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THE TEXT OF THE APOSTOLIC DECREE.

(ACTS xv. 29.)

TWO recent articles in THE EXPOSITOR for March and July of this year help to bring home to us that there is one important and in some respects fundamental group of readings in the Book of Acts in regard to which, in this country at least, opinion is still wholly unsettled. And, as it happens that in regard to this particular group of readings my own opinion is clear, I will venture to re-state the case as it seems to me at the present moment. I speak of "re-statement" because I have once before set forth at some length my views on the subject, but in a volume which is not likely to be in the hands of many in England. I had the honour of contributing to the volume of essays presented to the veteran scholar Dr. Theodor Zahn on his seventieth birthday, *Theologische Studien, Theodor Zahn, zum 10. Oktober 1908 dargebracht.* (Leipzig, 1908.) The subject which I took was "The Apostolic Decree"; but the essay, though known to Professor Kirsopp Lake (see *The Church Quarterly Review* for Jan. 1911, pp. 345-370, and *The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul*, pp. 48-60), has not, so far as I know, attracted the attention of others of my countrymen. And I cannot help just asking myself whether Professor Lake—although he has discussed fully and satisfactorily a single point in the case as I presented it—has considered as carefully as I should like him to do the effect of that case as a whole. At the same time I quite admit that in the article and the appendix to which I have referred he has covered the whole ground and offered an alternative construction which by inference excludes mine.

I shall not attempt to repeat the substance of all that I have already written, but will confine myself mainly to the text of the decree (Acts xv. 29) and the two connected verses (xv. 20 and xxi. 25), with a few further remarks pointing backwards and forwards. For the sake of clearness I will divide what I have to say into separate heads.

1. *The Present Situation.*—I had in view more especially, on the one side Zahn, *Einleitung* (ed. 3), ii. 344–346, 349, 353 f.; and on the other, Harnack, *Beiträge zur Einleitung in d. N.T.* III. (Leipzig, 1908), and Gotthold Resch, *Das Aposteldekret nach seiner ausserkanonischen Textgestalt untersucht* (Leipzig, 1905; *Texte und Untersuchungen*, Neue Folge, XIII. 3). Since that time I observe that things have taken a rather different course in this country and in Germany. On this side the North Sea, there has been something like a drawn battle, with the honours rather on the side of Harnack and Resch than otherwise. On this side, besides the article in the July EXPOSITOR, must be set Dean Furneaux's edition of the Acts (Oxford, 1912)¹ and the two writings already referred to by Professor Lake. These may be set against the older works of Rackham, Knowling (that best of all English Commentaries on the Acts) and Bartlet (in the *Century Bible*). In Germany, on the other hand, all the recent books that I can think of are against Resch and Harnack; so (e.g.) Wendt, in the new edition of his Commentary; Rudolf Knopf (in the series edited by Joh. Weiss); Erwin Preuschen (in Lietz-

¹ In referring to this book I cannot help regretting that Dr. Furneaux should write so dogmatically and on such very imperfect data ("Harnack has shown conclusively that three things are forbidden, all of them moral—idolatry, fornication and murder. . . The words 'and from what is strangled' are an early gloss written in the margin by some one who misunderstood the 'blood,' etc.)." Dr. Furneaux has command of a clear and vigorous style, and might have done good service in helping to make the Acts more generally understood; but, to say the truth, his book required at least three times the work and thought that have been actually given to it. It is much to be hoped that readers will not be carried away by his confident assertions.

mann's *Handbuch zum N.T.*—though he places in square brackets “things strangled” in the text of xv. 20, 29, and the whole verse xxi. 25); and above all, Freiherr Hermann von Soden in his new text (Göttingen, 1913). The last-named should carry special weight with Professor Lake, as he is not only a specialist of great experience (should we not say, in view of his *magnum opus* now completed, the leading specialist?) in textual criticism, but also shares with him the general principle “that our most famous uncials only represent an Alexandrian recension of the third or fourth century.” Taking the two countries together and considering all the circumstances, I think I may claim that the balance of authority is in favour of the older view. I would not, however, lay stress upon authority, but should wish the question to be decided strictly on its merits.

