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a *Grace Notes* course

## History of the Christian Church

By Philip Schaff

### **VOLUME 1. First Period – Apostolic Christianity**<sup>1</sup>

Chapter 3: The Apostolic Age

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<sup>1</sup> Editor: Warren Doud

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# History of the Christian Church

## VOLUME 1. First Period – Apostolic Christianity

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## VOL 1: Chapter 3. The Apostolic Age

### 1.20 Sources and Literature of the Apostolic Age

#### SOURCES.

##### 1. THE CANONICAL BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.—

The twenty-seven books of the New Testament are better supported than any ancient classic, both by a chain of external testimonies which reaches up almost to the close of the apostolic age, and by the internal evidence of a spiritual depth and unction which raises them far above the best productions of the second century.

The church has undoubtedly been guided by the Holy Spirit in the selection and final determination of the Christian canon.

But this does, of course, not supersede the necessity of criticism, nor is the evidence equally strong in the case of the seven Eusebian Antilegomena. The Tübingen and Leyden schools recognized at first only five books of the New Testament as authentic, namely, four Epistles of Paul—Romans, First and Second Corinthians, and Galatians—and the Revelation of John. But the progress of research leads more and more to positive results, and nearly all the Epistles of Paul now find advocates among liberal critics. (Hilgenfeld and Lipsius admit seven, adding First Thessalonians, Philippians, and Philemon; Renan concedes also Second Thessalonians, and Colossians to be Pauline, thus swelling the number of genuine Epistles to nine.) The chief facts and doctrines of apostolic Christianity are sufficiently guaranteed even by those five documents, which are admitted by the extreme left of modern criticism.

The ACTS OF THE APOSTLES give us the external, the EPISTLES the internal history of primitive Christianity. They are independent contemporaneous compositions and never refer to each other; probably Luke never read the Epistles of Paul, and Paul never read the Acts of Luke, although he no doubt supplied much valuable information to Luke. But indirectly they illustrate and confirm each other by a number of coincidences which have great evidential value, all the more as these coincidences are undesigned and incidental.

Had they been composed by post-apostolic writers, the agreement would have been more complete, minor disagreements would have been avoided, and the lacunae in the Acts supplied, especially in regard to the closing labors and death of Peter and Paul.

The ACTS bear on the face all the marks of an original, fresh, and trustworthy narrative of contemporaneous events derived from the best sources of information, and in great part from personal observation and experience. The authorship of Luke, the companion of Paul, is conceded by a majority of the best modern scholars, even by Ewald. And this fact alone establishes the credibility. Renan (in his St. Paul, ch. 1) admirably calls the Acts “a book of joy, of serene ardor. Since the Homeric poems no book has been seen full of such fresh sensations. A breeze of morning, an odor of the sea, if I dare express it so, inspiring something joyful and strong, penetrates the whole book, and makes it an excellent *compagnon de voyage*, the exquisite breviary for him who is searching for ancient remains on the seas of the south. This is the second idyl of Christianity. The Lake of Tiberias and its fishing barks had furnished the first. Now, a more powerful breeze, aspirations toward more distant lands, draw us out into the open sea.”

2. The POST-APOSTOLIC and PATRISTIC writings are full of reminiscences of, and references to, the apostolic books, and as dependent on them as the river is upon its fountain.
3. The APOCRYPHAL and HERETICAL literature. The numerous Apocryphal Acts, Epistles, and Apocalypses were prompted by the same motives of curiosity and dogmatic interest as the Apocryphal Gospels, and have a similar apologetic, though very little historical, value. The heretical character is, however, more strongly marked. They have not yet been sufficiently investigated. Lipsius (in Smith and Wace’s “Dict. of Christ. Biog.” vol. I. p. 27) divides the Apocryphal Acts into four classes:
  - (1) Ebionitic;
  - (2) Gnostic;
  - (3) originally Catholic;
  - (4) Catholic adaptations or recensions of heretical documents.

The last class is the most numerous, rarely older than the fifth century, but mostly resting on

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documents from the second and third centuries.

- (a) Apocryphal Acts: *Acta Petri et Pauli* (of Ebionite origin, but recast), *Acta Pauli et Theclae* (mentioned by Tertullian at the end of the second century, of Gnostic origin), *Acta Thomae* (Gnostic), *Acta Matthaei*, *Acta Thaddaei*, *Martyrium Bartholomaei*, *Acta Barnabae*, *Acta Andreae*, *Acta Andreae et Mathiae*, *Acta Philippi*, *Acta Johannis*, *Acta Simonis et Judae*, *Acta Thaddaei*, *The Doctrine of Addai*, the *Apostle* (ed. in Syriac and English by Dr. G. Phillips, London, 1876).
- (b) Apocryphal Epistles: the correspondence between *Paul and Seneca* (six by Paul and eight by Seneca, mentioned by Jerome and Augustine), the *third Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, *Epistolae Mariae*, *Epistolae Petri ad Jacobum*.
- (c) Apocryphal Apocalypses: *Apocalypsis Johannis*, *Apocalypsis Petri*, *Apocalypsis Pauli* (or ἀναβατικὸν Παύλου, based on the report of his rapture into Paradise, 2 Cor. 12:2–4), *Apocalypsis Thomae*, *Apoc. Stephani*, *Apoc. Mariae*, *Apoc. Mosis*, *Apoc. Esdrae*.

#### EDITIONS AND COLLECTIONS

- FABRICIUS: *Codex Apocryphus Novi Testamenti*. Hamburg, 1703, 2d ed. 1719, 1743, 3 parts in 2 vols. (vol. II.)
- GRABE: *Spicilegium Patrum et Haereticorum*. Oxford, 1698, ed. II. 1714.
- BIRCH: *Auctarium Cod. Apoc. N. Ti Fabrician*. Copenh. 1804 (Fasc. I.). Contains the pseudo-Apocalypse of John.
- THILO: *Acta Apost. Petri et Pauli. Halis, 1838. Acta Thomae*. Lips. 1823.
- TISCHENDORF: *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha*. Lips. 1851.
- TISCHENDORF: *Apocalypses Apocryphae Mosis, Esdrae, Pauli, Joannis, item Mariae Dormitio*. Lips. 1866.
- R. A. LIPSIUS: *Die apokryph Apostel geschichten und Apostel legenden*. Leipz. 1883 sq. 2 vols.

4. JEWISH sources: Philo and Josephus. Josephus is all-important for the history of the Jewish war and the destruction of Jerusalem, AD 70, which marks the complete rupture of the Christian Church with the Jewish synagogue and temple. The apocryphal Jewish, and the

Talmudic literature supplies information and illustrations of the training of the Apostles and the form of their teaching and the discipline and worship of the primitive church. Lightfoot, Schöttgen, Castelli, Delitzsch, Wünsche, Siegfried, Schürer, and a few others have made those sources available for the exegete and historian. Comp. here also the Jewish works of Jost, Graetz, and Geiger, mentioned § 9, p. 61, and HAMBURGER'S *Real-Encyclopädie des Judenthums* (für Bibel und Talmud), in course of publication.

5. HEATHEN WRITERS: TACITUS, PLINY, SUETONIUS, LUCIAN, CELSUS, PORPHYRY, JULIAN. They furnish only fragmentary, mostly incidental, distorted and hostile information, but of considerable apologetic value.
- Comp. NATH. LARDNER (d. 1768): *Collection of Ancient Jewish and Heathen Testimonies to the Truth of the Christian Religion*. Originally published in 4 vols. Lond. 1764–'67, and then in the several editions of his Works (vol. VI. 365–649, ed. Kippis).

#### HISTORIES OF THE APOSTOLIC AGE.

- WILLIAM CAVE (Anglican, d. 1713): *Lives of the Apostles, and the two Evangelists, St. Mark and St. Luke*. Lond. 1675, new ed. revised by H. Cary, Oxford, 1840 (reprinted in New York, 1857). Comp. also CAVE'S *Primitive Christianity*, 4th ed. Lond. 1862.
- JOH. FR. BUDDEUS (Luth., d. at Jena, 1729): *Ecclesia Apostolica*. Jen. 1729.
- GEORGE BENSON (d. 1763): *History of the First Planting of the Christian Religion*. Lond. 1756, 3 vols. 4to (in German by Bamberger, Halle, 1768).
- J. J. HESS (d. at Zurich, 1828): *Geschichte der Apostel Jesu*. Zür. 1788; 4th ed. 1820.
- GOTTL. JAC. PLANCK (d. in Göttingen, 1833): *Geschichte des Christenthums in der Periode seiner Einführung in die Welt durch Jesum und die Apostel*. Göttingen, 1818, 2 vols.
- \*AUG. NEANDER (d. in Berlin, 1850): *Geschichte der Pflanzung und Leitung der Christlichen Kirche durch die Apostel*. Hamb. 1832. 2 vols.; 4th ed. revised 1847. The same in English (*History of the Planting and Training of the Christ. Church*), by J. E. Ryland, Edinb. 1842, and in *Bohn's Standard Library*, Lond. 1851; reprinted in *Philad.* 1844; revised by E. G. Robinson, N.

