see that Paul is distinguishing two radically different acts: (1) he is resolutely bent against the partaking of the ritual meal of a Pagan society: (2) he regards as a trivial matter the mere eating in ordinary life of the meat of an animal which at a previous time and in different circumstances had been offered to an idol.

As a third argument, we observe that, on our explanation, the disagreement, which has often been commented on with astonishment, between St. Paul's teaching and the attitude of *Revelation* on this subject entirely disappears. It has been sometimes thought that the horror of *idolothya*—meats offered to idols—expressed in *Revelation* by John is in the sharpest contrast to the easy and almost indifferent tone of Paul; and no satisfactory explanation of the contrast seems possible on the ordinary explanation of his judgment. But on our interpretation John and Paul will be found in perfect harmony on this subject.

As it chanced, I began to write the present section immediately after writing on Sardis, Smyrna and Thyatira, as the result of a careful study of the seven messages in *Revelation* ii., iii.; and the atmosphere and spirit of those messages brought out the meaning of Paul's words far more perfectly than I had conceived them when writing the preceding sections of this Commentary. The messages to Pergamus and Thyatira seemed to spring out of and to develop logically the opinions expressed by Paul. This demands a special paragraph.

XXXVII. ST. JOHN AND ST. PAUL ON ASSOCIATIONS
AND IDOLOTHYTA.

Like Paul, so John points his treatment of the subject by an example taken from Hebrew history. *Revelation* ii. 14 corresponds to 1 *Corinthians* x. 1-11, but a marked interval has occurred; the method has become familiar and customary; and what would have been to Paul a type and an example becomes in John's mouth a designation and a category.

Paul might have said, "As Balaam taught how to seduce Israel from the right path, so you are being led astray by false teachers towards the same kind of practices." But John says, "Some of you hold the teaching of Balaam."

Further, we saw that there is the strongest contrast between the first 23 and the following 10 verses of 1 *Corinthians* x.: in 1-23 Paul treats with horror the eating of the ritual Pagan meal; in 24-33 he treats certain other forms of eating sacrificial meats with comparative indifference. Now the tone of *vv.* 1-23 is exactly the tone of John in the *Revelation*. Surely we must infer from this that the question with regard to the actions discussed in 1 *Corinthians* x. 24-33 was closed for ever. Paul's decision was final. The case was no longer up for judgment when the *Revelation* was written.

But the other class of acts, the sharing in the ritual meals, was still a serious danger. It had to be inveighed against, and denounced in the most uncompromising terms. Ephesus had been well taught, and "hated the works of the Nicolaitans." Smyrna was the most free from fault (thanks greatly to the persecution and poverty which were its lot) of all the Churches. But the distant Pergamus and Thyatira, farthest away from St. Paul's teaching, were still in the same danger as Corinth had been when Paul was writing this letter. In both Pergamus and Thyatira some

of the Christians still clung to their membership of the Pagan associations and shared in the fellowship of the ritual meal; and, if that evil were not burned out, the whole loose spirit of Pagan society, its impurity and its idolatry, would continue to rule in the congregation.

The question, however, continued to be treated and named from the point of view adopted by the Corinthian officials at the first. It was called the question of *Idolothya*, things offered to idols. But the most serious and grave matter involved in it was whether the Christians might continue to take part in those societies which were united in a fellowship of Pagan ritual. A common ritual is a great power over the minds of men; and the three great Apostles¹ were unanimous in refusing to permit Paganism to exercise that power over the minds of the young converts.

Perhaps a new light is thrown by our theory on the words of *Revelation* ii. 22: "Behold I do cast her [Jezebel] into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation." It is usual to take "into a bed" and "into great tribulation" as parallel to one another: the "tribulation" is the lot of her partners; her punishment and that of her children is different. Adultery and *πόρνεια* here mean "Idolatry and the low tone of morals which is inseparable from it."

There seems a distinct awkwardness in this; and the whole sentence (though susceptible of defence) fails to satisfy one's feeling for symmetry and completeness in thought. A different interpretation seems to spring naturally from our view of the action meant. The expression is full of bitter, almost savage irony: "See what a feast I will give them! I set her on a couch [*i.e.* the couch on which a guest at a banquet² reclined], and with her her

¹ See the following section.

² The vase paintings, with their frequent scenes of revel at such banquets, will occur to every reader's mind.

idolatrous partners; and the fare provided for them is—tribulation.”¹

That places us in the midst of the scene in Thyatira. One section of the Christian Church clings to the social life of the city: they cannot resolve to cut themselves off entirely from the bright and joyous customs of society: they take them with their idolatrous accompaniments and their sacrificial meals. “But I will give them their festal meal: I throw their mistress and prophetess on a couch at their table, and them along with her, to enjoy—the punishment that I have in store for them.”