2. *The Problem at issue.*—And yet I cannot be surprised that Professor Lake's book, and in particular his statement of this question, should have attracted the attention that it has both on other points and on this; he writes with such bright intelligence and in such a genuinely scientific spirit that his views deserve full discussion. For several reasons I should be glad to be allowed to state the problem in his words. It cannot be better stated—either with less of pedantry or with more lucidity—and I should be glad to mark the point up to which we can travel together. It should be said that Professor Lake writes (by inference) collectively of the three related verses, but primarily of the actual text of the Decree (Acts xv. 29). He opens his case as follows:

“The text of all the manuscripts which represent the dominant Greek tradition \aleph A B C P, etc.—supported by the Alexandrian Fathers Clement and Origen, states that the Apostles told the Gentile converts to keep themselves from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from fornication. Thus there is a

four-clause text of which the first three clauses seem, when united in this way, to give a food law, to fix, as it were, the conditions of intercourse between Jewish and Gentile Christians, while the last clause—against fornication—seems to have nothing to do with food, but to belong to a different category altogether.

“Over against this reading is the evidence of D, the Latin version, Irenaeus (in Greek as well as in the Latin translation), Tertullian, Cyprian, and other Latin writers, who omit ‘things strangled,’ generally insert after the reference to fornication, ‘and do not do to others what you would not that they should do to you,’ and at the end of all add, ‘Ye shall do well, being carried along by the Holy Spirit.’ Thus it is plain that a widely received text of the decrees ran somewhat as follows: ἀπέχεσθαι εἰδωλοθύτων καὶ αἵματος καὶ πορνείας, καὶ ὅσα μὴ θέλετε ἑαυτοῖς γίνεσθαι ἐτέρῳ μὴ ποιεῖν· ἀφ’ ὧν διατηροῦντες ἑαυτοὺς εὖ πράξετε [or πράξατε?] φερόμενοι ἐν τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι, and was opposed, ultimately successfully, by a rival form which ran ἀπέχεσθαι εἰδωλόθυτων καὶ αἵματος καὶ πνικτῶν καὶ πορνείας· ἐξ ὧν διατηροῦντες ἑαυτοὺς εὖ πράξετε.

“Now, the evidence of Irenaeus and Tertullian on the one hand, and of Clement on the other, shows that both these readings are very old. Moreover, the history of exegesis confirms them. For in Alexandria the Apostolic Decrees were always interpreted as a food law, but in Africa (up to the time of Augustine) and in Europe as referring to the three deadly sins. Irenaeus and Tertullian were, it is true, acquainted with a food law, but they did not connect it with the Apostolic Decrees.

“Nevertheless, the three-clause text, in its entirety, cannot be maintained. Among modern critics there is

an almost complete agreement that the additions of the negative form of the golden rule, and the reference to the Spirit cannot be original : partly because the former introduces a very harsh parenthesis or change of thought but chiefly because, if the golden rule had been in the text from the beginning, the interpretation of the decrees as a food law would have been impossible."

Down to this point my critic and I are in complete agreement, and I shall venture to use the statement thus made as if it had been my own. But from this point onwards there is usually some little change that I should like to see made in most of the paragraphs which affects the inference that I should draw from them. It will, however, be better just to indicate these changes as we go on, and then to endeavour to draw the threads of the evidence together.

Professor Lake continues :

"This consensus of opinion had prejudiced critics against the omission of 'things strangled,' which is supported by much the same witnesses, and Dr. Sanday in particular has argued that as D and Irenaeus have made a mistake in adding the golden rule, they ought not to be trusted where they omit 'things strangled.' His view is that the same people left out 'things strangled' and inserted the golden rule [not to do to others what one would not have done to oneself] in order to change a food law into a moral enactment.

"Against this argument serious objections can be brought. In the first place, it is not the case that the evidence for the golden rule is quite the same as that for the omission of 'things strangled'; Tertullian omits 'things strangled' but does not insert the golden rule. There is, therefore, important if not extensive evidence that the two readings are independent of each other. In the second place, there is no historical evidence whatever

that the circles which can be shown to have read a text which omitted 'things strangled' had any objection to a food law."

It was not so much the modern consensus of opinion that led me to my conclusion as the common elements that ran through the ancient authorities for the text. Nor did I at all slur over the difference in regard to the "golden rule" in Tertullian's version of it. I will come back to this in more detail when we have the evidence more fully before us. In regard to the omission of "things strangled," I would not say that the circles responsible for that omission "had any objection to a food law." I do not dispute the evidence which Professor Lake brings forward to show that they had no such objection. I will explain later just what I believe to have been their attitude on the subject. The sentences that follow are an argument in favour of looking for a reading which will explain the divergences on either side. That is no doubt quite in order as a rule of critical procedure. But it is another thing to say that "such a text would be excellently provided by the reading of Tertullian, which omits 'things strangled,' but does not insert the golden rule." I understand the reasons which have led to this remark; but we must reserve the discussion of them until we come to speak of the evidence of Tertullian as a whole. Before we do this it will be well to have before us a concise statement of the critical attestation of the different clauses.

