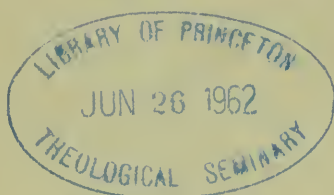


J. Gresham Machen

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RECENT CRITICISM OF THE BOOK
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J. GRESHAM MACHEN

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RECENT CRITICISM OF THE BOOK OF ACTS¹

Some years ago the world of New Testament scholarship was startled by the conversion of Adolf von Harnack² to the traditional view of the authorship of Luke-Acts. The book of Acts, Harnack concluded, was actually written by Luke, a companion of Paul. And what is more, it was written at about A.D. 60, or a little later, near the point of time where the narrative breaks off. Thus with regard to the date of the book the leading representative of modern "liberalism" had become more conservative than most of the "conservatives" themselves. Well might students of the New Testament ask, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

Perhaps the most distinctive contribution of Harnack to the argument for the Lucan authorship of Acts was his establishment of the linguistic and stylistic unity of the book. The "we-sections"—the sections where the first person plural appears—are generally admitted to have been written by a companion of Paul. But as Harnack showed with especial clearness the we-sections are strikingly similar in language and style to the rest of the book. If, therefore, the book as a whole was written or compiled by an author different from the author of the we-sections, this author of the whole must at least have revised the we-section source which he was using, so as to impress upon it his own style. But if so, why

¹ Charles C. Torrey, *The Composition and Date of Acts*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, Harvard Theological Studies I, 1916; "Fact and Fancy in Theories concerning Acts", in *American Journal of Theology*, xxiii, 1919, pp. 61-86, 189-212; F. J. Foakes-Jackson, "Professor C. C. Torrey on the Acts", in *Harvard Theological Review*, x, 1917, pp. 352-361; W. J. Wilson, "Some Observations on the Aramaic Acts", *ibid*, xi, 1918, pp. 74-99; "The Unity of the Aramaic Acts", *ibid*, pp. 322-335; Benjamin W. Bacon, "More Philological Criticism of Acts", in *American Journal of Theology*, xxii, 1918, pp. 1-23. Compare also Torrey, "The Translations Made from the Original Aramaic Gospels", in *Studies in the History of Religions Presented to Crawford Howell Toy*, 1912.

² *Lukas der Arzt*, 1906; *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 1908; *Neue Untersuchungen zur Apostelgeschichte und zur Abfassungszeit der synoptischen Evangelien*, 1911.

did he not change the "we" to "they"? As coming from the pen of a later writer, who as everyone knew could not have been an eye-witness of the missionary journeys of Paul, the "we" was rank nonsense. It could only have been retained if the final author was a mere compiler, copying out his sources mechanically. But that the final author was not a mere compiler is proved by the literary unity of the book. If, therefore, the final author was in the we-sections using a source written by some one else, he has revised everything in his source except the one thing, the "we", which most imperatively required revision.

It is with regard to the nature of the literary unity of the book that C. C. Torrey, in a series of notable studies, differs from Harnack. In his hands, it is true, the argument for the identity of the author of the we-sections with the author of the whole book remains absolutely unimpaired; the hand of Luke, the author of the we-sections, he believes, can everywhere be detected. But he thinks that in the whole former half of Acts (Acts i. 1b—xv. 35) Luke has given us a literal translation of an Aramaic document. The linguistic unity of the book is thus explained by the fact that the author of the latter half was himself the translator of the former half; while the Semitic coloring of the former half, which is in marked contrast with the purely Greek tone and style of the latter half, shows that in this former part of the book the author was allowing his language to be affected by a Semitic source.³

The fact of translation in "I Acts" (Acts i. 1b—xv. 35) is thought to be established by a few "especially striking examples of mistranslation" in the Greek form of the narrative, by many other evidences of translation, and by the great wealth of Semitisms (that is, Aramaisms) as contrasted with the absence or extreme scarcity of Semitisms

³ "Wherever, in the Gospel or Acts", Torrey says, "Luke's own vocabulary and style appear, Luke is either translating or composing freely" (*American Journal of Theology*, xxiii, 1919, p. 210). In other words, Torrey rejects altogether the hypothesis of revision on the part of Luke of Greek written sources.

in "II Acts" (Acts xv. 36—xxviii. 31). Among the "especially striking examples" may be mentioned Acts ii. 47, where the phrase ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό is certainly very difficult. The word in the original of the passage,⁴ it is argued, really meant "greatly", but was taken by the translator in the sense of "together". The reason for the mistake was that the word means "together" in the other Aramaic dialects (with which the translator was familiar), whereas in the Judean dialect, in which I Acts was written, it ordinarily meant "greatly". The verse meant in the original, then (if we correct also another slight mistake in translation), "And the Lord added greatly day by day to the saved."

This one example will serve to indicate at least part of the method which Torrey uses. An examination of the other "striking examples of mistranslation" would exceed the limits of the present article, and would require expert knowledge of the Aramaic dialects. Whatever may be thought of the alleged mistranslations, however, the argument for an Aramaic original of Acts i. 1b—xv. 35 is at least impressive. Certainly a good deal can be said for Torrey's view that the language of the former half of Acts is translation-Greek. As over against the rival explanations of the Semitic coloring of I Acts (and of such passages as Luke i. 5—ii. 52),⁵ even if one is not quite ready to characterize as a "grotesque performance" the imitation of the Septuagint on the part of Luke which is posited by Harnack, the hypothesis of translation has at least the advantage of simplicity. It will perhaps repay further examination.