It is true that the word *κλίνη* (used in *Revelation*) has only the sense of “bed” elsewhere in the New Testament; but there is little opportunity for mentioning a couch at a feast. The custom of reclining at supper was adopted from the Greek and Roman fashion, and became usual in Palestine. People sat in meetings and in the temple, etc., but reclined at meat. The Last Supper was eaten reclining, not sitting, as is clear from the words of Matthew, Mark and Luke,² though even the Revised Version maintains the false translation, and uses “sit” (but in the margin the proper term is given). The couch at supper must therefore have been well known; and, without doubt, the ordinary Greek name *κλίνη* was used, and the author of *Revelation*, therefore, had to employ it if he wished to speak of the couch.

Moreover the question may be asked whether we ought not to take *κλίνη* as a “couch” in Luke xvii. 34: “There shall be two men on one couch (at supper); there shall be two women grinding together.”

¹ *εις θλίψιν* does not correspond to *εις κλίνην*: *εις* has a different but quite usual sense in each case. I throw her on a couch and her partners beside her [on their couches], with a view to (give them) much suffering.

² *ἀπέπεσαν*, Luke xxii. 14; *ἀνέκειτο*, Matt. xxvi. 20; and so in Luke xxii. 27, *ἀνακείμενος* (compare Mark xiv. 18, xvi. 14). John uses both words freely.

XXXVIII. ST. PETER, ST. JOHN AND ST. PAUL ON
THE SACRIFICIAL FEASTS.

The description of the false teachers in 2 *Peter* ii. 1 ff. contains many traits recalling the doctrine of the Nicolaitans and the followers of Balaam and Jezebel in the *Revelation*, and also the arguments advanced by the Corinthian officials who wrote to Paul. A glance at that chapter will illuminate the nature of the issues on which Paul had to pronounce judgment in 1 *Corinthians* x.

Peter¹ speaks of those teachers in the future tense: "There shall be among you also false teachers." But the whole character of the chapter shows that he is describing a class of teaching which was already powerful among the Christians, while it was likely to grow even more dangerous.

Just as Paul in the opening of 1 *Corinthians* x., so Peter begins chapter ii. by quoting as an example and warning the history of the Jews: "There were false prophets also among the people (of Israel)."

The greed and ambition of our false teachers stimulates their teaching: they have personal ends to gain by making themselves the leaders of the congregation and imposing their policy and ways of living on all. But they will be destroyed like the fallen angels, like the ancient world at the flood, like Sodom and Gomorrah,—for God can punish the guilty, and especially vicious and unruly persons like them.

10b: [They have the qualities characteristic of the richer classes in a Greek city, where there was no real aristocracy, no class ennobled by the public services or the abilities of their ancestors, and preserving a certain tradition of

¹ The name is used for brevity's sake, without implying a theory. As in the *Church in the Roman Empire*, p. 492 (in later editions), I still think that the Epistle was written by a follower of St. Peter (even more full of Roman ideas than the author of 1 *Peter*), who considered that he was expressing Peter's opinions. It is not impossible that this may have been done under Peter's own instructions. I am disposed to think that the Epistle is earlier than I formerly allowed; see below.

nobility—for such a class had almost wholly perished from the “progressive” Greek cities]. They are audacious, obstinately self-willed, they have no respect for authorities¹ in their ribald talk, where even angels would shrink from expressing a defamatory opinion if they were bringing a charge before God. They pride themselves on living the free life of nature, like the wild beasts, ignorant of moral law and restraint, born to perish. And they shall perish.²

13b: Finding their pleasure in luxurious revelling during the day,³ blots upon life,⁴ indulging in luxury at their love-feasts (Agapæ) as they revel in your company, the vicious soul gleaming in their eyes: they bring into Christian rites the Pagan licence (1 Cor. xi. 21 f.). [The scathing picture of a Komos, a drunken revel, as it is shown in Greek vase pictures and in literature, cannot be mistaken; see *Hist. Comm. Galatians*, p. 453 f.].

15: They have forsaken the right path and have gone astray, following the path of Balaam, who loved the pay of wrong-doing (though even the ass corrected him). [The allusion to Balaam, bribed to teach vice and luxury to the Israelites, has become stereotyped.]

17: They are untrustworthy; they merely cheat the dupes among the young converts, whom they mislead with their boastful, self-confident language, promising them liberty while they are themselves slaves to their vices.

It seems beyond question that this description is drawn

¹ We take δόξας as a rendering of *honores*, offices, positions of authority and trust, *i.e.* in the Church.

² In the following phrase, if we read with the great MSS. ἀδικούμενοι μισθὸν ἀδικίας, the only reasonable sense seems to be “deprived (after all) of the pay of their wrong-doing.” They bargained for certain pay, and are cheated of it. The Revised Version, “suffering wrong as the hire of their wrong-doing,” seems self-contradictory, for they are not said to suffer wrong, but to suffer right.