3. *The Textual Phenomena.*—The alternatives lie between two connected groups of what are technically known as "Western" and "Eastern" readings. It will be enough to set out in full the evidence for the first of these (the Western group). It may be assumed that the mass of the other authorities, including the leading Greek MSS. and the Versions, is on the other side. I shall not hesitate to use the recognised critical symbols; because to do so makes the

statement much more compact and it is easier to get a synoptic view of the whole. It is not important that all the symbols should be understood. They may be simply taken as so many pawns in the game; the main point on which we have to fix our attention is their tendency to recur.

I proceed then to give the commonly accepted texts, with the Western readings represented as variants. I omit a few secondary details of evidences, that would only confuse.

Acts xv. 20: ἀλλὰ ἐπιστεῖλαι αὐτοῖς τοῦ ἀπέχεσθαι ἀπὸ τῶν ἀλισγημάτων τῶν εἰδώλων καὶ τῆς πορνείας καὶ τοῦ πνικτοῦ καὶ τοῦ αἵματος ("but that we write unto them that they abstain from the pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from what is strangled, and from blood").

Omit καὶ τοῦ πνικτοῦ ("and from what is strangled").

D, g, Latin Irenaeus, *add at end* καὶ ὅσα μὴ θέλουσιν ἑαυτοῖς γίνεσθαι ἑτέροις μὴ ποιεῖν or the like ("and what they would not have done to themselves not to do to others"), D, Sahidic (Egyptian) version, Latin Irenaeus, Eusebius.

xv. 29: ἀπέχεσθαι εἰδωλοθύτων, καὶ αἵματος, καὶ πνικτῶν, καὶ πορνείας· ἐξ ὧν διατηροῦντες ἑαυτοὺς εὖ πράξετε ("that ye abstain from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication; from which, if ye keep yourselves, ye shall prosper").

Omit πνικτῶν ("things strangled"), D, Latin Irenaeus, Cyprian, Pacian, Ambrosiaster, Jerome, Fulgentius.

Insert (after πορνείας, "fornication") καὶ ὅσα μὴ θέλετε ἑαυτοῖς γίνεσθαι ἑτέρω μὴ ποιεῖν or *the like*, D, Harclean (Syriac) version with an asterisk, Sahidic (Egyptian) version, Ethiopic, Latin Irenaeus, Cyprian, Eusebius, Ambrosiaster (nearly) and others.

Add at end, φερόμενοι ἐν [τῷ] ἀγίῳ πνεύματι, D, Latin Irenaeus, Tertullian.

xxi. 25: φυλάσσεσθαι αὐτοὺς τό, τε εἰδωλόθυτον καὶ αἷμα καὶ πνικτὸν καὶ πορνείαν ("that they should keep themselves from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what is strangled, and from fornication").

Ομίη καὶ πνικτὸν, D g, Ambrosiaster (nearly), Augustine.

We observe that D (Codex Bezae, the leading authority for the Western text) enters into the testimony for every one of these readings; the Latin Irenaeus also enters into every one where the verse is quoted by Irenaeus. A single verse is quoted by Tertullian; and there Tertullian agrees with Irenaeus except in the insertion of the golden rule. This one reading (with the corresponding insertion in xv. 20) stands rather by itself, and must be considered separately. It too is Western, resting primarily upon D, Iren. The other readings are not only Western, but belong definitely to the Latin branch of the Western Text. In regard to the golden rule, we note (i) that the absence of Tertullian and the presence of a small group of early versions gives the reading a rather special character. The "Harclean Syriac with an asterisk" requires a word of explanation. Thomas of Har-khel (Heraclea) in the year 616 published a revised form of an earlier version of 508 A.D., as he expressly tells us, with a careful collation of two (or three) "accurate Greek manuscripts." This edition was made in a monastery nine miles from Alexandria. The Greek MSS. referred to were remarkable, and contained a number of very ancient readings. This (the insertion of the golden rule) was one of them, and the asterisk in the MSS. denoted that the reading was an addition to the current text. Strictly, this authority was Greek rather than Syriac; but it is Greek that was closely bound up with the Syriac tradition. The readings of this witness are characteristically Western, and it is in close alliance with D. Its presence here, along with two other

ancient versions, also Western in character, shows that the reading which they attest had a wider diffusion and was earlier in date than those for which the authorities are purely Latin. It must have originated before the point at which the Latin branched off from the Syrian (primitive Western Greek) and Egyptian.