In detecting a great wealth of Semitisms in I Acts, Torrey is in conflict with the present tendency among philologists to reduce the number of Semitisms in the New Testament and explain the supposed Semitisms as popular usages of the Greek Koiné, which formerly seemed un-Greek only because until the discovery of the non-literary papyri we were unfamiliar with the popular, as distinguished from the liter-

⁴ לחרא

⁵ See *Studies in the History of Religions*, loc. cit.

ary, form of the Greek world-language. Perhaps, however, the debate will finally be settled by a compromise. On the one hand, the modern philologists are undoubtedly correct in denying the existence of the special Jewish-Greek dialect in which the New Testament was formerly sometimes supposed to be written; but on the other hand the influence of Semitic originals or even a Semitic "atmosphere" upon the language of certain parts of the New Testament may be considerably greater than many philologists are at present willing to admit. At any rate, in order to disprove the hypothesis of translation with regard to I Acts, it is not sufficient to point out the supposed Semitisms individually in native Greek. It is the heaping-up in a single passage of these apparently Semitic usages, even though every one of them individually may be found on native Greek ground, which produces the impression of translation-Greek. The English example which Torrey gives in his paper on the Gospels is particularly instructive. Every idiom in the passage is good grammatical English, yet the heaping up of the idioms show clearly, to anyone thoroughly familiar with both languages, that the passage is a translation from the Latin.⁶ It is evidence like this, rather than the supposed mistranslations, which will perhaps go furthest toward establishing the translation-character of I Acts.

The Aramaic document underlying I Acts, was, according to Torrey, thoroughly homogeneous,⁷ and has been trans-

⁶ *Op. cit.*, pp. 284 f.

⁷ Torrey is unwilling to allow to W. J. Wilson (who agrees with him thoroughly in his principal contentions) even the presence of "doublets" in Acts iv and v. 17-42. In accordance with a very widespread opinion, Wilson holds (*op. cit.*, pp. 91 f.) that the two accounts of imprisonments of apostles (Peter and John in the former case, the apostles generally in the latter) are divergent accounts of the same event, the second being a heightening of the former. Torrey, however, insists that the heightening is inherent in the events, not merely in the tradition of the events, since it is only natural that, as the Christian movement spread, more and more drastic action on the part of the Jewish authorities would become necessary (*American Journal of Theology*, xxiii, 1919, pp. 190 f.). Such common sense in dealing with the New Testament narratives is very refreshing.

lated by Luke literally and almost without editorial changes, so that its representations have been allowed to stand unmodified even when, as in the case of the time of the Ascension or in the case of certain details of the conversion of Paul, those representations were contradictory either to other sources used by Luke or to Luke's own view.⁸ The "manipulation of documents" presupposed, for example, by Bacon's theory, was not, Torrey insists, "either usual or regarded as respectable in those days."⁹

The date of the Aramaic I Acts, according to Torrey and W. J. Wilson, is fixed at A.D. 49 or 50, in the first place by the general impression conveyed by the narrative that it was written in the "first flush" of enthusiasm after the triumph of liberal views which was achieved in the Apostolic Council (Acts xv. 1-35),¹⁰ and in the second place by the fact that the author evidently did not yet know, as he must have known very soon, "that Silas, instead of returning with Judas to Jerusalem, remained at Antioch, and set out with Paul on a second missionary journey" (Acts xv. 33).¹¹ With regard to the common argument for a late date based

⁸ According to W. J. Wilson, (*op. cit.*, pp. 84-89), the account of the conversion in I Acts (Acts ix) is highly legendary, and contains invention of details. In Acts xxii Luke corrects the account which had already been translated literally. Acts xxii is not incredible, though it requires modern interpretation. Acts xxvi is abbreviated. Thus Acts xxii is the best account of the conversion, Paul's own inward interpretation of the experience (as in Rom. vii) being "so involved with ancient mystical psychology and with Paul's own subsequent reflections as to be of slight value from the modern point of view." The one crucial fact in Paul's interpretation (the moral aspect of the conversion) "seems to have passed completely over the heads of both of the authors of Acts." Here we have, in more extreme form than in Torrey himself, the characteristics of what may be called the "school" of criticism which he represents—thoroughgoing conservatism with regard to questions of date and authorship of the documents coupled with equally thoroughgoing disbelief in the deeper things that the documents attest.

⁹ *American Journal of Theology*, xxiii, 1919, p. 68, footnote.

¹⁰ So Wilson (*Harvard Theological Review*, xi, 1918, p. 329). If, Torrey argues (*American Journal of Theology*, xxiii, 1919, p. 192), other important events had already happened, the author of I Acts would have narrated them.