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York, 1865. This book marks an epoch and is still valuable.

F. C. ALBERT SCHWEGLER (d. at Tübingen, 1857): *Das nachapostolische Zeitalter in den Hauptmomenten seiner Entwicklung*. Tübingen, 1845, 1846, 2 vols. An ultra-critical attempt to transpose the apostolic literature (with the exception of five books) into the post-apostolic age.

\*FERD. CHRIST. BAUR (d. 1860): *Das Christenthum und die christliche Kirche der drei ersten Jahrhunderte*. Tübingen, 1853, 2d revised ed. 1860 (536 pp.). The third edition is a mere reprint or title edition of the second and forms the first volume of his General Church History, edited by his son, in 5 vols. 1863. It is the last and ablest exposition of the Tübingen reconstruction of the apostolic history from the pen of the master of that school. See vol. I. pp. 1–174. English translation by Allen Menzies, in 2 vols. Lond. 1878 and 1879. Comp. also Baur's Paul, second ed. by Ed. Zeller, 1866 and 1867, and translated by A. Menzies, 2 vols. 1873, 1875. Baur's critical researches have compelled a thorough revision of the traditional views on the apostolic age, and have so far been very useful, notwithstanding their fundamental errors.

A. P. STANLEY (Dean of Westminster): *Sermons and Essays on the Apostolic Age*. Oxford, 1847. 3d ed. 1874.

\*HEINRICH W. J. THIERSCH (Irvingite, died 1885 in Basle): *Die Kirche im apostolischen Zeitalter*. *Francof. a. M.* 1852; 3d ed. Augsburg, 1879, "improved," but very slightly. (The same in English from the first ed. by Th. Carlyle. Lond. 1852.)

\*J. P. LANGE (d. 1884): *Das apostolische Zeitalter*. Braunsch. 1854. 2 vols.

PHILIP SCHAFF: *History of the Apostolic Church, first in German, Mercersburg, Penns.* 1851; 2d ed. enlarged, Leipzig, 1854; English translation by Dr. E. D. Yeomans, N. York, 1853, in 1 vol.; Edinb. 1854, in 2 vols.; several editions without change. (Dutch translation from the second Germ. ed. by T. W. Th. Lublink Weddik, Tiel, 1857.)

\*G. V. LECHLER (Prof. in Leipzig): *Das apostolische und das nachapostolische Zeitalter*. 2d ed. 1857; 3d ed. thoroughly revised, Leipzig, 1885.

*Engl. trsl. by Miss Davidson*, Edinb. 1887. Conservative.

\*ALBRECHT RITSCHL (d. in Göttingen, 1889): *Die Entstehung der altkatholischen Kirche*. 2d ed. Bonn, 1857. The first edition was in harmony with the Tübingen School; but the second is materially improved, and laid the foundation for the Ritschl School.

\*HEINRICH EWALD (d. at Göttingen, 1874): *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, vols. VI. and VII. 2d ed. Göttingen, 1858 and 1859. Vol. VI. of this great work contains the History of the Apostolic Age to the destruction of Jerusalem; vol. VII. the History of the post-Apostolic Age to the reign of Hadrian. English translation of the History of Israel by R. Martineau and J. E. Carpenter. Lond. 1869 sqq. A trans. of vols. VI. and VII. is not intended. Ewald (the "Urvogel von Göttingen") pursued an independent path in opposition both to the traditional orthodoxy and to the Tübingen school, which he denounced as worse than heathenish. See Preface to vol. VII.

\*E. DE PRESSENSÉ: *Histoire des trois premiers siècles de l'église chrétienne*. Par. 1858 sqq. 4 vols. German translation by E. Fabarius (Leipz. 1862–'65); English translation by Annie Harwood-Holmden (Lond. and N. York, 1870, new ed. Lond. 1879). The first volume contains the first century under the title *Le siècle apostolique*; rev. ed. 1887.

\*JOH. JOS. IGN. VON DÖLLINGER (Rom. Cath., since 1870 Old Cath.): *Christenthum und Kirche in der Zeit der Gründung*. Regensburg, 1860. 2d ed. 1868. The same translated into English by H. N. Oxenham. London, 1867.

C. S. VAUGHAN: *The Church of the First Days*. Lond. 1864–'65. 3 vols. Lectures on the Acts of the Apostles.

J. N. SEPP (Rom. Cath.): *Geschichte der Apostel Jesu bis zur Zerstörung Jerusalems*. Schaffhausen, 1866.

C. HOLSTEN: *Zum Evangelium des Paulus und des Petrus*. Rostock, 1868 (447 pp.).

PAUL WILH. SCHMIDT and FRANZ V. HOLTZENDORF: *Protestanten-Bibel Neuen Testaments*. Zweite, revid. Auflage. Leipzig, 1874. A popular exegetical summary of the Tübingen views with contributions from BRUCH, HILGENFELD, HOLSTEN, LIPSIUS, PFLEIDERER and others.

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A. B. BRUCE (Professor in Glasgow): *The Training of the Twelve*. Edinburgh, 1871, second ed. 1877.

\*ERNEST RENAN (de l'Académie Française): *Histoire des origines du Christianisme*. Paris, 1863 sqq. The first volume is *Vie de Jésus*, 1863, noticed in § 14 (pp. 97 and 98); then followed II. *Les Apôtres*, 1866; III. *St. Paul*, 1869; IV. *L'Antechrist*, 1873; V. *Les Évangiles*, 1877; VI. *L'Église Chrétienne*, 1879; VII. and last volume, *Marc-Aurèle*, 1882. The II., III., IV., and V. volumes belong to the Apostolic age; the last two to the next. The work of a sceptical outsider, of brilliant genius, eloquence, and secular learning. It increases in value as it advances. The *Life of Jesus* is the most interesting and popular, but also by far the most objectionable volume, because it deals almost profanely with the most sacred theme.

EMIL FERRIÈRE: *Les Apôtres*. Paris, 1875.

SUPERNATURAL RELIGION. An *Inquiry into the Reality of Divine Revelation*. Lond. 1873, (seventh), "complete ed., carefully revised," 1879, 3 vols. *This anonymous work is an English reproduction and repository of the critical speculations of the Tübingen School of Baur, Strauss, Zeller, Schwegler, Hilgenfeld, Volkmar, etc. It may be called an enlargement of Schwegler's Nachapostolisches Zeitalter*. The first volume is mostly taken up with a philosophical discussion of the question of miracles; the remainder of vol. I. (pp. 212–485) and vol. II. contain an historical inquiry into the apostolic origin of the canonical Gospels, with a negative result. The third volume discusses the Acts, the Epistles and the Apocalypse, and the evidence for the Resurrection and Ascension, which are resolved into hallucinations or myths. Starting with the affirmation of the antecedent incredibility of miracles, the author arrives at the conclusion of their impossibility; and this philosophical conclusion determines the historical investigation throughout. Dr. Schürer, in the "Theol. Literaturzeitung" for 1879, No. 26 (p. 622), denies to this work scientific value for Germany, but gives it credit for extraordinary familiarity with recent German literature and great industry in collecting historical details. Drs. Lightfoot, Sanday, Ezra Abbot, and others have exposed the defects of its scholarship, and the false

premises from which the writer reasons. The rapid sale of the work indicates the extensive spread of skepticism and the necessity of fighting over again, on Anglo-American ground, the theological battles of Germany and Holland; it is to be hoped with more triumphant success.

\*J. B. LIGHTFOOT (Bishop of Durham since 1879): A series of elaborate articles against "*Supernatural Religion*," in the "Contemporary Review" for 1875 to 1877. They should be republished in book form. Comp. also the reply of the anonymous author in the lengthy preface to the sixth edition. Lightfoot's Commentaries on Pauline Epistles contain valuable Excursuses on several historical questions of the apostolic age, especially *St. Paul and the Three, in the Com. on the Galatians*, pp. 283–355.