(ii) I should therefore regard it as practically certain that, whether Tertullian had or had not in his copy the reading "do not do to others what you would not have done to you," that reading is at least of considerably older date than his own. To my mind the probabilities are that he had it before him, because in any case he had the other admittedly secondary reading *vectante vos spiritu sancto*. But it would not follow that, because he had it in his text, he would therefore include it in his quotation. It has always, in modern times as well as in ancient, been held to be permissible to drop a clause of the original that was not directly relevant to the purpose for which it was quoted. Tertullian could not, even if he had wished, have quoted this clause, because it would have made havoc of the rest of the quotation: *a quibus observando recte agitis* (the authenticated text, Reifferscheid's reconstruction is certainly wrong, but does not affect the point), links on naturally to *a quibus necesse est abstineri, a sacrificiis et a fornicationibus et sanguine*, but would make nonsense if preceded by the golden rule. A careful modern writer would call attention to the omission by printing . . . where the clause should occur, but the ancients did not adopt these niceties.

(iii) If we do not follow this reasoning, then we can only say that through some accident of transmission Tertullian has in this verse two readings of his group but not the third. Anomalies of this kind are frequent: for instance, of the seven Western non-interpolations in Luke xxiv. the Old Syriac (apparently) supports three, does not support three, and has part of one.

For these reasons it seems to me that Tertullian is at best a precarious foundation to build on, as Professor Lake builds upon him. But I would waive this point, if there were not weightier considerations in the background.

4. *Antecedent Probabilities.*—We may follow the example of Professor Lake in propounding to ourselves the question which is more likely to have been the decision of the Council—the three-clause group (in the main of moral precepts) or the four-clause group (of ceremonial observances).

In any case neither group is strictly homogeneous. On the one hand, “things sacrificed to idols”—i.e. meat from a victim portions of which had been sacrificed on an idol altar—must be ceremonial. On the other hand, “fornication” is no less clearly moral. But the leading aspect in which it is regarded in this context is as presenting a contrast between Jew and Gentile. To the Gentile it was a thing indifferent; by the Jew it was to be avoided at all costs. But that condition does not apply to “homicide.” The prohibition of homicide was really common to Jew and Gentile. In this context it is a moral commonplace, which is flat and pointless; it is indeed so pointless as to be incredible.¹

It is otherwise with what is called the “food-law.” In regard to this we are not left to vague possibilities; we have the best of evidence to show that discussions precisely of this kind were actively going on at the time and place indicated. It is rather surprising to me that more has not been made of this point, and that I myself did not make more of it. The scene at Antioch in Galatians ii. 11–14 presents a graphic picture of the urgency of such questions and the sharp controversy to which they were liable to give rise.

“But when Cephas came to Antioch, I resisted him to

¹ This would not exclude the possibility that *αἵματος* was in some sense ceremonial; but that sense is much clearer in conjunction with *πικτοῦ τῶν*).

the face, because he stood condemned. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles ; but when they came, he drew back and separated himself, fearing them that were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews dissembled likewise with him ; insomuch that even Barnabas was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Cephas before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest as do the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, how compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews ? ”

For those who identify (as I am still disposed to do) the Council with the events referred to in the preceding verses, the scene thus described would be in near proximity to it and would naturally throw back a light upon the circumstances which led up to it. It will be remembered that some scholars, including Mr. C. H. Turner,¹ have raised the question whether it is necessary to suppose that the events alluded to in the two paragraphs of Galatians ii. are in strict chronological order, and whether the events of the second paragraph may not have really preceded those of the first, or (in other words) fall before the Council rather than after it. It would simplify the whole story to suppose that they did ; and I too lean to the same hypothesis, which however, of course, cannot be verified. But whether the relation of this incident to the Council is nearer or more remote, in any case it illustrates aptly the nature of the controversy between the Judaising party and their opponents. With this scene in our minds the debating of questions of food loses any semblance of inappropriateness. In fact such questions were really among the burning practical issues of the day ; and practical issues are apt to take precedence of theoretical.

All that is to be said on the other side is contained in the

¹ Hastings, *DB*, i. 424.

argument that if "the Council enacted a food law, it would be hard for St. Paul to say that the Apostles had made no additions to his gospel."¹ But what reason is there to suppose that St. Paul would ever have thought of connecting such things with "his gospel"? That was surely concerned with very different matters.