¹¹ Torrey, *op. cit.*, pp. 191 f.

on the supposed dependence on Josephus (*Antiq. Jud.* XX. v. 1, 2) in Acts v. 36, 37, Torrey admits a confusion of the author with regard to Judas and Theudas, but supposes that the confusion arose on the basis of some earlier source where the events were less clearly narrated than in Josephus.¹²

The treatment of II Acts in Torrey's monograph and subsidiary articles is very interesting and in the main very convincing, but since it is less distinctive than the treatment of I Acts it may be reported more briefly. Here also, the homogeneity of the narrative is insisted upon, particular attention being given to Norden's hypothesis of the dependence of Acts xvii. 16-34 upon a treatise of Apollonius of Tyana, and to Bacon's separation of Acts xxviii. 17-28 from the we-section that precedes. The refutation both of Norden and of Bacon is vigorous and convincing. The early date of II Acts, which places it at the very point of time when the narrative closes, that is, according to Torrey's chronology, about A.D. 64, is maintained by means of some of the very characteristics of Acts xxviii. 17-28 which Bacon urges against the Lucan origin of that passage. If written at a later date, Torrey says, the passage would perhaps not be impressive, but when it is dated at the time of the events themselves, it is altogether what might have been expected.

There emerges, then, according to Torrey, the following "suitable and convincing" chronological series for the Lucan writings:

I Acts	A. D. 50
Gospel of Luke	A. D. 60
II Acts	A. D. 64

It may be remarked in passing that Torrey regards the Gospel of Mark as "practically a contemporary account" of the events that it narrates.¹³

Such a chronological scheme would not be so remarkable if it came from some "orthodox" source (though conserva-

¹² *Composition and Date of Acts*, pp. 70 f.; *American Journal of Theology*, xxiii, 1919, pp. 199-201.

¹³ *Op. cit.*, p. 193.

tive scholars have not usually dated the Synoptic Gospels and Acts so early), but as coming from C. C. Torrey, it is really enough to take one's breath away. For Torrey gives no evidence of being a "conservative" or an "orthodox" theologian; on the contrary he seems to be as uncompromising as anyone in his denial of the historicity of the supernatural element in the New Testament narratives. Yet he regards as practically contemporaneous with the events (at least as written only some twenty years after the origin of the Church, and in the dialect used in Judea) a document which represents Jesus of Nazareth as holding table-companionship with His disciples after His resurrection from the dead! What has become of the hypothesis of gradual production of myth in the Christian tradition which has been popular since the days of Strauss? When Torrey maintains that the record of facts in the New Testament narrative is essentially true, but that the narratives have put an erroneous, supernatural interpretation upon the facts, it might almost seem as though we had returned to the days of Paulus and the older rationalism. The method of interpretation, it must be admitted, is totally different. Our modern rationalists are careful not to try to work out their rationalizing in detail; and for the most part, despite the rationalizing principle just enunciated, the treatment of the sources shows closer affinity to Strauss than to Paulus.

But how could legendary representations like the table-companionship with the risen Christ or the speaking with tongues on the day of Pentecost have found a place in practically contemporary records? Despite the supposed parallel of Saint Simeon Stylites,¹⁴ and the antique fondness for miracles, the thing does not seem very natural to the great majority of investigators. As was pertinently pointed out against Harnack, it is the advocates of this modern return to tradition in literary criticism who are the real sceptics. For if legendary representations like the bodily resurrection of Jesus can find a place in the very reports of contemporaries, where can the truth ever be found?

¹⁴ *Op. cit.*, pp. 196 f.

Nevertheless the tendency represented, in an ascending scale, by Kirsopp Lake, Harnack and C. C. Torrey, is not without its significance. That significance does not indeed consist in any return, on the part of the representatives of the tendency, to a belief in evangelical Christianity. One would have to search far, for example, to discover a more abysmal scepticism with regard to the objective validity of Christian beliefs than is to be found in Kirsopp Lake.¹⁵ Yet Lake is the author of the admirable book, so conservative in its treatment of the Lucan account of Paul's relation to the Jerusalem Church, *The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul*. Scarcely less abysmal, perhaps, is the scepticism of A. C. McGiffert,¹⁶ yet McGiffert, some years ago, was the author of a notable history of the apostolic age, which, very much after the manner also exemplified by the commentary of Wendt, seeks so far as possible to save everything in the narrative of Acts except the one thing really worth saving—namely the supernaturalness of the origin of Christianity.¹⁷

The real significance of the "return to tradition" in literary criticism¹⁸ consists in the support that it affords to those who have not decided to reject the supernaturalistic view of Christian origins. Harnack and the others have at least introduced a dangerous antinomy into the imposing "liberal" reconstruction of early Christianity. The late dating of such documents as the book of Acts was an integral

¹⁵ *The Stewardship of Faith*, 1915. Lake leaves open the question of Lucan authorship of Luke-Acts (see his article "Acts of the Apostles" in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Apostolic Church*). With regard to the presentation in Acts of the attitude of Paul toward the original apostles and the Jewish Church, Lake completely reverses the unfavorable estimates which were formerly in vogue. See especially *The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul*, 1911.

¹⁶ See especially *The Rise of Modern Religious Ideas*, 1915.

¹⁷ McGiffert and Wendt do not, it is true, accept the Lucan authorship of Acts and do not represent that recent "return to tradition" which we are now discussing.