W. SANDAY: *The Gospels in the Second Century*. London, 1876. This is directed against the critical part of "*Supernatural Religion*." The eighth chapter on Marcion's Gnostic mutilation and reconstruction of *St. Luke's Gospel* (pp. 204 sqq.) had previously appeared in the "Fortnightly Review" for June, 1875, and finishes on English soil, a controversy which had previously been fought out on German soil, in the circle of the Tübingen School. The preposterous hypothesis of the priority of Marcion's Gospel was advocated by Ritschl, Baur and Schwegler, but refuted by Volkmar and Hilgenfeld, of the same school; whereupon Baur and Ritschl honorably abandoned their error. The anonymous author of "*Supernatural Religion*," in his seventh edition, has followed their example. The Germans conducted the controversy chiefly under its historic and dogmatic aspects; Sanday has added the philological and textual argument with the aid of Holtzmann's analysis of the style and vocabulary of Luke.

A. HAUSRATH (Prof. in Heidelberg): *Neutestamentliche Zeitgeschichte*. Heidelberg, 1873 sqq. Parts II. and III. (second ed. 1875) embrace the apostolic times, Part IV. (1877) the post-apostolic times. English translation by *Poynting and Quenzer*. Lond. 1878 sqq. H. belongs to the School of Tübingen.

DAN. SCHENKEL (Prof. in Heidelberg): *Das Christusbild der Apostel und der*

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*nachapostolischen Zeit*. Leipz. 1879. Comp. the review by H. Holtzmann in Hilgenfeld's "Zeitschrift für wissensch. Theol." 1879, p. 392.

H. OORT AND I. HOOYKAAS: *The Bible for Learners*, translated from the Dutch by Philip H. Wicksteed, vol. III. (the New Test., by Hooykaas), Book III. pp. 463–693 of the Boston ed. 1879. (In the Engl. ed. it is vol. VI.) This is a popular digest of the rationalistic Tübingen and Leyden criticism under the inspiration of Dr. A. Kuenen, *Professor of Theology at Leyden*. It agrees substantially with the *Protestanten-Bibel* noticed above.

\*GEORGE P. FISHER (Prof. in Yale College, New Haven): *The Beginnings of Christianity*. N. York, 1877. Comp. also the author's former work: *Essays on the Supernatural Origin of Christianity, with special reference to the Theories of Renan, Strauss, and the Tübingen School*. New York, 1865. New ed. enlarged, 1877.

\*C. WEIZSÄCKER (successor of Baur in Tübingen): *Das Apostolische Zeitalter*. Freiburg, 1886. Critical and very able.

\*O. PFLEIDERER (Prof. in Berlin): *Das Urchristenthum, seine Schriften und Lehren*. Berlin, 1887. (Tübingen School.)

III. *The Chronology of the Apostolic Age*.

RUDOLPH ANGER: *De temporum in Actis Apostolorum ratione*. Lips. 1833 (208 pp.).

HENRY BROWNE: *Ordo Saeculorum. A Treatise on the Chronology of the Holy Scriptures*. Lond. 1844. Pp. 95–163.

KARL WIESELER: *Chronologie des apostolischen Zeitalters*. Göttingen, 1848 (606 pp.).

The older and special works are noticed in Wieseler, pp. 6–9. See also the elaborate Synopsis of the dates of the Apostolic Age in Schäffer's translation of Lechler on Acts (in the Am. ed. of Lange's Commentary); Henry B. Smith's *Chronological Tables of Church History* (1860); and WEINGARTEN: *Zeittafeln zur K-Gesch.* 3d ed. 1888.

## 1.21 Character of the Apostolic Age

### EXTENT AND ENVIRONMENT OF THE APOSTOLIC AGE.

The apostolic period extends from the Day of Pentecost to the death of St. John, and covers about seventy years, from AD 30 to 100. The field of action is Palestine, and gradually extends over Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, and Italy.

The most prominent centres are Jerusalem, Antioch, and Rome, which represent respectively the mother churches of Jewish, Gentile, and United Catholic Christianity. Next to them are Ephesus and Corinth. Ephesus acquired a special importance by the residence and labors of John, which made themselves felt during the second century through Polycarp and Irenæus. Samaria, Damascus, Joppa, Caesarea, Tyre, Cyprus, the provinces of Asia Minor, Troas, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Crete, Patmos, Malta, Puteoli, come also into view as points where the Christian faith was planted.

Through the eunuch converted by Philip, it reached Candace, the queen of the Ethiopians. As early as AD 58 Paul could say: "From Jerusalem and round about even unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ." He afterwards carried it to Rome, where it had already been known before, and possibly as far as Spain, the western boundary of the empire.

The nationalities reached by the gospel in the first century were the Jews, the Greeks, and the Romans, and the languages used were the Hebrew or Aramaic, and especially the Greek, which was at that time the organ of civilization and of international intercourse within the Roman empire.

The contemporary secular history includes the reigns of the Roman Emperors from Tiberius to Nero and Domitian, who either ignored or persecuted Christianity. We are brought directly into contact with King Herod Agrippa I. (grandson of Herod the Great), the murderer of the apostle, James the Elder;

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with his son King Agrippa II. (the last of the Herodian house), who with his sister Bernice (a most corrupt woman) listened to Paul's defense; with two Roman governors, Felix and Festus; with Pharisees and Sadducees; with Stoics and Epicureans; with the temple and theatre at Ephesus, with the court of the Areopagus at Athens, and with Caesar's palace in Rome.

#### SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The author of Acts records the heroic march of Christianity from the capital of Judaism to the capital of heathenism with the same artless simplicity and serene faith as the Evangelists tell the story of Jesus; well knowing that it needs no embellishment, no apology, no subjective reflections, and that it will surely triumph by its inherent spiritual power.

The Acts and the Pauline Epistles accompany us with reliable information down to the year 63.

Peter and Paul are lost out of sight in the lurid fires of the Neronian persecution which seemed to consume Christianity itself. We know nothing certain of that satanic spectacle from authentic sources beyond the information of heathen historians. A few years afterwards followed the destruction of Jerusalem, which must have made an overpowering impression and broken the last ties which bound Jewish Christianity to the old theocracy. The event is indeed brought before us in the prophecy of Christ as recorded in the Gospels, but for the terrible fulfillment we are dependent on the account of an unbelieving Jew, which, as the testimony of an enemy, is all the more impressive.

The remaining thirty years of the first century are involved in mysterious darkness, illuminated only by the writings of John. This is a period of church history about which we know least and would like to know most. This period is the favorite field for ecclesiastical fables and critical conjectures. How thankfully would the historian hail the discovery of any new authentic documents

between the martyrdom of Peter and Paul and the death of John, and again between the death of John and the age of Justin Martyr and Irenæus.

#### CAUSES OF SUCCESS

As to the numerical strength of Christianity at the close of the first century, we have no information whatever. Statistical reports were unknown in those days. The estimate of half a million among the one hundred millions or more inhabitants of the Roman empire is probably exaggerated. The Pentecostal conversion of three thousand in one day at Jerusalem, and the "immense multitude" of martyrs under Nero, favor a high estimate.

The churches in Antioch also, Ephesus, and Corinth were strong enough to bear the strain of controversy and division into parties. But the majority of congregations were no doubt small, often a mere handful of poor people. In the country districts paganism (as the name indicates) lingered longest, even beyond the age of Constantine. The Christian converts belonged mostly to the middle and lower classes of society, such as fishermen, peasants, mechanics, traders, freedmen, slaves.

St. Paul says: "Not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble were called, but God chose the foolish things of the world, that he might put to shame them that are wise; and God chose the weak things of the world that he might put to shame the things that are strong; and the base things of the world, and the things that are despised, did God choose, yea, and the things that are not, that he might bring to naught the things that are: that no flesh should glory before God." And yet these poor, illiterate churches were the recipients of the noblest gifts, and alive to the deepest problems and highest thoughts which can challenge the attention of an immortal mind.

Christianity built from the foundation upward. From the lower ranks come the rising men of the future, who constantly



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reinforce the higher ranks and prevent their decay.

At the time of the conversion of Constantine, in the beginning of the fourth century, the number of Christians may have reached ten or twelve millions, that is about one-tenth of the total population of the Roman empire. Some estimate it higher.

The rapid success of Christianity under the most unfavorable circumstances is surprising and its own best vindication. It was achieved in the face of an indifferent or hostile world, and by purely spiritual and moral means, without shedding a drop of blood except that of its own innocent martyrs.

Gibbon, in the famous fifteenth chapter of his "History," attributes the rapid spread to five causes, namely:

- (1) the intolerant but enlarged religious zeal of the Christians inherited from the Jews;
- (2) the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, concerning which the ancient philosophers had but vague and dreamy ideas;
- (3) the miraculous powers attributed to the primitive church;
- (4) the purer but austere morality of the first Christians;
- (5) the unity and discipline of the church, which gradually formed a growing commonwealth in the heart of the empire.

