

*MISSIONARY METHODS IN THE TIMES OF THE
APOSTLES.*

II.

IN the interim between the foundation of the Corinthian community and the composition of St. Paul's two Epistles to that body, teachers arrived there, who, backed by letters of commendation from foreign authorities of high position, managed to assume an importance which still more perplexed the members of that already restless community, and encouraged them in their insubordination to their founder. If we consider the allusions in the two Epistles to the Corinthians together, there can scarcely be any doubt that these Jewish Christians came from Palestine, and that they made much of their connection with St. Peter, who may have converted and baptized them. They went forth into the world as missionaries,¹ well provided with letters of commendation from St. Peter or St. James, which gave them an entry into all the communities and assured them hospitality in Christian houses. We learn from the keen irony with which St. Paul calls them "the chiefest Apostles," and then again in holy anger "false Apostles" (2 Cor. xi. 5, 13, xii. 11), that they had assumed the name of apostle in order to represent themselves as missionaries. This was not in itself arrogance, for in the apostolic and immediately succeeding generations the name apostle had not yet exclusively acquired that narrower

¹ I refer 1 Corinthians i. 12 to these followers of St. Peter; iii. 16-20 (a passage of which the reference is proved by the reappearance of the name Kephas iii. 22, whereas iii. 4-15, like all that precedes it from i. 17, is still influenced by the opposition to Paul and Apollos); further, xvi. 22 (where strangers who were then sojourning in Corinth, and whose mother tongue was the Aramaic language of the Jews in Palestine, are clearly distinguished from the community and are not included in the greetings addressed to it); so also 2 Cor. ii. 17-iii. 1, v. 12; xi. 1-23, xii. 11-18. Comp. my *Einl. in das N.T.* i. 204 ff.

meaning with which we are accustomed to connect it. Every one who, as commissioned by the Lord, preached the gospel to the unconverted from place to place was called an apostle.¹

If this name, from the beginning, had been the exclusive title of the Twelve, St. Paul would have scarcely felt justified in assuming it, to say nothing of his uniting Silvanus and Timothy with himself under the same designation. As far as we know, the experience to which he dates back his Christian position and calling did not expressly put him on a par with the Twelve, or formally invest him with the title of "Apostle," and the statement that he was the twelfth or thirteenth Apostle is quite unhistorical. In himself he was simply one of the numerous Apostles or missionaries of that time; only he could prove from facts that he had not, like others, been called by men or through men; but just as directly as the Twelve he had received his commission from God and Christ, and was in the fullest sense of the word "called to be an Apostle." St. Paul would no more have grudged to those itinerant preachers from Palestine the name of "Apostles" than that of "servants of Christ," had they shown that honourable, open, and unselfish spirit with which, according to St. Paul, the

¹ The strongest proof of this wider use of the term is furnished by the fact that itinerant teachers like those in Corinth and elsewhere (Rev. ii. 2) fearlessly made their appearance, and, introducing themselves as Apostles, made themselves ridiculous at once and for ever. St. Luke unites Paul and Barnabas (Acts xiv. 4, 14). St. Paul unites Silvanus and Timotheus with himself under this title (1 Thess. ii. 6; comp. i. 1). The same mode of expression is suggested more or less clearly in Luke xi. 49 (where, however, people like the Seventy, Luke x. 1, must not be thought of as excluded, 1 Cor. iv. 9, ix. 5 f.). *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* is especially instructive for post-apostolic times, for in it very few noted itinerant preachers of their times are called "Apostles" (c. xi.), and the *Shepherd of Hermas* gives the numbers of the "apostles and teachers" on whose work the stability of the Church at that time depended as forty, without any suggestion that twelve or thirteen of these had a peculiar or even exclusive claim to the first of the two titles (*sim.* ix. 15, 4, xvi. 5, xvii. 1, xxv. 2; cf. *vis.* iii. 5, 1, and my remarks in the *Hirten des Hermas*, p. 94 f.).