¹⁸ Of course the prevalence of this return should not be exaggerated. The great majority of those who hold the naturalistic view of the origin of Christianity still maintain the non-Lucan and post-apostolic view of Luke and Acts.

part of that reconstruction. But if Acts was written in A.D. 60 or 64, all is thrown into confusion. It is not surprising that the great majority of "liberal" historians have reacted strongly against Harnack's recent conclusions. Furthermore, if Harnack and Lake and Torrey are correct, the objection to the New Testament account of Christian origins is seen more and more clearly to be simply and solely an objection to the miraculous. It used to be maintained that contradictions and improbabilities in the New Testament discredit the narratives even entirely apart from the question of the miraculous, and that if the New Testament books do not accredit themselves in the ordinary historical field, still less can they be given credence when they attest marvels. But now we have men like C. C. Torrey and Kirsopp Lake engaging in the most thoroughgoing defence of the narratives in just those points where they were supposed to be most clearly discredited.

In this connection we are brought to what is perhaps most significant of all in the recent tendency of "return to tradition." Harnack, Lake and Torrey represent the culmination of what may be called, if a convenient word-coinage be permitted, the progressive de-Tübingenizing of the criticism of Acts.

About the middle of the nineteenth century, F. C. Baur of Tübingen laid the foundation for subsequent New Testament criticism by a bold reconstruction of early Christian history. Strauss in his famous *Leben Jesu* (1835) had, in the opinion of many, demolished the supernatural view of the Gospels. Zeller, who with Baur belongs to the so-called "Tübingen school", extended the work of demolition, with equal thoroughness, to the book of Acts. But Baur and Zeller were not content with demolition. They sought rather to construct with the old materials a new building of genuine history. The New Testament documents, rejected for the most part as true accounts of the events which they purport to narrate, were made to do duty as indirect witnesses, through their very misrepresentations of history, to

the several tendencies in the thought and life of the Church for the sake of which those misrepresentations were ventured upon. The fundamental fact of apostolic history, according to Baur, was a conflict between Paul and the original apostles, between Gentile Christianity and Jewish Christianity; and that conflict extended on through the middle of the second century, until it was finally settled by a compromise. The New Testament books are party documents, to be dated according to their place in the development of the conflict. Those books, like the anti-Pauline Apocalypse of John on the one hand, and the genuine epistles of Paul on the other, which stand strongly on one side or the other of the conflict, are relatively early; those books like the book of Acts, which represent an "irenic" or compromise tendency are late.

The construction of Baur, in its entirety, soon had to be abandoned or at least seriously modified. Albrecht Ritschl, for example, showed that Baur had enormously exaggerated the influence of specifically Jewish Christianity upon the history of the Church. Anti-Pauline Jewish Christianity, he pointed out, never had the support of the original apostles (indeed the real conflict in the apostolic age was between all the apostles on the one hand and an extreme Judaizing party on the other), and soon ceased to be influential. The Old Catholic Church of the close of the second century owes its divergence from Paul not to a compromise between a Pauline and an anti-Pauline party but to the natural inability of the ordinary man to understand the Pauline doctrine of grace—to a development therefore upon purely Gentile Christian ground.

Furthermore, a more detailed study of the early patristic literature, on the part of such men as Lightfoot and Zahn, soon showed that Baur's late dating of many of the New Testament books was excluded by external evidence. It was no longer possible to string out the books of the New Testament along anywhere at will throughout the second century in the interests of a plausible theory of develop-

ment. A study of plain literary relationships came in to supplement and contradict Baur's use of internal evidence.

But because the theory of Baur was soon rejected as a whole, it does not follow that it became unimportant. On the contrary, it has left its mark upon all subsequent developments in New Testament criticism. And it has done so especially at the point which interests us just now—namely in the treatment of Acts. Baur's reconstruction of apostolic history was based fundamentally upon a comparison of the book of Acts with the Pauline Epistles—to the detriment of the former. At this point he has been followed, more or less closely, by subsequent criticism.

In the general wreck of alleged apostolic writings, according to Baur, one solid rock emerges triumphant from the storm—namely the genuineness of the four major epistles of Paul. The account, therefore, which they give of apostolic history is the touch-stone by which all other documents, and particularly the account given in Acts, must be tested. Now at most points the testing of Acts is impossible, or at least very difficult, because the book does not run parallel with anything that is found in Paul. But in the fifteenth chapter we find an account of an event which is also narrated in the Epistle to the Galatians (Chap. ii). Here at any rate is an opportunity for comparison.

The comparison, Baur maintains, results disastrously for the book of Acts; Acts and Paul are found to be in hopeless disagreement. The disagreement, moreover, concerns not merely details, but the vital matter of the relation existing between Paul and the original apostles. That relation, says Baur, was according to Paul one of fundamental difference of principle, the agreement reached at the time of Paul's Jerusalem visit (Gal. ii. 1-10), being essentially an agreement to disagree. Paul was careful to assert his own complete independence of those who had been apostles before him. The book of Acts on the other hand represents the relation between Paul and the original apostles as altogether harmonious; far from insisting upon his independence Paul is

actually willing to consent to a compromise and permit the Jerusalem church to impose upon the Gentile converts a certain portion at least of the ceremonial law—the so-called “Apostolic Decree” (Acts xv. 23-29). The worst of it is, moreover, that this false representation of the relation between Paul and the original apostles is allowed to color the entire history in the book of Acts; from beginning to end the book is intended to show, in defiance of the real facts, that Paul and Peter were in perfect harmony; the real independence of the apostle Paul is carefully concealed. Thus in the book of Acts, Paul is brought into early conference with the Jerusalem leaders (Acts ix. 26-30); he does not hesitate to visit them again before the Council (Acts xi. 30); and all through his subsequent career he is careful of Jewish custom and deferential to the Jerusalem authorities (Acts. xvi. 3, 4; xxi. 26). Peter, on the other hand, is represented as expressing thoroughly Pauline views about Gentile freedom (Acts xv. 7-12), and even as taking the lead in the Gentile mission (Acts x). Indeed an elaborate parallelism is set up, all through the book, between the careers of the the two apostles, and everything that might have called to mind their disagreements, like the unfortunate incident of Titus, for example, or the dispute at Antioch (Gal. ii. 11-21), is carefully suppressed.