But every one of these causes, properly understood, points to the superior excellence and to the divine origin of the Christian religion, and this is the chief cause, which the Deistic historian omits.

#### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE APOSTOLIC AGE

The life of Christ is the divine-human fountainhead of the Christian religion; the apostolic age is the fountainhead of the Christian church, as an organized society separate and distinct from the Jewish synagogue. It is the age of the Holy Spirit, the age of inspiration and legislation for all subsequent ages.

Here springs, in its original freshness and purity, the living water of the new creation. Christianity comes down from heaven as a supernatural fact, yet long predicted and prepared for, and adapted to the deepest wants of human nature. Signs and wonders and extraordinary demonstrations of the Spirit, for the conversion of unbelieving Jews and heathens, attend its entrance into the world of sin.

It takes up its permanent abode with our fallen race, to transform it gradually, without war or bloodshed, by a quiet, heaven-like process, into a kingdom of truth and righteousness. Modest and humble, lowly and unseemly in outward appearance, but steadily conscious of its divine origin and its eternal destiny; without silver or gold, but rich in supernatural gifts and powers, strong in faith, fervent in love, and joyful in hope; bearing in earthen vessels the imperishable treasures of heaven, it presents itself upon the stage of history as the only true, the perfect religion, for all the nations of the earth.

At first an insignificant and even contemptible sect in the eyes of the carnal mind, hated and persecuted by Jews and heathens, it confounds the wisdom of Greece and the power of Rome, soon plants the standard of the cross in the great cities of Asia, Africa, and Europe, and proves itself the hope of the world.

In virtue of this original purity, vigor, and beauty, and the permanent success of primitive Christianity, the canonical authority of the single but inexhaustible volume of its literature, and the character of the apostles, those inspired organs of the Holy Spirit, those untaught teachers of mankind, the apostolic age has an incomparable interest and importance in the history of the church.

It is the immovable groundwork of the whole. It has the same regulative force for all the subsequent developments of the church as the inspired writings of the apostles have for the works of all later Christian authors.

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Furthermore, the apostolic Christianity is preformative, and contains the living germs of all the following periods, personages, and tendencies. It holds up the highest standard of doctrine and discipline; it is the inspiring genius of all true progress; it suggests to every age its peculiar problem with the power to solve it. Christianity can never outgrow Christ, but it grows in Christ; theology cannot go beyond the word of God, but it must ever progress in the understanding and application of the word of God.

The three leading apostles represent not only the three stages of the apostolic church, but also as many ages and types of Christianity, and yet they are all present in every age and every type.

#### THE REPRESENTATIVE APOSTLES

PETER, PAUL, AND JOHN stand out most prominently as the chosen Three who accomplished the great work of the apostolic age, and exerted, by their writings and example, a controlling influence on all subsequent ages. To them correspond three centres of influence, Jerusalem, Antioch, and Rome.

Our Lord himself had chosen Three out of the Twelve for his most intimate companions, who alone witnessed the Transfiguration and the agony in Gethsemane. They fulfilled all the expectations, Peter and John by their long and successful labors, James the Elder by drinking early the bitter cup of his Master, as the proto-martyr of the Twelve. Since his death, AD 44, James, "the brother of the Lord" seems to have succeeded him, as one of the three "pillars" of the church of the circumcision, although he did not belong to the apostles in the strict sense of the term, and his influence, as the head of the church at Jerusalem, was more local than ecumenical.

Paul was called last and out of the regular order, by the personal appearance of the exalted Lord from heaven, and in authority and importance he was equal to any of the three pillars, but filled a place of his own, as

the independent apostle of the Gentiles. He had around him a small band of co-laborers and pupils, such as Barnabas, Silas, Titus, Timothy, Luke.

Nine of the original Twelve, including Matthias, who was chosen in the place of Judas, labored no doubt faithfully and effectively, in preaching the gospel throughout the Roman empire and to the borders of the barbarians, but in subordinate positions, and their labors are known to us only from vague and uncertain traditions.

The labors of James and Peter we can follow in the Acts to the Council of Jerusalem, AD 50, and a little beyond; those of Paul to his first imprisonment in Rome, AD 61–63; John lived to the close of the first century. As to their last labors we have no authentic information in the New Testament, but the unanimous testimony of antiquity that Peter and Paul suffered martyrdom in Rome during or after the Neronian persecution, and that John died a natural death at Ephesus.

The Acts breaks off abruptly with Paul still living and working, a prisoner in Rome, "preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, with all boldness, none forbidding him." A significant conclusion.

It would be difficult to find three men equally great and good, equally endowed with genius sanctified by grace, bound together by deep and strong love to the common Master, and laboring for the same cause, yet so different in temper and constitution, as Peter, Paul, and John. Peter stands out in history as the main pillar of the primitive church, as the Rock-apostle, as the chief of the twelve foundation-stones of the new Jerusalem; John as the bosom-friend of the Saviour, as the son of thunder, as the soaring eagle, as the apostle of love; Paul as the champion of Christian freedom and progress, as the greatest missionary, with "the care of all the churches" upon his heart, as the expounder of the Christian system of doctrine, as the father of Christian theology.

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Peter was a man of action, always in haste and ready to take the lead; the first to confess Christ, and the first to preach Christ on the day of Pentecost; Paul a man equally potent in word and deed; John a man of mystic contemplation. Peter was unlearned and altogether practical; Paul a scholar and thinker as well as a worker; John a theosophist and seer.

Peter was sanguine, ardent, impulsive, hopeful, kind-hearted, given to sudden changes, "consistently inconsistent" (to use an Aristotelian phrase); Paul was choleric, energetic, bold, noble, independent, uncompromising; John some what melancholic, introverted, reserved, burning within of love to Christ and hatred of Antichrist.

Peter's Epistles are full of sweet grace and comfort, the result of deep humiliation and rich experience; those of Paul abound in severe thought and logical argument, but rising at times to the heights of celestial eloquence, as in the seraphic description of love and the triumphant paeon of the eighth chapter of the Romans; John's writings are simple, serene, profound, intuitive, sublime, inexhaustible.

We would like to know more about the personal relations of these pillar-apostles, but must be satisfied with a few hints. They labored in different fields and seldom met face to face in their busy life. Time was too precious, their work too serious, for sentimental enjoyments of friendship.

Paul went to Jerusalem AD 40, three years after his conversion, for the express purpose of making the personal acquaintance of Peter, and spent two weeks with him; he saw none of the other apostles, but only James, the Lord's brother.

He met the pillar-apostles at the Conference in Jerusalem, AD 50, and concluded with them the peaceful concordat concerning the division of labor, and the question of circumcision; the older apostles gave him and

Barnabas "the right hands of fellowship" in token of brotherhood and fidelity.

Not long afterwards Paul met Peter a third time, at Antioch, but came into open collision with him on the great question of Christian freedom and the union of Jewish and Gentile converts.<sup>3</sup> The collision was merely temporary, but significantly reveals the profound commotion and fermentation of the apostolic age, and foreshadowed future antagonisms and reconciliations in the church.

Several years later (AD 57) Paul refers the last time to Cephas, and the brethren of the Lord, for the right to marry and to take a wife with him on his missionary journeys. Peter, in his first Epistle to Pauline churches, confirms them in their Pauline faith, and in his second Epistle, his last will and testament, he affectionately commends the letters of his "beloved brother Paul," adding, however, the characteristic remark, which all commentators must admit to be true, that (even beside the account of the scene in Antioch) there are in them "some things hard to be understood."<sup>5</sup> According to tradition (which varies considerably as to details), the great leaders of Jewish and Gentile Christianity met at Rome, were tried and condemned together, Paul, the Roman citizen, to the death by the sword on the Ostian road at Tre Fontane; Peter, the Galilean apostle, to the more degrading death of the cross on the hill of Janiculum.

John mentions Peter frequently in his Gospel, especially in the appendix, but never names Paul; he met him, as it seems, only once, at Jerusalem, gave him the right hand of fellowship, became his successor in the fruitful field of Asia Minor, and built on his foundation.

Peter was the chief actor in the first stage of apostolic Christianity and fulfilled the prophecy of his name in laying the foundation of the church among the Jews and the Gentiles. In the second stage he is overshadowed by the mighty labors of Paul;

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but after the apostolic age he stands out again most prominent in the memory of the church. He is chosen by the Roman communion as its special patron saint and as the first pope. He is always named before Paul. To him most of the churches are dedicated. In the name of this poor fisherman of Galilee, who had neither gold nor silver, and was crucified like a malefactor and a slave, the triple-crowned popes deposed kings, shook empires, dispensed blessings and curses on earth and in purgatory, and even now claim the power to settle infallibly all questions of Christian doctrine and discipline for the Catholic world. Paul was the chief actor in the second stage of the apostolic church, the apostle of the Gentiles, the founder of Christianity in Asia Minor and Greece, the emancipator of the new religion from the yoke of Judaism, the herald of evangelical freedom, the standard-bearer of reform and progress.