life-giving Spirit of the New Covenant inspires his followers. But he recognised by their fraudulent dealings that they were much more the servants of Satan, who knows how to clothe himself as an angel of light, and that their claim to be Apostles was but a borrowed mask. Instead of going forth earnestly to spread the gospel amongst the unconverted, they crept into the communities founded by St. Paul, and instead of his being able to regard their work there as only unskilful building on the foundations laid by him, he was obliged to describe them as devastators of the Temple of God at Corinth. It was true that they preached the "Word of God," but they did so in the spirit and with the low motives of the dishonourable pedlar who knows how to dispose of his wares by tricks and artifices to the ignorant purchaser (2 Cor. ii. 17). They made use of the right of hospitality which was lavished so freely by the Christians on their brethren when travelling in those days, and also of the special right of the itinerant preacher of being supported by those amongst whom he worked. St. Paul renounced all such claims, and especially in Corinth. This they laid to his charge as pride, as a sign of his want of trust in and love for the community, and even as a cunning device by means of which, maintaining his external independence of the community, he might all the more certainly domineer over them morally. They compared St. Paul to his disadvantage with the older Apostles, who had themselves seen the Lord, and had received their commission from Him (1 Cor. ix. 1-3). No sort of contempt and depreciation was too bad for them to use if they might undermine the reputation of the founder of the community, and gain influence for themselves where they had accomplished nothing (2 Cor. x. 15). St. Paul testified to these, his opponents at Corinth, as to the hostile preachers in Rome—and he did it in order to show the community how disgraceful it was to allow themselves to

be thus imposed upon—that no other Jesus and no other gospel could be preached to them, and no other gifts of the Spirit could be exhibited than those which the Corinthians had long ago received through him (2 Cor. xi. 4). Whether this was based on really doctrinal convictions or was only a temporary and prudent reserve on the part of these missionaries, they were, nevertheless, spiritually related to those identical Jews who, from the beginning of the independent missionary work of St. Paul, had dogged his steps and endeavoured to destroy his work, or sought, as they imagined, to correct it.

This Judaistic tendency, with which St. Paul had to fight all his life long, should be considered much more than is usually the case from a missionary point of view. The core of this Judaising party was composed of those who had once been Pharisees, and who, according to the judgment of St. Paul, had never been really penetrated by the emancipating power of the gospel, and who had no right to the Christian name of brethren.¹ In these Christian Pharisees might be found a goodly portion of that zeal for making proselytes (Matt. xxiii. 15) of which Jesus accused the Pharisees. They caricatured the truly missionary calling of Israel. They, like the former Pharisee, St. Paul, did not doubt that the gospel was intended for all nations; only they held that the Gentiles converted by it were to be incorporated into the Jewish people and placed under the laws of Moses. Therefore they saw with deep resentment a Gentile Church arise in Antioch, independent of the law, and that this Christianity, no longer dependent on Judaism, was successfully propagated in Asia Minor. If they were not prepared to give up their ideal for ever, they must grasp the wanderer's staff and establish themselves as missionary

¹ Gal. ii. 4; 2 Cor. xi. 26; Acts. xv. 5.

preachers wherever the opposite of their wishes began to take firm hold. They acted thus in Antioch immediately after the first missionary journey of St. Paul and Barnabas. After they had been disowned, according to the two existing accounts, by the leaders of Jewish Christianity at the Apostles' Council, they made similar attempts on their own account in the newly formed communities of Galatia; that is, as I and others understand it, in the communities which St. Paul and Barnabas had founded after their first journey together. They could scarcely introduce themselves there as anything but missionaries. St. Paul indeed judges of them as false Christians, who had crept into the overwhelmingly Gentile Christian communities like spies, in order to discover how they could best eliminate the evangelical freedom which reigned there. He would not allow that their preaching was the gospel, and saw in them only vain Jews, who prided themselves in making as many men like themselves as possible. They, however, looked upon themselves as representatives of the original gospel, and as St. Paul, according to their judgment, had mutilated it in order to gain speedy and brilliant missionary results, it appeared to them that it was truly a missionary task to bring to the misguided Gentile Christians the true and complete gospel. Neither was it probably very difficult for them to obtain an entrance into the communities as missionaries.