There is one small confirmation of the view just taken that may easily be overlooked. Preuschen has rightly pointed out that *ἀλίσγημα* in v. 20 is properly used of defilement through food. The word is not classical, and the noun does not occur in the LXX, but the cognate verb occurs there four times and always in connexion with pollution by food.

Daniel i. 8. Daniel would not defile himself with the king's meat.

Malachi i. 7. Ye offer polluted bread.

Malachi i. 12. The table of the Lord is polluted.

Ecclesiasticus xl. 29. He will pollute his soul with another man's meat.

This shows at least that the writer of this chapter had the idea of pollution through food strongly before his mind.

It is interesting to notice that the Latin translator of Irenaeus misses this point, where the bilingual MSS. retain it. Irenaeus renders *ἀλίσγημάτων* by *vanitatibus*, *d*, *e* (Latin columns of D and E), with *g* (cod. *gigas*), by *contaminationibus*.

5. *Origin of the Readings*.—It is then, I submit, proved that in the near neighbourhood of the time and place to which the decree is assigned there was a real interest in questions relating to food, due to the prominent part which such matters played in the Mosaic Law and in Jewish practice. It was an incident in the inevitable controversy as to the terms of intercourse and communion between Jewish and Gentile Christians. It comes in most naturally when that contro-

¹ *Earlier Epistles of St. Paul*, p. 54.

versy was at its height. And it certainly was at its height in the first age of the Gospel, in what we may call the Pauline period. We know how rapidly the controversy subsided, not so much through the victory of St. Paul in argument—though we have no doubt that he was victorious in argument—as through the shifting of the balance between the Jewish and Gentile parties, the one contracting and drawing into its shell, while the other was as fast expanding in growth and increasing in influence. As this process went on, and as the old controversy receded into the distance, the points on which it turned became less intelligible. Professor Lake seems to me rather to miss the mark here. He speaks of the circle which omitted “things strangled” as not having “any objection to a food law” (p. 50), and again of such a law becoming “repugnant or obsolete” (p. 59). He has indeed proved (and we welcome the proof) that a food law was recognised by Tertullian and in the churches of Vienne and Lyons which were under the government of Irenaeus. If I were merely arguing for a thesis, I might quote the two leading supporters of the Western text as witnessing to the Eastern readings in spite of themselves. But I do not think that they really do this. The evidence really points, not to the continued influence of the Apostolic Decree, but to the survival down to this date in the churches of Africa and Gaul of practices derived from the Levitical Law. When Tertullian refers to the abstention of Christians from things strangled and from the flesh of dead beasts, he is clearly thinking of Leviticus xvii. 13–16. “Whatsoever man there be . . . which taketh in hunting any beast or fowl that may be eaten, he shall pour out the blood thereof and cover it with dust . . . And every soul that eateth that which dieth of itself or that is torn off beasts . . . he shall wash his clothes, etc.” This rule was obviously regarded as still unrepealed. Tertullian knew his Bible, and the martyr Biblis also knew

her Bible, but the rule came by degrees to be more or less ignored. From the first the special abstention form "things strangled" must have been a puzzle in the West, where no such usage existed; and it is not strange that among the scribes to whom we owe the origin of the Latin branch of the Western Text there should have been one or more to whom allusions to such a practice were a stumblingblock. That is all we have to assume in order to account for the Western readings. Nothing could be more simple, or more natural in view of the course of historical development. The Eastern readings are really Eastern, and reflect a condition of things that we know to have existed in the middle of the first century. The Western readings reflect, no less naturally, conditions which obtained away from Syria and Palestine (or from the districts where Jewish Christians were thickest) in the first half of the second century.

There is clearly a close interconnexion between all the members of the two groups of reading; but it is not necessary to suppose that they all came in at once. For me, the Eastern readings represent the genuine text; and therefore the *onus* on my side is to explain the origin of the Western. For the advocates of the Western text, this relation is inverted. And here I cannot help thinking that the task is beyond what they are able to perform. It is never a very serious matter to explain an easy reading out of a difficult one; but the reverse process is likely to prove troublesome. I will give my sketch of what I conceive to have been the origin of the Western readings first.