His controlling influence was felt also in Rome, and is clearly seen in the genuine Epistle of Clement, who makes more account of him than of Peter. But soon afterwards he is almost forgotten, except by name. He is indeed associated with Peter as the founder of the church of Rome, but in a secondary line; his Epistle to the Romans is little read and understood by the Romans even to this day; his church lies outside of the walls of the eternal city, while St. Peter's is its chief ornament and glory.

In Africa alone he was appreciated, first by the rugged and racy Tertullian, more fully by the profound Augustine, who passed through similar contrasts in his religious experience; but Augustine's Pauline doctrines of sin and grace had no effect whatever on the Eastern church, and were practically overpowered in the Western church by Pelagian tendencies. For a long time Paul's name was used and abused outside of the ruling orthodoxy and hierarchy by anti-catholic heretics and sectaries in their protest against the new yoke of traditionalism and ceremonialism. But in the sixteenth century he celebrated a

real resurrection and inspired the evangelical reformation. Then his Epistles to the Galatians and Romans were republished, explained, and applied with trumpet tongues by Luther and Calvin. Then his protest against Judaizing bigotry and legal bondage was renewed, and the rights of Christian liberty asserted on the largest scale.

Of all men in church history, St. Augustine not excepted, Martin Luther, once a contracted monk, then a prophet of freedom, has most affinity in word and work with the apostle of the Gentiles, and ever since Paul's genius has ruled the theology and religion of Protestantism.

As the gospel of Christ was cast out from Jerusalem to bless the Gentiles, so Paul's Epistle to the Romans was expelled from Rome to enlighten and to emancipate Protestant nations in the distant North and far West.

St. John, the most intimate companion of Jesus, the apostle of love, the seer who looked back to the ante-mundane beginning and forward to the post-mundane end of all things, and who is to tarry till the coming of the Lord, kept aloof from active part in the controversies between Jewish and Gentile Christianity. He appears prominent in the Acts and the Epistle to the Galatians, as one of the pillar-apostles, but not a word of his is reported.

He was waiting in mysterious silence, with a reserved force, for his proper time, which did not come till Peter and Paul had finished their mission. Then, after their departure, he revealed the hidden depths of his genius in his marvelous writings, which represent the last and crowning work of the apostolic church. John has never been fully fathomed, but it has been felt throughout all the periods of church history that he has best understood and portrayed the Master, and may yet speak the last word in the conflict of ages and usher in an era of harmony and peace. Paul is the heroic captain of the church militant, John the mystic prophet of the church triumphant.

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Far above them all, throughout the apostolic age and all subsequent ages, stands the one great Master from whom Peter, Paul, and John drew their inspiration, to whom they bowed in holy adoration, whom alone they served and glorified in life and in death, and to whom they still point in their writings as the perfect image of God, as the Saviour from sin and death, as the Giver of eternal life, as the divine harmony of conflicting creeds and schools, as the Alpha and Omega of the Christian faith.

### **1.22 The Critical Reconstruction of the History of the Apostolic Age**

Never before in the history of the church has the origin of Christianity, with its original documents, been so thoroughly examined from standpoints entirely opposite as in the present generation. It has engaged the time and energy of many of the ablest scholars and critics.

Such is the importance and the power of that little book which "contains the wisdom of the whole world," that it demands ever new investigation and sets serious minds of all shades of belief and unbelief in motion, as if their very life depended upon its acceptance or rejection.

There is not a fact or doctrine which has not been thoroughly searched. The whole life of Christ, and the labors and writings of the apostles with their tendencies, antagonisms, and reconciliations are theoretically reproduced among scholars and reviewed under all possible aspects. The post-apostolic age has by necessary connection been drawn into the process of investigation and placed in a new light.

The great biblical scholars among the Fathers were chiefly concerned in drawing from the sacred records the catholic doctrines of salvation, and the precepts for a holy life; the Reformers and older Protestant divines studied them afresh with special zeal for the evangelical tenets which separated them from the Roman church; but all stood on the

common ground of a reverential belief in the divine inspiration and authority of the Scriptures.

The present age is preëminently historical and critical. The Scriptures are subjected to the same process of investigation and analysis as any other literary production of antiquity, with no other purpose than to ascertain the real facts in the case.

We want to know the precise origin, gradual growth, and final completion of Christianity as an historical phenomenon in organic connection with contemporary events and currents of thought.

The whole process through which it passed from the manger in Bethlehem to the cross of Calvary, and from the upper room in Jerusalem to the throne of the Caesars is to be reproduced, explained and understood according to the laws of regular historical development.

And in this critical process the very foundations of the Christian faith have been assailed and undermined, so that the question now is, "to be or not to be." The remark of Goethe is as profound as it is true: "The conflict of faith and unbelief remains the proper, the only, the deepest theme of the history of the world and mankind, to which all others are subordinated."

The modern critical movement began, we may say, about 1830, is still in full progress, and is likely to continue to the end of the nineteenth century, as the apostolic church itself extended over a period of seventy years before it had developed its resources. It was at first confined to Germany (Strauss, Baur, and the Tübingen School), then spread to France (Renan) and Holland (Scholten, Kuenen), and last to England ("Supernatural Religion") and America, so that the battle now extends along the whole line of Protestantism.

There are two kinds of biblical criticism, verbal and historical.

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### TEXTUAL CRITICISM

The verbal or textual criticism has for its object to restore as far as possible the original text of the Greek Testament from the oldest and most trustworthy sources, namely, the uncial manuscripts (especially, the Vatican and Sinaitic), the ante-Nicene versions, and the patristic quotations. In this respect our age has been very successful, with the aid of most important discoveries of ancient manuscripts.

By the invaluable labors of Lachmann, who broke the path for the correct theory (*Novum Testament. Gr.*, 1831, large Graeco-Latin edition, 1842–50, 2 vols.), Tischendorf (8th critical ed., 1869–72, 2 vols.), Tregelles (1857, completed 1879), Westcott and Hort (1881, 2 vols.), we have now in the place of the comparatively late and corrupt *textus receptus* of Erasmus and his followers (Stephens, Beza, and the Elzevirs), which is the basis of all Protestant versions in common use, a much older and purer text, which must henceforth be made the basis of all revised translations.

After a severe struggle between the traditional and the progressive schools there is now in this basal department of biblical learning a remarkable degree of harmony among critics. The new text is in fact the older text, and the reformers are in this case the restorers. Far from unsettling the faith in the New Testament, the results have established the substantial integrity of the text, notwithstanding the one hundred and fifty thousand readings which have been gradually gathered from all sources. It is a noteworthy fact that the greatest textual critics of the nineteenth century are believers, not indeed in a mechanical or magical inspiration, which is untenable and not worth defending, but in the divine origin and authority of the canonical writings, which rest on far stronger grounds than any particular human theory of inspiration.

### HISTORICAL CRITICISM

The historical or inner criticism (which the Germans call the "higher criticism," *höhere Kritik*) deals with the origin, spirit, and aim of the New Testament writings, their historical environments, and organic place in the great intellectual and religious process which resulted in the triumphant establishment of the catholic church of the second century. It assumed two very distinct shapes under the lead of Dr. NEANDER in Berlin (d. 1850), and Dr. BAUR in Tübingen (d. 1860), who labored in the mines of church history at a respectful distance from each other and never came into personal contact. Neander and Baur were giants, equal in genius and learning, honesty and earnestness, but widely different in spirit.

They gave a mighty impulse to historical study and left a long line of pupils and independent followers who carry on the historico-critical reconstruction of primitive Christianity. Their influence is felt in France, Holland and England. Neander published the first edition of his *Apostolic Age* in 1832, his *Life of Jesus* (against Strauss) in 1837 (the first volume of his *General Church History* had appeared already in 1825, revised ed. 1842); Baur wrote his essay on the *Corinthian Parties* in 1831, his critical investigations on the canonical Gospels in 1844 and 1847, his "Paul" in 1845 (second ed. by Zeller, 1867), and his "Church History of the First Three Centuries" in 1853 (revised 1860). His pupil Strauss had preceded him with his first *Leben Jesu* (1835), which created a greater sensation than any of the works mentioned, surpassed only by that of Renan's *Vie de Jésus*, nearly thirty years later (1863).