³ The practice of beginning to feast in the daytime is often alluded to by Roman writers either as the extreme of unprincipled luxury (see Juvenal, i. 103, *ab octava Marius bibit [hora]*), or as a pardonable stretch of liberty on a holiday (Horace, Od. iii. 3, *partem solido demere de die*).

⁴ σπίλος, like Latin *macula*.

from the same class of persons who are alluded to in the messages to Pergamus and Thyatira, and whose action in Corinth prompted Paul's allusions in viii. 10, xi. 22, and produced the evils at the Agapæ which he denounces in xi. 20 ff. The method of treatment of the subject has been fixed by Paul; the temptations of Israel are taken as typical of the temptations that beset the new Christians. Balaam (as he is described in *Numbers* xxxi. 16, and Josephus, *Ant. Jud.*, iv. 6, 6) gave the advice to tempt the Hebrews by means of the Midianite women; and a mere allusion to "the way of Balaam" in *2 Peter* ii. 15, "the error of Balaam" in *Jude* 11, is sufficient to recall the familiar illustration. In both those places the allusion is evidently a current and stereotyped formula.

In *Revelation* ii. 14 the allusion is introduced with greater appearance of originality and is fully explained. But one cannot, from that single case, argue that *Revelation* ii. is earlier than *2 Peter* ii.; for it lies in the nature of all moral exhortations sometimes to state in explanatory detail a traditional type. On the whole the tone of the messages to Pergamus and Thyatira in *Revelation* ii. perhaps suggests a more developed stage than *2 Peter* ii., after that special temptation or tendency had become a recognised form of thought and life, but still within the Church.

We observe a steadily growing body of accepted principles. The judgments of Paul are assumed as fundamental by the authors of *2 Peter* and *Revelation*. A question that has come before him and been decided is not permitted to come up again for discussion. What has been permitted by him is a part of ordinary Christian life. What has been denounced by him becomes a curse to those who practise it; and the teachers who permit it are teachers of falsehood for whom destruction is gaping.

It is true that a distinct difference of spirit is perceptible between the attitude of St. Paul and that of St. John

towards the Roman State. The former does not despair of, in fact he hopes for and strives after, peaceful development of the Church under the protection which the existing government gives to all orderly and contented citizens: "the Christians should avoid, so far as is consistent with religion, the appearance of interfering with the present social order: the proper rule of life is to accept the world's facts, not as in themselves right, but as indifferent, and to waste no time and thought on them":¹ only religious duty must not be violated, *i.e.* there must be no complicity with idolatry.

On the other hand, John has become convinced of "the absolute and irreconcilable opposition between the Church and the Empire": he has "no thought of the possibility of bringing the State to a milder policy by convincing it of the harmlessness of Christianity."²

But in the same pages where that difference was pointed out it was also shown that the change of spirit was due, not to any real difference in the principles of the Christian leaders, but to the change of policy on the part of the State. Paul wrote while the early policy of Nero, *i.e.* the policy of Seneca, guided the action of the Government. John wrote after that policy had been abandoned, and the Government had resolved to regard all Christians as out-laws and enemies.

We now see that Paul, even while he was instructing his converts to respect, so far as possible, the existing facts of society, was as firmly persuaded as John that the Christians must keep themselves apart from the present fabric of society: there was no possible place for them in the most characteristic and universal social institutions. The necessary inference was that these must all be destroyed, and society must be re-established on a Christian basis.

¹ From the *Church in the Roman Empire*, p. 246, where the context states the principle more fully.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 296 f.

Paul was neither bigoted nor intolerant. He appreciated the value of education. "He advised his pupils to learn from the surrounding world everything that was worthy in it."¹ He did not think that they must go out of the world; they may and should continue in the world.² But his opinion was unhesitating that Pagan society was so leavened and impregnated by idolatry that it must be broken up before it could be reconstituted in a form reconcilable with Christian principles. Christians may remain in the world, use its teaching, profit by its opportunities. But they must not be of the world, as a part of its society.

The more closely we scrutinize the words and acts of the leading Apostles, the more clearly does their perfect harmony in all essential points appear—amid some slight and purely superficial differences—and the better do we understand what is implied in *Galatians* ii. 2 and 9: Paul laid before James and Cephas and John the Gospel for the Gentiles, and they perceived the grace that was given him, and gave him the right hand of fellowship. This implies that they were all from the beginning in complete agreement as to what should be the position of the Gentiles in the Church and in the State. W. M. RAMSAY.

BIBLICAL DIFFICULTIES.

I.

THE title of this short series of papers is designedly vague. The writer thought, in the first place, of problems arising out of the Massoretic text; all our elaborate historical conclusions are based upon that text, and yet no adequate, thorough examination of it has been made. Textual criticism, as has been said already in the *EXPOSITOR* (March, 1899), is passing into a new phase, and since it may be some time before commentators, hampered by the

¹ *St. Paul the Traveller*, p. 149.

² *1 Cor.* v. 10.