

## Galatians vi. 12, 13.

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THE Jewish-Christian section of the Church in the Apostolic Age is still shrouded in a tantalizing obscurity. G. Hoennicke's elaborate and painstaking monograph (*Das Judenchristentum im ersten u. zweiten Jahrhundert*, Berlin, 1908) continually reminds us of the slenderness of the data which are available for an estimate of the situation. Accordingly, any sidelights which may even dimly illuminate the history are worthy of careful attention.

I cannot help thinking that the hints almost casually supplied by Gal 6<sup>12, 13</sup> deserve a closer examination than they have received. The passage occurs at the beginning of Paul's emphatic summary of the positions which he has asserted throughout the Epistle. 'All who wish to make a fair show in the flesh, it is *they* that compel you to be circumcised, merely that they may escape persecution for the cross of Christ. For not even do the circumcised themselves keep the law, but they wish you to be circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.' There are no serious difficulties in the interpretation of the statement. Obviously *ἐν σαρκί* in v. 12 refers to the external rite of circumcision. The 'fair show' is intended for some outside persons, who are also affected by the 'glorying in your flesh' of v. 13, where, of course, *σαρκί* must be taken in the same sense as in v. 12. The 'fair show' and the 'glorying' have a common end in view, the escaping of persecution on account of the cross of Christ. What this persecution means is made clear by 5<sup>11</sup>: 'As for me, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still (or, in that case, as Lipsius) persecuted? I suppose, then, I have got rid of the stumblingblock of the cross.' In 1 Co 1<sup>23</sup> Paul describes the preaching of Christ crucified as 'a stumblingblock to the Jews.' To cease giving prominence to the proclamation of a crucified Messiah would be to turn the edge of the hostility of non-Christian Jews. This would re-establish the preacher in the eyes of his fellow-countrymen as a genuine member of their community. As such, he would naturally proclaim the necessity of circumcision for all who desired a share in the splendid heritage of Israel.

This was a course which Paul rejected with scorn. He had indeed been charged with enjoining circumcision when that suited his plans. No doubt the charge had been made on the ground of his circumcision of Timothy (Ac 16<sup>3</sup>). But Timothy's case was quite exceptional (see Hort, *Judaistic Christianity*, pp. 84-87). His inexorable refusal in the case of Titus (Gal 2<sup>3-5</sup>), where the whole principle of the sufficiency of Christ for salvation was at stake, clearly showed the ground on which he stood. His Judaizing opponents had accused him of time-serving. He can repel their reproach from the actual experiences through which he is passing. 'Does the bitter persecution I am suffering look as if I were compromising my gospel?' That is his point in 5<sup>11</sup>. And it has been anticipated by 1<sup>9, 10</sup>, where, after pronouncing a curse on false gospels, he exclaims, 'Does that look like an attempt to win over men, or to please men?'

But the Judaizers have followed precisely that course on which Paul vents his irony and indignation. It is not pure zeal for the law which makes them champions of circumcision. They have an ulterior aim which appeals to them. They desire to keep in with their non-Christian fellow-countrymen. If they show their ardent zeal for circumcision, their connexion with a crucified Messiah will fall into the background and be ignored. Every Gentile whom they can persuade to be circumcised will be a testimony to the world that they themselves are loyal to the traditions of the chosen people.

It seems to me that this incidental reference of the Apostle is highly significant. I am aware that Bousset (*Die Schriften d. N.T.*, ii. p. 71) remarks on 6<sup>13</sup>: 'The question arises here whether in the controversy Paul is quite fair to his opponents.' But even granting that the emotion of the moment has coloured his language, and admitting that the Judaizers were genuinely zealous for the law, it is highly improbable that Paul has completely misrepresented his opponents. The references that have been quoted as to his own treatment by the Jews seem to corroborate

his statement in 6<sup>12, 13</sup>. And that statement provides us with valuable data for estimating at least some features in the Jewish-Christian outlook. We may infer from Acts, as well as from certain early Christian writers, such as Hegesippus, that the Jewish-Christian wing of the Church remained in close touch with the synagogue, and, for a time at any rate, were tolerated as a sect within Judaism, holding certain peculiar Messianic views. But there is extraordinarily little direct evidence regarding their relation to the non-Christian Jewish community during the Apostolic Age. Here Paul draws aside the veil for a moment. He gives us, indeed, no clear indication as to the exact connexion of these Judaizers with the Jerusalem Church. But we may agree with Hoennicke that they were not originally proselytes from heathenism (p. 118, note 2), and that they came to the Christian communities of Galatia from some outside region, in all probability Palestine (p. 212). Their attitude towards their non-Christian brethren is made quite distinct. They show an eagerness to gain their favour. They are ready to go forth on proselytizing missions, not merely for the honour of the law, although that will always be a concomitant motive, but to demonstrate to the Jews that they

are at one with them in fundamentals. Hence they will take care not to lay too much emphasis on the crucified Messiah. For this doctrine must necessarily be a dividing-line between Christian and non-Christian Jews. When they can point to members of heathen-Christian communities whom they have induced to conform to the law and its regulations, they may expect to win credit with their brethren as real defenders of the faith.

Clearly, then, at this period in the Apostolic Age, there was a very intimate association between some sections of Jewish Christianity and the traditional Judaism of the synagogue. This attitude of compromise meant an obscuring of those very elements in the gospel which formed the kernel of Paulinism. In all likelihood, for a time, such compromise would be even easier for Jewish Christians throughout the Diaspora.

And so it is not difficult to understand how, by the closing decades of the first century, the deeper aspects of Paul's religious thought and teaching, which had come into the foreground owing to his emphasis on Christ crucified, faded before the more external, and, at the same time, typically Judaistic conception of Christianity as the New Law.

## The Practice of Circumambulation.

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CIRCUMAMBULATION is an ancient and wide-spread usage. It can best be studied in the manners and customs of ancient and modern India. There it has been practised from the oldest times down to the present day, and is mentioned in Buddhist as well as in Brahmanical texts. Bridegroom and bride walk round the fire; the Snātaka (according to Manu, iv. 36) has to circumambulate idols; Brāhmaṇas, kine; 'the Upoṣaṇavrata . . . involves the speaking of the truth, the observance of strict chastity, the circumambulating of images of the gods with the right side turned towards them'<sup>1</sup>; Prince Mrgāṅkadatta proceeds to walk round the tree in which the god dwells, with his right hand towards it<sup>2</sup>; Ambapālī, whose invitation was

accepted by Buddha, 'rose from her seat and bowed down before him, and, keeping him on her right hand as she passed him, she departed thence.'<sup>3</sup> The *Pañch-Koṣi-Yātrā*, which the pilgrim of to-day performs round the holy city of Benares, is a modern and striking example of the old *pradakṣiṇa*.<sup>4</sup> It is an old way of paying respect to a god, to a holy person, or any object of veneration, be it a temple or *chaitya*, a plant or tree, the fire, etc. The text-books of the Indian ritual, the Śrauta—as well as the Grhyasūtras, distinguish two forms of circumambulation; it may be performed from left to right (*pradakṣiṇa*, *prasavalī*), or from right to left (*prasavya*, *apasavalī*), and it depends

<sup>1</sup> *Kāthā-Sarīt Sāgara*, Tawney, ii. 83.

<sup>2</sup> *loc. cit.* 365.

<sup>3</sup> Rhys Davids, *S.B.E.*, xi. 30; Simpson, *The Buddhist Praying Wheel*, p. 64.

<sup>4</sup> Simpson, *ibid.*, p. 80.