Renan reproduces and popularizes Strauss and Baur for the French public with independent learning and brilliant genius, and the author of "Supernatural Religion" reëchoes the Tübingen and Leyden speculations in England. On the other hand Bishop Lightfoot, the leader of conservative criticism; declares that he has learnt more from the German Neander than from any

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recent theologian ("Contemp. Review" for 1875, p. 866. Matthew Arnold says (*Literature and Dogma*, Preface, p. xix.): "To get the facts, the data, in all matters of science, but notably in theology and Biblical learning, one goes to Germany.

Germany, and it is her high honor, has searched out the facts and exhibited them. And without knowledge of the facts, no clearness or fairness of mind can in any study do anything; this cannot be laid down too rigidly." But he denies to the Germans "quickness and delicacy of perception." Something more is necessary than learning and perception to draw the right conclusions from the facts: sound common sense and well-balanced judgment.

And when we deal with sacred and supernatural facts, we need first and last a reverential spirit and that faith which is the organ of the supernatural. It is here where the two schools depart, without difference of nationality; for faith is not a national but an individual gift.

#### THE TWO ANTAGONISTIC SCHOOLS

The two theories of the apostolic history, introduced by Neander and Baur, are antagonistic in principle and aim, and united only by the moral bond of an honest search for truth. The one is conservative and reconstructive, the other radical and destructive. The former accepts the canonical Gospels and Acts as honest, truthful, and credible memoirs of the life of Christ and the labors of the apostles; the latter rejects a great part of their contents as unhistorical myths or legends of the post-apostolic age, and on the other hand gives undue credit to wild heretical romances of the second century.

The one draws an essential line of distinction between truth as maintained by the orthodox church, and error as held by heretical parties; the other obliterates the lines and puts the heresy into the inner camp of the apostolic church itself. The one proceeds on the basis of faith in God and Christ, which implies faith in

the supernatural and miraculous wherever it is well attested; the other proceeds from disbelief in the supernatural and miraculous as a philosophical impossibility, and tries to explain the gospel history and the apostolic history from purely natural causes like every other history.

The one has a moral and spiritual as well as intellectual interest in the New Testament, the other a purely intellectual and critical interest. The one approaches the historical investigation with the subjective experience of the divine truth in the heart and conscience, and knows and feels Christianity to be a power of salvation from sin and error; the other views it simply as the best among the many religions which are destined to give way at last to the sovereignty of reason and philosophy.

The controversy turns on the question whether there is a God in History or not; as the contemporaneous struggle in natural science turns on the question whether there is a God in nature or not. Belief in a personal God almighty and omnipresent in history and in nature, implies the possibility of supernatural and miraculous revelation.

Absolute freedom from prepossession (*Voraussetzungslosigkeit* such as Strauss demanded) is absolutely impossible, "*ex nihilo nihil fit.*" There is prepossession on either side of the controversy, the one positive, the other negative, and history itself must decide between them. The facts must rule philosophy, not philosophy the facts. If it can be made out that the life of Christ and the apostolic church can be psychologically and historically explained only by the admission of the supernatural element which they claim, while every other explanation only increases the difficulty, of the problem and substitutes an unnatural miracle for a supernatural one, the historian has gained the case, and it is for the philosopher to adjust his theory to history.

The duty of the historian is not to make the facts, but to discover them, and then to

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construct his theory wide enough to give them all comfortable room.

#### THE ALLEGED ANTAGONISM IN THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH

The theory of the Tübingen school starts from the assumption of a fundamental antagonism between Jewish or primitive Christianity represented by Peter, and Gentile or progressive Christianity represented by Paul, and resolves all the writings of the New Testament into tendency writings (*Tendenzschriften*), which give us not history pure and simple, but adjust it to a doctrinal and practical aim in the interest of one or the other party, or of a compromise between the two.

The Epistles of Paul to the Galatians, Romans, First and Second Corinthians—which are admitted to be genuine beyond any doubt, exhibit the anti-Jewish and universal Christianity, of which Paul himself must be regarded as the chief founder. The Apocalypse, which was composed by the apostle John in 69, exhibits the original Jewish and contracted Christianity, in accordance with his position as one of the “pillar”-apostles of the circumcision (Gal. 2:9), and it is the only authentic document of the older apostles.

Baur (*Gesch. der christl. Kirche*, I., 80 sqq.) and Renan (*St. Paul*, ch. X.) go so far as to assert that this genuine John excludes Paul from the list of the apostles (Apoc. 21:14, which leaves no room for more than twelve), and indirectly attacks him as a “false Jew” (Apoc. 2:9; 3:9), a “false apostle” (2:2), a “false prophet” (2:20), as “Balaam” (2:2, 6, 14; comp. Jude 11; 2 Pet. 2:15); just as the Clementine Homilies assail him under the name of Simon the Magician and arch-heretic. Renan interprets also the whole Epistle of Jude, a brother of James, as an attack upon Paul, issued from Jerusalem in connection with the Jewish counter-mission organized by James, which nearly ruined the work of Paul.

The other writings of the New Testament are post-apostolic productions and exhibit the various phases of a unionistic movement, which resulted in the formation of the orthodox church of the second and third centuries. The Acts of the Apostles is a Catholic Irenicon which harmonizes Jewish and Gentile Christianity by liberalizing Peter and contracting or Judaizing Paul, and concealing the difference between them; and though probably based on an earlier narrative of Luke, it was not put into its present shape before the close of the first century.

The canonical Gospels, whatever may have been the earlier records on which they are based, are likewise post-apostolic, and hence untrustworthy as historical narratives. The Gospel of John is a purely ideal composition of some unknown Gnostic or mystic of profound religious genius, who dealt with the historic Jesus as freely as Plato in his Dialogues dealt with Socrates, and who completed with consummate literary skill this unifying process in the age of Hadrian, certainly not before the third decade of the second century. Baur brought it down as late as 170; Hilgenfeld put it further back to 140, Keim to 130, Renan to the age of Hadrian.

Thus the whole literature of the New Testament is represented as the living growth of a century, as a collection of polemical and irenic tracts of the apostolic and post-apostolic ages. Instead of contemporaneous, reliable history we have a series of intellectual movements and literary fictions. Divine revelation gives way to subjective visions and delusions, inspiration is replaced by development, truth by a mixture of truth and error. The apostolic literature is put on a par with the controversial literature of the Nicene age, which resulted in the Nicene orthodoxy, or with the literature of the Reformation period, which led to the formation of the Protestant system of doctrine.



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History never repeats itself, yet the same laws and tendencies reappear in ever-changing forms. This modern criticism is a remarkable renewal of the views held by heretical schools in the second century. The Ebionite author of the pseudo-Clementine Homilies and the Gnostic Marcion likewise assumed an irreconcilable antagonism between Jewish and Gentile Christianity, with this difference, that the former opposed Paul as the arch-heretic and defamer of Peter, while Marcion (about 140) regarded Paul as the only true apostle, and the older apostles as Jewish perverters of Christianity; consequently he rejected the whole Old Testament and such books of the New Testament as he considered Judaizing, retaining in his canon only a mutilated Gospel of Luke and ten of the Pauline Epistles (excluding the Pastoral Epistles and the Epistle to the Hebrews). In the eyes of modern criticism these wild heretics are better historians of the apostolic age than the author of the Acts of the Apostles.

The Gnostic heresy, with all its destructive tendency, had an important mission as a propelling force in the ancient church and left its effects upon patristic theology. So also this modern gnosticism must be allowed to have done great service to biblical and historical learning by removing old prejudices, opening new avenues of thought, bringing to light the immense fermentation of the first century, stimulating research, and compelling an entire scientific reconstruction of the history of the origin of Christianity and the church. The result will be a deeper and fuller knowledge, not to the weakening but to the strengthening of our faith.

#### REACTION

There is considerable difference among the scholars of this higher criticism, and while some pupils of Baur (e.g. Strauss, Volkmar) have gone even beyond his positions, others make concessions to the traditional views. A most important change took place in Baur's own mind as regards the conversion of Paul,

which he confessed at last, shortly before his death (1860), to be to him an insolvable psychological problem amounting to a miracle. Ritschl, Holtzmann, Lipsius, Pfleiderer, and especially Reuss, Weizsäcker, and Keim (who are as free from orthodox prejudices as the most advanced critics) have modified and corrected many of the extreme views of the Tübingen school. Even Hilgenfeld, with all his zeal for the "Fortschrittstheologie" and against the "Rückschrittstheologie," admits seven instead of four Pauline Epistles as genuine, assigns an earlier date to the Synoptical Gospels and the Epistle to the Hebrews (which he supposes to have been written by Apollos before 70), and says: "It cannot be denied that Baur's criticism went beyond the bounds of moderation and inflicted too deep wounds on the faith of the church" (*Hist. Krit. Einleitung in das N. T.* 1875, p. 197).