At that time every newly formed community was also a missionary station. It was their duty to add to the sphere of their influence by the conversion of the unconverted. St. Paul himself also, when he visited that neighbourhood a second time, had preached the gospel there, and had thus carried on missionary work (Gal. iv. 13). How welcome it must have been to the newly founded communities, whose founder was busy far away making new settlements, when experienced Christians, members of

the mother Church, from which in fact the gospel had spread to Gentile lands, visited them, and carried on missionary work in their midst. We learn from the Epistle to the Galatians how successful they were, and what an impression they made, what a spell was exercised by the sacred traditions and authorities to which they seemed rightly to appeal, and what means they used in order to make plain to the immature Gentile Christians that they must first become Jews in order to become true Christians. Here, too, the calumniators of St. Paul played an important part. Neither was it difficult to show that St. Paul's method of carrying on missions to the Gentiles roused to the uttermost the hatred of the unbelieving Jews against Christianity, and that, apart from this, the Christian communities were much safer from the attacks of the Gentile populations and authorities when they represented themselves as a species of the Jewish communities, which throughout the Empire enjoyed a very tolerable amount of freedom in the exercise of their religion, than when they made themselves known as a new sect, worshippers of a crucified Jew. Added to this these Judaistic missionaries certainly knew how to put into practice that forbearance which has inclined the masses to many a theory. It seems, also, that up to a certain point they knew how to appear as if possessed of liberal views, and by their own example to show ways and means by which all that was too burdensome in a complete observance of the law might be avoided (Gal. vi. 13). St. Paul had to bring to bear the whole weight of his personal influence and of his principles to make an end of these doings. In Galatia and elsewhere he was completely victorious. The Judaistic mission did not succeed in persuading any considerable number of Gentile Christians to assume the legal mode of life of the Jews and of Jewish Christians. But the facts already referred to, in the history of the

Corinthian community and of the Roman mission, show that the first great battles by no means ended the war.

Again and again in the large circles of Jewish Christianity discontent arose with the course which Gentile missions had taken, and hatred against St. Paul, who had been the chief cause of this development. When on their side they found that, come what might, they were obliged to accept the fact that the Gentile Church had victoriously asserted her freedom from the Jewish law and her external independence of Jerusalem, when they no longer dared to appear with the demand that the whole of Judaism must be accepted within the borders of the Gentile Church, they by no means, therefore, desisted from striving to exert secret or open influence in this domain in opposition to St. Paul. Beside that renegade from Judaism who, as it appeared, strove untiringly, without any reverence for all that was sacred to the nation or any pity for its misfortunes, to build up a great and independent Gentile Church, these Jewish Christians also, who looked upon themselves as more faithful sons of the holy nation, felt themselves called to be the leaders and guides of the blind heathen and of the Gentile Christians still under age. So they came to Corinth, to Rome, to Colossæ, and to other places, naturally not always the same people, and, by no means, the representatives everywhere of exactly the same principles and requirements, but, nevertheless, always Jewish Christians who were dissatisfied with the Apostle to the Gentiles, and who were thoroughly put out and wounded in their Jewish self-sufficiency by his success. Though the Christian world has condemned them because the maintenance of their nationality was of more importance to them than the results of the gospel, yet we must not forget, if we would judge them with justice and humanity, that they belonged to the nation of whom Jesus came "according to the flesh." But this Jewish mission

never accomplished anything salutary; in fact, its positive influence was very slight; no new communities amongst the Gentiles were founded, but much unrest and confusion were caused to communities that had been founded in a very different spirit.¹

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(*To be continued.*)

¹ According to *Epiphan. Hær.* 30, 16, 25; further, according to *Clem. Recogn.* i. 43-71, and *Epist. Petri ad Jac.* 2 (Clementine ed. Lagarde, pp. 3, 24).