This treatment of the book of Acts has been generally modified by subsequent investigators. The relative good faith of the author, for example, is now usually accepted. The book is no longer regarded as a party document written late in the second century and intended to bring peace into the Church by means of a deliberate falsification of history. If it misrepresents the relation between Paul and the original apostles it is now thought to do so merely because at the time when it was written the apostles were surrounded with the halo of antiquity and sanctity, and the memory of the birth-throes of Gentile freedom had been lost. The obscuration of the profound differences of principle in the apostolic age is thus regarded as naïve rather than deliberate; true

Paulinism, it is urged, was not easy for a later generation to understand. Baur and Zeller, moreover, are generally admitted to have been wrong in making the representation of apostolic unity, as manifested, for example, in an elaborate parallelism between the fortunes and achievements of Peter and Paul, the determining principle of the choice of material in the book. The principal purpose of the author of Acts is now often admitted to have been the telling of the truth, though unfortunately, it is said, he set about the task from the point of view of his own age.

At one point, however, the position of Baur has generally been maintained. The fifteenth chapter of Acts, it is insisted, does prove to be in contradiction to the second chapter of Galatians. No doubt the unfavorable judgment of Baur was greatly exaggerated; no doubt his exegesis of Galatians and Corinthians was one-sided. But after all, it is said, the contradiction, however it arose, is a fact, and it discredits even those portions of Acts where direct testing is impossible. The book of Acts is thus regarded as having failed at the very point where it can be tested in the light of an unimpeachable authority. There is some justification, therefore, for calling, with B. W. Bacon, the relation between Acts and Galatians, particularly as regards the Apostolic Council, the "crux of apostolic history."¹⁹

Even this last stronghold of Tübingenism, however, has not been immune from attack, and the vigor of the attack seems to be increasing rather than diminishing. The picture which the book of Acts draws of the apostle Paul has been finding vigorous defenders.

With regard to the specific problem of Acts xv. 1-35 there have been various lines of defense.

The most thoroughgoing is the contention that Gal. ii. 1-10 and Acts xv. 1-35 are not contradictory for the simple reason that they are accounts of two entirely different events, Gal. ii being an account, not of the Apostolic Council, but of

¹⁹ "Acts versus Galatians: the Crux of Apostolic History", in *American Journal of Theology*, xi, 1907, pp. 454-474; "Professor Harnack on the Lukan Narrative", *ibid*, xiii, 1909, pp. 59-76.

what happened at the "famine visit" of Paul to Jerusalem, which is mentioned in Acts xi. 30; xii. 25. In its most thoroughgoing form, this view places the Epistle to the Galatians actually before the Apostolic Council of which it was formerly supposed to give an account.²⁰ This early dating of Galatians can no longer be regarded as a mere uninfluential vagary of criticism. For some time an idiosyncrasy of the Roman Catholic scholar Weber, it has now won the support of Lake, Ramsay, Emmet, and Plooiij.²¹ Undoubtedly it solves many of the problems. The omission in Galatians of the "famine visit" of Paul to Jerusalem (Acts xi. 30; xii. 25), for example, no longer needs to be explained, if Galatians actually contains a rather extended account of that visit, and the omission of the "Apostolic Decree" is easily explicable if at the time when the Epistle was written that decree had not yet been promulgated.

Three principal difficulties beset the hypothesis. In the first place, it makes the chronology a little difficult. The visit narrated in Gal. ii took place fourteen years (Gal. ii. 1) after the first visit, which took place three years after the conversion (Gal. i. 18); thus the event of Gal. ii is apparently to be put seventeen years after the conversion of Paul. But the famine visit apparently took place at about the time of the death of Herod Agrippa I in A.D. 44. If therefore the famine visit is to be identified with Gal. ii we get A.D. 27 (44-17) as the date of the conversion of Paul, which is of course too early.

This chronological difficulty is, however, not insuperable. The figures given in Galatians i. 18; ii. 1 may be taken in

²⁰ The identification of Gal. ii. 1-10 with Acts xi. 30; xii. 25, without the early dating of Galatians, is advocated by Maurice Jones (*Expositor*, 8th Series, vol. xvii, 1919, pp. 443-446. See also "The Date of the Epistle to the Galatians", in *Expositor*, 8th series, vol. vi, 1913, pp. 193-208, where weighty considerations are adduced against the early dating of the Epistle.)