Renan admits nine Pauline Epistles, the essential genuineness of the Acts, and even the narrative portions of John, while he rejects the discourses as pretentious, inflated, metaphysical, obscure, and tiresome! (See his last discussion of the subject in *L'église chrétienne*, ch. I-V. pp. 45 sqq.) Matthew Arnold and other critics reverse the proposition and accept the discourses as the sublimest of all human compositions, full of "heavenly glories" (*himmlische Herrlichkeiten*, to use an expression of Keim, who, however, rejects the fourth Gospel altogether).

Schenkel (in his *Christusbild der Apostel*, 1879) considerably moderates the antagonism between Petrinism and Paulinism, and confesses (Preface, p. xi.) that in the progress of his investigations he has been "forced to the conviction that the Acts of the Apostles is a more trustworthy source of information than is commonly allowed on the part of the modern criticism; that older documents worthy of credit, besides the well known *We*-source (*Wirquelle*) are contained in it; and that the Paulinist who composed it has not intentionally distorted the facts, but only placed them in the light in which they

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appeared to him and must have appeared to him from the time and circumstances under which he wrote.

He has not, in my opinion, artificially brought upon the stage either a Paulinized Peter, or a Petrinized Paul, in order to mislead his readers, but has portrayed the two apostles just as he actually conceived of them on the basis of his incomplete information." Keim, in his last work (*Aus dem Urchristenthum*, 1878, a year before his death), has come to a similar conclusion, and proves (in a critical essay on the *Apostelkonvent*, pp. 64–89) in opposition to Baur, Schwegler, and Zeller, yet from the same standpoint of liberal criticism, and allowing later additions, the substantial harmony between the Acts and the Epistle to the Galatians as regards the apostolic conference and concordat of Jerusalem. Ewald always pursued his own way and equaled Baur in bold and arbitrary criticism, but violently opposed him and defended the Acts and the Gospel of John.

To these German voices we may add the testimony of Matthew Arnold, one of the boldest and broadest of the broad-school divines and critics, who with all his admiration for Baur represents him as an "unsafe guide," and protests against his assumption of a bitter hatred of Paul and the pillar-apostles as entirely inconsistent with the conceded religious greatness of Paul and with the nearness of the pillar-apostles to Jesus (*God and the Bible*, 1875, Preface, vii–xii).

As to the fourth Gospel, which is now the most burning spot of this burning controversy, the same author, after viewing it from without and from within, comes to the conclusion that it is, "no fancy-piece, but a serious and invaluable document, full of incidents given by tradition and genuine 'sayings of the Lord' " (p. 370), and that "after the most free criticism has been fairly and strictly applied, ... there is yet left an authentic residue comprising all the profoundest, most important, and most

beautiful things in the fourth Gospel" (p. 372 sq.).

#### THE POSITIVE SCHOOL

While there are signs of disintegration in the ranks of destructive criticism, the historic truth and genuineness of the New Testament writings have found learned and able defenders from different standpoints, such as Neander, Ullmann, C. F. Schmid (the colleague of Baur in Tübingen), Rothe, Dorner, Ebrard, Lechler, Lange, Thiersch, Wieseler, Hofmann (of Erlangen), Luthardt, Christlieb, Beyschlag, Uhlhorn, Weiss, Godet, Edm. de Pressensé.

The English and American mind also has fairly begun to grapple manfully and successfully, with these questions in such scholars as Lightfoot, Plumptre, Westcott, Sanday, Farrar, G. P. Fisher, Ezra Abbot (on the *Authorship of the Fourth Gospel*, 1880). English and American theology is not likely to be extensively demoralized by these hypercritical speculations of the Continent. It has a firmer foothold in an active church life and the convictions and affections of the people. The German and French mind, like the Athenian, is always bent upon telling and hearing something new, while the Anglo-American mind cares more for what is true, whether it be old or new. And the truth must ultimately prevail.

#### ST. PAUL'S TESTIMONY TO HISTORICAL CHRISTIANITY

Fortunately even the most exacting school of modern criticism leaves us a fixed fulcrum from which we can argue the truth of Christianity, namely, the four Pauline Epistles to the Galatians, Romans, and Corinthians, which are pronounced to be unquestionably genuine and made the Archimedean point of assault upon the other parts of the New Testament.

We propose to confine ourselves to them. They are of the utmost historical as well as doctrinal importance; they represent the first Christian generation, and were written between 54 and 58, that is within a quarter of

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the century after the crucifixion, when the older apostles and most of the principal eye-witnesses of the life of Christ were still alive. The writer himself was a contemporary of Christ; he lived in Jerusalem at the time of the great events on which Christianity rests; he was intimate with the Sanhedrin and the murderers of Christ; he was not blinded by favorable prejudice, but was a violent persecutor, who had every motive to justify his hostility; and after his radical conversion (AD 37) he associated with the original disciples and could learn their personal experience from their own lips (Gal. 1:18; 2:1-11).

Now in these admitted documents of the best educated of the apostles we have the clearest evidence of all the great events and truths of primitive Christianity, and a satisfactory answer to the chief objections and difficulties of modern skepticism.

They prove:

1. The leading facts in the life of Christ, his divine mission, his birth from a woman, of the royal house of David, his holy life and example, his betrayal, passion, and death for the sins of the world, his resurrection on the third day, his repeated manifestations to the disciples, his ascension and exaltation to the right hand of God, whence he will return to judge mankind, the adoration of Christ as the Messiah, the Lord and Saviour from sin, the eternal Son of God; also the election of the Twelve, the institution of baptism and the Lord's Supper, the mission of the Holy Spirit, the founding of the church. Paul frequently alludes to these facts, especially the crucifixion and resurrection, not in the way of a detailed narrative, but incidentally and in connection with doctrinal expositions and exhortations as addressed to men already familiar with them from oral preaching and instruction. Comp. Gal 3:13; 4:4-6; 6:14; Rom. 1:3; 4:24, 25; 5:8-21; 6:3-10; 8:3-11, 26, 39; 9:5; 10:6, 7;

14:5; 15:3 1 Cor. 1:23; 2:2, 12; 5:7; 6:14; 10:16; 11:23-26; 15:3-8, 45-49; 2 Cor. 5:21.

2. Paul's own conversion and call to the apostleship by the personal appearance to him of the exalted Redeemer from heaven. Gal. 1:1, 15, 16; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8.
3. The origin and rapid progress of the Christian church in all parts of the Roman empire, from Jerusalem to Antioch and Rome, in Judaea, in Syria, in Asia Minor, in Macedonia and Achaia. The faith of the Roman church, he says, was known "throughout the world," and "in every place" there were worshippers of Jesus as their Lord. And these little churches maintained a lively and active intercourse with each other, and though founded by different teachers and distracted by differences of opinion and practice, they worshipped the same divine Lord, and formed one brotherhood of believers. Gal. 1:2, 22; 2:1, 11; Rom. 1:8; 10:18; 16:26; 1 Cor. 1:12; 8:1; 16:19, etc.
4. The presence of miraculous powers in the church at that time. Paul himself wrought the signs and mighty deeds of an apostle. Rom. 15:18, 19; 1 Cor. 2:4; 9:2; 2 Cor. 12:12. He lays, however, no great stress on the outer sensible miracles, and makes more account of the inner moral miracles and the constant manifestations of the power of the Holy Spirit in regenerating and sanctifying sinful men in an utterly corrupt state of society. 1 Cor. 12 to 14; 6:9-11; Gal. 5:16-26; Rom. 6 and 8.
5. The existence of much earnest controversy in these young churches, not indeed about the great facts on which their faith was based, and which were fully admitted on both sides, but about doctrinal and ritual inferences from these facts, especially the question of the continued obligation of circumcision and the Mosaic law, and the personal question of the apostolic authority of Paul. The Judaizers maintained the superior claims of the older apostles and charged him

with a radical departure from the venerable religion of their fathers; while Paul used against them the argument that the expiatory death of Christ and his resurrection were needless and useless if justification came from the law. Gal. 2:21; 5:2-4.