I have argued above, from the distribution of the authorities, that the first link in the chain was the insertion of the negative form of the golden rule. This was probably in the first instance a gloss written in the margin. Some scribe who was interested in the substance of what he was writing, took the decree as containing the essentials of Christian practice,

From this point of view it seemed to him somewhat external and deficient, and he jotted down by the side a current summary of duty to one's neighbour. Then came a copy in which by accident the clause about "things strangled" was omitted. Such accidents are very common, especially where there is a string of clauses like one another in meaning. Professor Lake aptly refers to two examples in connexion with this same decree. He notes that both Origen and Methodius (though Origen at least was familiar with the ordinary four-clause text) quote it in a three-clause form, omitting "blood" instead of "things strangled." There was nothing deliberate or intentional in this. But, with "things strangled" omitted and the golden rule inserted, and with "blood" an ambiguous term and "fornication" certainly ethical, it was natural that a scribe—especially one of those masterful scribes who are almost as good as "editors"—should consider with himself whether the whole decree ought not to be mainly ethical. He decides that it ought; and then, in order to harmonise all three verses, he strikes out "things strangled," which indeed he only half understood) in xv. 20 and xxi. 25. There must have been deliberate action somewhere, because the three passages have all been brought into agreement; but on this view we should have that combination of accident and design which is so common in human affairs, and especially in the vagaries of textual criticism.

The difficulty on the other view is to account for the insertion of "things strangled." Omissions, as I have said, are easy; but insertions always require an explanation of the special nature of the insertion. Professor Lake's hypothesis is, I think, the best that can be suggested. He thinks that there were two lines of exegesis of the ambiguous "blood," and that those who took the ceremonial side inserted "things strangled" to make the meaning clear. The question is, from what quarter in the Church could an impulse in this

direction come? There was no longer an interest in these old Jewish scruples. If there had been, as perhaps there was in some Palestinian community on a very small scale, it would never have possessed itself of the great mass of Greek uncial MSS., with the single exception of Cod. Bezae. That is where the explanation seems to me to break down. The four-clause text, with its appurtenances, belongs to the great main stream of Greek tradition; and to obtain command of this before the time of Clement and Origen, a reading or group of readings must have proceeded from a very central and authoritative quarter indeed. It is much easier to suppose that this particular group of readings was original.

6. *Subsequent History.*—We have hitherto spoken of the “Apostolic Decree,” and that is the common designation. But I am by no means sure that “Apostolic Rescript” would not be a better name. No doubt a rescript proceeding from “the apostles and elders with the whole church” of Jerusalem would be as authoritative as if it were called a decree. But the point brought out would be that it was a direct answer to a limited local question arising out of limited local circumstances. The reason why we hear so little of this answer later was because there were so few churches in which the conditions were the same. The apostles and their colleagues evidently knew that they were legislating for a region in which the Jewish and the Gentile elements in the Church were more or less evenly balanced. Their object was to consult as far as possible the susceptibilities of the Jews, sharpened by long ages of exclusive practice. It is a matter of experience that questions affecting social relations of this kind lead to more acute controversy within their range than others of far greater theoretical importance. But when St. Paul carried his missionary labours further westwards, when the Jews definitely rejected his preaching while Gentiles freely joined his newly founded communities, the problem that arose was of a different kind. It was only what was

right and seemly in itself; there was no longer need to provide against Jewish sensitiveness. Hence the so-called "food law" practically reduced itself to the question of meats "offered in sacrifice to an idol." In regard to these St. Paul gave the wise advice, not to ask too many questions, but in case attention were called to the origin of the meat set before you, to abstain in order not to offend tender consciences. The whole atmosphere of this decision is different. It could easily and simply be placed upon a basis of Christian principle. There was no need to invoke the Levitical law. St. Paul had too much insight and tact to do this where it was not necessary. He had more important things to bring home to his converts than to explain to them the Levitical system; and it was probably more prudent, and more likely to keep discussions of this sort in their proper place, if he treated them just by the way and without any appeal to authority at all. When we consider what St. Paul was and what his converts were, I fail to see that there is anything improbable in the treatment of food questions in his Epistles, or anything really inconsistent with the special instructions laid down to meet a special case in Acts xv. It is not likely to have been ever forgotten that in these the Church of Jerusalem was addressing the Churches of Antioch, Syria and Cilicia, and that it had no thought of "binding" or "loosing" the whole Christian Church for all time.

On such a general view, the events of the middle of the first century seem to me to fall into their places, and the evidence of the end of the second century also falls into its place; it also seems that a reasonable bridge of hypothesis has been constructed between them. But in any event I very much hope that we in England shall not be in too great haste to commit ourselves to a theory which as a whole is losing ground in Germany, and which I believe to be fundamentally wrong and misleading.

W. SANDAY.