²¹ *De Chronologie van het leven van Paulus*. See the review of this recent book by Maurice Jones ("A New Chronology of the life of St. Paul", in *Expositor*, 8th series, vol. xvii, 1917, pp. 363-383, 424-446). The book itself has not been accessible to the present writer.

accordance with the ancient inclusive method of reckoning time by which "three years" may mean only one whole year with parts of two other years. The 17 years of Galatians would then be reduced to 15 (13+2, instead of 14+3). The famine visit probably occurred not at the very time of the death of Herod Agrippa I, but a year or two later, perhaps as late as A.D. 46, Acts xii not being placed as exactly synchronous with xi. 30, but being intended merely to bring the Jerusalem thread of the narrative up through the time since the last mention of Jerusalem. If then, the famine visit occurred in 46 and that was 15 years after the conversion, we have A.D. 31 (46-15) as the date of the conversion—which is not absolutely impossible. Moreover, it is by no means certain that the "fourteen years" of Gal. ii. 1 is to be reckoned from the first visit rather than from the conversion itself. In the latter case the famine visit (A.D. 46) would be only fourteen (or according to the inclusive reckoning, thirteen) years after the conversion; the conversion then would be placed in A.D. 32 or 33—which is perfectly possible. The balance of chronological probability is therefore only slightly against the identification of Gal. ii with the famine visit of Acts xi. 30; xii. 25, and it is unnecessary to suggest, with Lake, that "fourteen" in the text of Gal. ii. 1 is a primitive copyist's error for "four."

The second difficulty is based upon the apparent coincidences existing between Gal. ii. 1-10 and Acts xv. 1-35. These similarities, in the minds of most scholars, can be explained only if the two passages are regarded as accounts of the same event. Furthermore, if the matter of Gentile freedom had already been settled at the famine visit in the way described in Gal. ii. 1-10, how could it come up again, apparently *de novo*, at the Apostolic Council?

This difficulty is more serious than the chronological difficulty just considered. It must be admitted that there is a *prima facie* case for identifying Gal. ii with Acts xv. But here again the difficulty is not absolutely insuperable. Gal. ii says nothing with absolute clearness about a public con-

ference with the Jerusalem church. But if the conference at the famine visit was merely a private matter between Paul and the Jerusalem leaders, a public conference, to silence the Judazing agitators who had subsequently arisen, might still be necessary. The Apostolic Council of Acts xv is therefore not unnatural, even if the conference of Gal. ii had preceded it.

The third difficulty, unlike the two others, concerns not the identification of Gal. ii. 1-10 with Acts xv. 1-35, but only the other feature of the thoroughgoing hypothesis that we are now considering, namely the dating of the Epistle to the Galatians before the Apostolic Council. If Galatians was written before the Apostolic Council, it preceded the Epistles to the Thessalonians, and is the earliest of the extant epistles of Paul. But in that case it is separated from the epistles of the second group—that is, the epistles of the third missionary journey, I and II Corinthians and Romans—for which, especially for Romans, it displays a marked affinity both of language and of thought. The early dating of Galatians, therefore, seems to disrupt the natural grouping of the epistles and render unintelligible the development of Paul's thinking.

To meet this difficulty Kirsopp Lake has ventured upon the bold hypothesis that the Epistle to the Romans, in an original form in which it was intended for general circulation, was written at an early date, though afterwards it was modified by Paul and sent as an epistle to the church of Rome. If Romans, as well as Galatians, is early, then the affinity between the two epistles is no longer an argument against the early dating of the Galatian epistle. The hypothesis of Lake is supported by certain interesting textual phenomena in Romans. But it does not silence altogether the objection drawn from the natural grouping of the Pauline Epistles; for it separates not only Galatians but also Romans from the Corinthian epistles. And it is perhaps too venturesome to be relied upon with any confidence. If it be rejected, then we can defend the separation of Galatians

from the epistles of the third journey only by the general consideration that development of language and thought is seldom perfectly regular. Perhaps the simplicity of the Thessalonian epistles, for example, in comparison with the later epistles of Paul, is to be explained by the immaturity of the readers, far more than by any immaturity in Paul's own thinking. It must always be remembered that the period covered by the epistles, except perhaps the Pastorals, represents only a comparatively brief portion of the Christian life of Paul. Long years of experience, of labor and of meditation had preceded. The thought of Galatians, therefore, cannot certainly be pronounced too highly developed for the Epistle to have been written in A.D. 50.

Before the question of the early dating of Galatians is finally dismissed, it is only fair to observe that the hypothesis can be maintained only upon the "South Galatian" theory of the address of the Epistle. If the Epistle was written before the Apostolic Council (Acts xv) it could not have been written to the churches of "North Galatia", for they were not founded until after the Council (Acts xvi. 6). The later dating of the Epistle—at some time after the Council—has the advantage of being consistent with either of the theories as to the addressees, whereas the early dating is consistent only with one.

On the whole, it may be said that the identification of Gal. ii. 1-10 with the famine visit (Acts xi. 30; xii. 25), with or without the early dating of the Epistle, is possible. If there is strong independent ground for accepting the Lucan authorship of Acts and if such acceptance of Lucan authorship is impossible on the hypothesis that Acts xv. 1-35 is parallel to Gal. ii. 10, then the identification of Gal. ii. 1-10 with the famine visit may well be accepted. Meanwhile, the *prima facie* evidence is perhaps still in favor of the old identification with the Apostolic Council.