6. The essential doctrinal and spiritual harmony of Paul with the elder apostles, notwithstanding their differences of standpoint and field of labor. Here the testimony of the Epistle to the Galatians 2:1-10, which is the very bulwark of the skeptical school, bears strongly against it. For Paul expressly states that the, "pillar"-apostles of the circumcision, James, Peter, and John, at the conference in Jerusalem AD 50, approved the gospel he had been preaching during the preceding fourteen years; that they "imparted nothing" to him, gave him no new instruction, imposed on him no new terms, nor burden of any kind, but that, on the contrary, they recognized the grace of God in him and his special mission to the Gentiles, and gave him and Barnabas "the right hands of fellowship" in token of their brotherhood and fidelity. He makes a clear and sharp distinction between the apostles and "the false brethren privily brought in, who came to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage," and to whom he would not yield, "no, not for an hour." The hardest words he has for the Jewish apostles are epithets of honor; he calls them, the pillars of the church, "the men in high repute" (οἱ στῦλοι, οἱ δοκοῦντες, Gal. 2:6, 9); while he considered himself in sincere humility "the least of the apostles," because he persecuted the church of God (1 Cor. 15:9). This statement of Paul makes it simply impossible and absurd to suppose (with Baur, Schwegler, Zeller, and Renan) that John should have so contradicted and stultified himself as to attack, in the Apocalypse, the same Paul whom he had

recognized as a brother during his life, as a false apostle and chief of the synagogue of Satan after his death. Such a reckless and monstrous assertion turns either Paul or John into a liar. The antinomian and antichristian heretics of the Apocalypse who plunged into all sorts of moral and ceremonial pollutions (Apoc. 2:14, 15) would have been condemned by Paul as much as by John; yea, he himself, in his parting address to the Ephesian elders, had prophetically foreannounced and described such teachers as "grievous wolves" that would after his departure enter in among them or rise from the midst of them, not sparing the flock (Acts 20:29, 30). On the question of fornication he was in entire harmony with the teaching of the Apocalypse (1 Cor. 3:15, 16; 6:15-20); and as to the question of eating meat offered in sacrifice to idols (τὰ εἰδδωλόθυστα), though he regarded it as a thing indifferent in itself, considering the vanity of idols, yet he condemned it whenever it gave offence to the weak consciences of the more scrupulous Jewish converts (1 Cor. 8:7-13; 10:23-33; Rom. 14:2, 21); and this was in accord with the decree of the Apostolic Council (Acts 15:29).

7. Paul's collision with Peter at Antioch, Gal. 2:11-14. which is made the very bulwark of the Tübingen theory, proves the very reverse. For it was not a difference in principle and doctrine; on the contrary, Paul expressly asserts that Peter at first freely and habitually (mark the imperfect *συνήσθιεν*, Gal. 2:12) associated with the Gentile converts as brethren in Christ, but was intimidated by emissaries from the bigoted Jewish converts in Jerusalem and acted against his better conviction which he had entertained ever since the vision at Joppa (Acts 10:10-16), and which he had so boldly confessed at the Council in Jerusalem (Acts 15:7-11) and carried out in Antioch. We have here the same impulsive, impressible, changeable

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disciple, the first to confess and the first to deny his Master, yet quickly returning to him in bitter repentance and sincere humility. It is for this inconsistency of conduct, which Paul called by the strong term of dissimulation or hypocrisy, that he, in his uncompromising zeal for the great principle of Christian liberty, reproved him publicly before the church. A public wrong had to be publicly rectified. According to the Tübingen hypothesis the hypocrisy would have been in the very opposite conduct of Peter. The silent submission of Peter on the occasion proves his regard for his younger colleague, and speaks as much to his praise as his weakness to his blame. That the alienation was only temporary and did not break up their fraternal relation is apparent from the respectful though frank manner in which, several years after the occurrence, they allude to each other as fellow apostles, Comp. Gal. 1:18, 19; 2:8, 9; 1 Cor. 9:5; 2 Pet. 3:15, 16, and from the fact that Mark and Silas were connecting links between them and alternately served them both.

The Epistle to the Galatians then furnishes the proper solution of the difficulty, and essentially confirms the account of the Acts. It proves the harmony as well as the difference between Paul and the older apostles. It explodes the hypothesis that they stood related to each other like the Marcionites and Ebionites in the second century. These were the descendants of the *heretics* of the apostolic age, of the "false brethren insidiously brought in" (ψευδάδελφοί παρείσακτοι, Gal. 2:4); while the true apostles recognized and continued to recognize the same grace of God which wrought effectually through Peter for the conversion of the Jews, and through Paul for the conversion of the Gentiles. That the Judaizers should have appealed to the Jewish apostles, and the antinomian Gnostics to Paul, as their authority, is not more surprising than the

appeal of the modern rationalists to Luther and the Reformation.

We have thus discussed at the outset, and at some length, the fundamental difference of the two standpoints from which the history of the apostolic church is now viewed, and have vindicated our own general position in this controversy.

It is not to be supposed that all the obscure points have already been satisfactorily cleared up, or ever will be solved beyond the possibility of dispute. There must be some room left for faith in that God who has revealed himself clearly enough in nature and in history to strengthen our faith, and who is concealed enough to try our faith. Certain interstellar spaces will always be vacant in the firmament of the apostolic age that men may gaze all the more intensely at the bright stars, before which the post-apostolic books disappear like torches. A careful study of the ecclesiastical writers of the second and third centuries, and especially of the numerous Apocryphal Acts, Epistles, and Apocalypses, leaves on the mind a strong impression of the immeasurable superiority of the New Testament in purity and truthfulness, simplicity and majesty; and this superiority points to a special agency of the Spirit of God, without which that book of books is an inexplicable mystery.

### 1.23 Chronology of the Apostolic Age

The chronology of the apostolic age is partly certain, at least within a few years, partly conjectural: certain as to the principal events from AD 30 to 70, conjectural as to intervening points and the last thirty years of the first century. The sources are the New Testament (especially the Acts and the Pauline Epistles), Josephus, and the Roman historians. Josephus (b. 37, d. 103) is especially valuable here, as he wrote the Jewish history down to the destruction of Jerusalem.

The following dates are more or less certain and accepted by most historians:

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1. The founding of the Christian Church on the feast of Pentecost in May AD 30. This is on the assumption that Christ was born B.C. 4 or 5, and was crucified in April AD 30, at an age of thirty-three.
  2. The death of King Herod Agrippa I. AD 44 (according to Josephus). This settles the date of the preceding martyrdom of James the elder, Peter's imprisonment and release Acts 12:2, 23).
  3. The Apostolic Council in Jerusalem, AD 50 (Acts 15:1 sqq.; Gal. 2:1-10). This date is ascertained by reckoning backwards to Paul's conversion, and forward to the Caesarean captivity. Paul was probably converted in 37, and "fourteen years" elapsed from that event to the Council. But chronologists differ on the year of Paul's conversion, between 31 and 40.
  4. The dates of the Epistles to the Galatians, Corinthians, and Romans, between 56 and 58. The date of the Epistle to the Romans can be fixed almost to the month from its own indications combined with the statements of the Acts. It was written before the apostle had been in Rome, but when he was on the point of departure for Jerusalem and Rome on the way to Spain, after having finished his collections in Macedonia and Achaia for the poor brethren in Judaea;<sup>3</sup> and he sent the epistle through Phoebe, a deaconess of the congregation in the eastern port of Corinth, where he was at that time. These indications point clearly to the spring of the year 58, for in that year he was taken prisoner in Jerusalem and carried to Caesarea.
  5. Paul's captivity in Caesarea, AD 58 to 60, during the procuratorship of Felix and Festus, who changed places in 60 or 61, probably in 60. This important date we can ascertain by combination from several passages in Josephus, and Tacitus. It enables us at the same time, by reckoning backward, to fix some preceding events in the life of the apostle.
  6. Paul's first captivity in Rome, AD 61 to 63. This follows from the former date in connection with the statement in Acts 28:30.
  7. The Epistles of the Roman captivity, Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon, AD 61-63.
  8. The Neronian persecution, AD 64 (the tenth year of Nero, according to Tacitus). The martyrdom of Paul and Peter occurred either then, or (according to tradition) a few years later. The question depends on the second Roman captivity of Paul.
  9. The destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, AD 70 (according to Josephus and Tacitus).
  10. The death of John after the accession of Trajan, AD 98 (according to general ecclesiastical tradition).
- The dates of the Synoptic Gospels, the Acts, the Pastoral Epistles, the Hebrews, and the Epistles of Peter, James, and Jude cannot be accurately ascertained except that they were composed before the destruction of Jerusalem, mostly between 60 and 70. The writings of John were written after that date and towards the close of the first century, except the Apocalypse, which some of the best scholars, from internal indications assign to the year 68 or 69, between the death of Nero and the destruction of Jerusalem.