The difficulty of such identification is diminished by an acceptance of the so-called "Western text" of the Apostolic

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Decree (Acts xv. 20, 29; xxi. 25). This solution is adopted by Harnack and Lake.²²

It has already been observed that one of the chief Tübingen and post-Tübingen arraigments of the book of Acts is based upon the decree of the Jerusalem church, which according to Acts was accepted by the apostle Paul. Paul says in Galatians that the original apostles "imparted nothing" or "added nothing" to him. But according to Acts, it is urged, they did add to him something very important indeed—namely a requirement that the Gentile converts should keep, not indeed all, but a part of the ceremonial law, that they should refrain, not only from fornication, but also from "things offered to idols and from blood and from things strangled." The acceptance of that requirement, it is said, would have been the acceptance of a compromise, which was absolutely contradictory to the character of Paul and absolutely contradictory to what he says in Galatians. Various explanations have been proposed for the origin of the supposed error in Acts; it is generally admitted that the decree could hardly have been invented out of whole cloth by the author. A common view supposes that it was actually a decree of the Jerusalem church, but that it was promulgated after Paul's departure and without his consent. Acts xxi. 25 is the chief support of this view; James, it is said, is there represented not as calling attention to something that Paul already knew but as informing him of what had been done in his absence. On the other hand, the leading commentator on the book of Acts in Germany, H. H. Wendt, comes to the conclusion that the decree was not only passed by the Jerusalem church but passed with Paul's consent, at the Apostolic Council, as the narrator represents; the error, he believes, consists merely in the attribution of a greater importance and larger scope to the decree than was actually the fact. Such a concession, however, goes far beyond what

²²Lake thus combines two of the methods of defending the narrative in Acts—the early dating of Galatians and the adoption of the Western text of the decree. Yet his purpose is certainly not apologetic.

is usual except among conservative scholars. In general, from Baur to Bacon the Apostolic Decree has been made one of the chief objections to the historicity and Lucan authorship of the book.

But if the so-called "Western text" of the decree is accepted, the objection, to a great extent at least, disappears. The Western text, as represented by the manuscript D supported by the usual companion evidence (the patristic evidence taking us back at least to the close of the second century) omits all reference to "things strangled" or "that which is strangled" in Acts xv. 20, 29, and adds the so-called negative form of the Golden Rule ("Whatsoever things you would not have happen to you, do ye not to another"). In xxi. 25, also, the omission occurs, though it is somewhat more weakly attested; but there is no addition of the Golden Rule. The addition is generally admitted to be a gloss. But the matter is not so clear about the omission.

If the "things strangled" be omitted we have mentioned in the decree only things offered to idols and blood and fornication. In this form the decree may be taken as purely moral rather than ceremonial—"things offered to idols" may mean idolatry, "blood" may mean murder (it is possible to think of a form of murder like exposure of infants which was widely practised in those days), and "fornication" of course would be taken in the most general sense. It is the mention of "things strangled" which makes the decree certainly refer to food-requirements, and apparently fixes the word "blood" as meaning blood that might be eaten—with meat or otherwise. Without ~~the word "blood"~~ the clause ^{things} may be taken as prohibiting merely the three deadly sins—idolatry, murder and fornication. Such a prohibition could not be regarded as modifying in any way the gospel which Paul preached; for Paul was as careful as anyone else to require holy living of his Gentile converts. If the Western text be correct the Apostolic Decree meant an absolutely uncompromising victory for Gentile freedom; far from keeping any part of the ceremonial law, the Gentiles are to re-

frain from nothing except deadly sin; the words of Paul remain true in the fullest and most literal sense, "They . . . who were of repute imparted nothing to me." (Gal. ii. 6).

If this shorter, three-fold form of the decree, without "things strangled," be original, then the subsequent development of the text may be explained by the diverging efforts of copyists to fix the meaning. The text in its original form was ambiguous, since "blood" might mean either blood to be eaten, or, figuratively, murder. Those who took it in the ceremonial sense, as blood to be eaten, made the meaning clear by adding "things strangled"; those who took it in the moral sense, as murder, made the meaning clear by adding the Golden Rule, which may be regarded as the summation of the moral, as distinguished from the ceremonial law. On the other hand, if the longer, fourfold form, with "things strangled", be original, then the Western text would be explained as an effort on the part of copyists to whom the circumstances that had given birth to the decree lay far away in the past, to make the decree intelligible by reducing it to a moral commonplace. Lake, however, insists that just in those quarters where the moral form of the decree appears in the text of Acts there existed a food-law to which the ceremonial form of the decree could have given convenient support; there would therefore, he thinks, have been no motive for removing the food-provisions from the decree. Furthermore, Lake argues, there is a singular failure on the part of those in the second century who attest the food-law in question to base that food-law upon the authority of Acts.

The very interesting textual question cannot here be discussed. Probably it must be admitted that the elaborate monographs on the subject have not yet brought a final settlement. Decision depends of course to a considerable extent upon what is thought of the Western text as a whole; and if it be argued that although the Western text is discredited in its additions it is valuable where, as here, it omits something, the reply may perhaps be made that the omission of "things strangled" is here so closely associated with an ad-

dition—the addition of the Golden Rule—as to share in the discredit which attaches to that manifest gloss. As with regard to the identification of Gal. ii. 1-10 with Acts xi. 30, the most that can be said at present is that the adoption of the Western text of the decree is a possible way out of the difficulties that are thought to beset a comparison of Acts with the Pauline Epistles; and on the whole it is perhaps a less satisfactory way than that other hypothesis.

But if both of these hypotheses should be rejected, if Gal. ii. 1-10 still be identified with Acts xv. 1-35 as an account of the Apostolic Council, and if the form of the Apostolic Decree contained in the great manuscripts be accepted as against the Western text, must we then abandon the Lucan authorship of Acts and admit that the book has drawn a false picture of the apostle Paul? C. C. Torrey, at least, does not think so. Rejecting both the hypotheses which have thus far been considered, maintaining the ordinary identification of Gal. ii. 10 with Acts xv. 1-35 and the ordinary text of the Apostolic Decree, he yet sturdily rejects all Tübingenizing suggestions and insists that the account which the book of Acts gives of the attitude of Paul is in all essentials correct. With regard to the Apostolic Decree, in particular, he insists that "no one of the four things named is either a religious requirement or thought of as connected with specifically Jewish customs." Acts xv. 21 he interprets in a rather unusual way as being simply a "rather naïve explanation of the fact that all through the known world these four things were normally regarded as the requirements of morality and decency." "The Gentiles, the writer seems to say plainly, *hold the same opinion as the Jews with regard to these particular things.*"²³ With regard to the general attitude attributed by the book of Acts to the apostle Paul, Torrey arrives at an equally favorable conclusion. Peter, he thinks, believed in continuing circumcision and Jewish customs as a racial matter, though not as a means of salvation; Paul's attitude seems to have been one of "disapproving

²³ *American Journal of Theology*, xxiii, 1919, pp. 76 f.

acquiescence." The controversy between Paul and the original apostles at the Apostolic Council was not serious, and was not of importance to the interests of the whole Church. Peter no doubt confessed his error after being rebuked by Paul at Antioch. The influence of the Judaizers in the Church soon diminished. The original apostles were not on their side at the time of Paul's last visit to Jerusalem. A small band of Judaizers would have had great influence with the non-Christian population there, and would have been amply sufficient, without any adherence of the apostles, to give rise to the apprehensions which Paul expresses in Rom. xv. 30-32.²⁴

Thus Torrey finds in the picture of the apostle Paul given in the book of Acts absolutely no reason for abandoning his view of the early date of both parts of the book. Indeed, even if I Acts were anti-Pauline in some particulars, he thinks that a companion of Paul could still have incorporated it in his work without change, especially since (says Torrey) it is quite possible that the companion in question had little understanding of the theology of Paul and perhaps little liking for it. But as a matter of fact, Torrey believes, the friendship of Luke was put to no such test; for the author of I Acts, like the author of II Acts, was a man of broad spirit in full sympathy with the Gentile mission.²⁵

In the account which Torrey gives of the attitude of Paul according to Acts and Galatians, there is a good deal that is questionable. The exegesis of Acts xv. 21, for example, may have to be rejected in favor of the more usual view that the four prohibitions are here represented simply as an effort to avoid offending the Jews who heard Moses read in the synagogues; and to explain the silence of Paul one may fall back upon the general consideration that the decree was never intended to be one of the requirements of salvation or an addition to Paul's gospel, but was merely an attempt to solve the concrete problem of certain churches, and was

²⁴ *Op. cit.*, pp. 70-81.

²⁵ *Op. cit.*, pp. 68 f.

limited in geographical scope. So understood, it would be quite in accord with Paul's own principle of becoming all things to all men.

But even after all qualifications are made, Torrey's exposition of the Lucan account of Paul is highly significant. Along with the expositions given by Lake and Harnack and others it is significant as a symptom of the progressive overcoming of an unfavorable estimate of Acts which has existed since the days of Baur. The Tübingen view is indeed by no means abandoned; certainly it will not be altogether abandoned in America until the opinions of B. W. Bacon, for example, are radically changed. But the work of Lake, Harnack, Torrey and others is sufficient to show that in certain quarters where apologetic interest is quite out of the question a more favorable estimate of Acts is gaining ground. The book of Acts can no longer be so easily ruled out of court by the simple test of the Epistle to the Galatians. The account of Paul which is given in Acts may perhaps after all be allowed to supplement what he himself tells us in his letters.

Under such treatment, the figure of the great apostle will by no means suffer, as Tübingen and neo-Tübingen scholars have always maintained that it would; the apostle will lose nothing of his uncompromising devotion to principle. On the contrary, his true greatness appears all the more clearly in the additional light which is shed upon him. Important as is the Epistle to the Galatians, and false as is the contention of Watkins²⁶ that in it Paul is misrepresenting certain aspects of the truth in the interests of his argument, it is quite impossible that in one brief letter Paul should have succeeded in revealing all that is worth knowing about himself. The one-sided use of Galatians has been one of the chief sources of misinterpretation of the Epistle itself and one of the chief sources of error in the investigation of the apostolic age. The Tübingen construction was produced

²⁶ *Der Kampf des Paulus um Galatien*, 1913. (*St. Paul's Fight for Galatia*, 1914).

by disregarding all sources of information except the Epistles to the Galatians and to the Corinthians—and then misinterpreting these. That construction is beginning to give place to broader views.

It is true, the work of Lake and Harnack and Torrey does not get to the root of the matter. The root of the matter is the supernatural origin of Christianity, and these investigators have not got one bit nearer to that. But if they themselves have come no nearer to the goal, they have helped others to come near—all the more because of their manifest freedom from apologetic bias. On the basis of naturalistic presuppositions they have arrived at conclusions in the sphere of literary criticism which are profoundly contradictory to the naturalistic view.

J. GRESHAM MACHEN.

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