

PAUL, ALIAS SIMON THE MAGICIAN

BY ROBERT P. RICHARDSON

DEVOTION to historical truth has never been the distinguishing feature of religious writings, and nowhere has its lack been more in evidence than in the orthodox works dealing with Paul, the Christian saint. Here the reverential attitude taken by modern Christians towards their canonical scriptures have made them reluctant even to listen to hostile extra-biblical accounts of Paul's career. To take this stand is obviously to stultify common sense which bids us give at least a hearing to the enemies of a historic personage and not trust solely to the *ex parte* tales of himself and his friends. Yet not satisfied with leaving entirely out of consideration the accusations that tradition says his enemies levelled against him, his modern admirers are even unwilling to accept Paul's own story when this runs counter to their preconceptions of apostolic harmony.

That controversy soon arose between Paul and the original disciples of Jesus is clearly evinced in Paul's *Epistle to the Galatians*. The Galatians, we here learn, had "quickly" fallen away from their newly acquired Christian faith as taught to them by Paul, and had harkened to certain persons who "would pervert the gospel of Christ." These perverters, it appears, were Judaizers, that is Christians who contended that no one could be saved, even though he believed in Christ, without submitting to the restrictions of the Mosaic law, which for the Gentile converts to Christianity had as prime condition circumcision. Paul, on the contrary, affirmed that "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law," and warned the Gentile Christians not to become circumcised, saying: "Behold, I Paul, say unto you, that if ye receive circumcision, Christ will profit you nothing." He held that a Jew, though circumcised, by becoming a Christian released himself from all obligation to obey the

Jewish law, but contended that a Gentile who on conversion to Christianity took the first step of submitting to circumcision thereby obligated himself to the whole Mosaic code. "Yea, I testify again to every man that receiveth circumcision, that he is debtor to do the whole law." So firmly did Paul adhere to the doctrine that he had originated that he admonished the Galatians: "though we or an angel from heaven should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema." He asserted that "as touching the gospel which was preached by me . . . neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ." What is implied here is that the Judaizing mischief-makers were trying to destroy the confidence of the Galatian Christians in Paul by showing the divergence of his teachings from those of the personal disciples of Jesus, and to obviate this difficulty Paul boldly repudiated the authority of the apostles who had known Jesus during the latter's earthly career, and contended that his own "revelations" from Christ in heaven, obtained when Paul was in a state of ecstasy, completely superseded what Christ was known to have taught while on earth.

Paul was anxious to show his followers that he had never submitted to the authority of the original apostles, and in doing this gave a resume of his career which, from a historical standpoint, is invaluable. He told how in the beginning he persecuted "the church of God, and made havoc of it; and I advanced in the Jews' religion beyond many of mine own age among my countrymen, being exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers." However, it pleased God "to reveal his son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles," or, in other words, he became a convert to Christianity—of a sort. This conversion, as we learn elsewhere, was occasioned, not by the exhortations of those who were Christians before him, but by a vision vouchsafed him direct from heaven as he was on his way^a to Damascus. And "immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood; neither went I up to Jerusalem to them that were apostles before me; but I went away into Arabia; and again I returned to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and tarried with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James, the Lord's brother. . . . Then I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. And I was still unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ; but they

only heard say: 'He that once persecuted us now preacheth the faith of which he once made havoc'; and they glorified God in me."

At first the Jerusalem Mother Church was content to let Paul go his own way while converting the Gentiles and made no attempt to meddle with him and his converts. "After the space of fourteen years," continues Paul, "I went up again to Jerusalem, with Barnabas, taking Titus also with me. And I went up by revelation; and I laid before them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately before them which were of repute, lest by any means I should be running or had run in vain." Conybeare¹ comments that the gospel which Paul thus laid before the Jerusalem apostles "he had evolved out of his own inner consciousness, so we are not surprised to learn . . . that he only laid it 'privately before them who were of repute.' It was clearly so remote from the gospel with which the mass of believers were familiar in the very home and diocese of Christ himself that it was expedient not to communicate it to them. We infer that if he had broached it to them there would have been such a general outcry against him as would have deprived him of the 'liberty in Jesus Christ' which he and his converts enjoyed; and he 'would be running' in the future and 'have run' in the past 'in vain.'" Paul emerged triumphant from the ordeal, and tells us that "Not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised." Evidently the trend of Paul's remarks, here and elsewhere, puts beyond the bounds of credibility the statement of *Acts* XVI, 3 that in the neighborhood of Derbe and Lystra, "because of the Jews that were in those parts," Paul circumcised a Christian offspring of a Greek father and a Jewish mother. As has been well said: "No manipulation can obliterate the fact that the St. Paul of the *Acts* differs considerably from the St. Paul of such Epistles as rightly bear his name; so that the alternative lies between believing his own words, or those of the unknown writer who describes him long after in the *Acts of the Apostles*," and unfortunately it is still the prevalent custom to accept the latter alternative—the natural result of making apostolic harmony the criterion of Pauline biography. A rational view of the career of Paul must have taken contrary ground and in consequence recognize that the contentions of the Tuebingen School were sub-

¹ *Myth, Magic and Morals*, third ed. 1925, p. 15.

stantially correct and that relations between Paul and the Jerusalem apostles were by no means uniformly harmonious.²

There were in evidence, according to Paul's account, Judaizers in the Mother Church who desired to subject Paul and his Gentile converts to the Mosaic law. He describes these as "the false brethren privily brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus that they might bring us into bondage," but denies having yielded to them even temporarily: "to whom we gave way in the place of subjection, no not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you." To be regarded as in any way subordinate to the original apostles was highly repugnant to Paul: "I reckon that I am not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles" (2 *Cor.* XI, 5). He assures the Galatians that he learned nothing from those whom he met in Jerusalem. "Those who were reputed to be somewhat," he says, "they . . . who were of repute imparted nothing to me; but contrariwise, when they saw that I had been intrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision as Peter with the gospel of the circumcision (for he that wrought for Peter unto the apostleship of the circumcision wrought for me also unto the Gentiles); and when they perceived the grace that had been given unto me, James and Cephas and John, they who were reputed to be pillars, gave unto me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go unto the Gentiles and they unto the circumcision; only they would that we should remember the poor; which very thing I was also zealous to do. But when Cephas came to Antioch, I resisted him to the face, because he stood condemned. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he drew back and separated himself, fearing them that were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews dissembled likewise with him, insomuch that even Barnabas was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas, before them all: 'If thou, being a Jew livest as do the Gentiles and not as do the Jews, how compelleth thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?'"

² The harmonious relation which is commonly assumed to have existed between the Apostle Paul and the Jewish Christians with the older Apostles at their head is unhistorical." F. C. Baur: *Paul, the Apostle of Jesus Christ, his life and work, his epistles and his doctrine, a contribution to a critical history of primitive Christianity*, V.I, p. V.

It would seem then that while the Mother Church had at first been willing to tolerate the ignoring of the Mosaic law by the Gentile converts, it had later taken quite another stand. And the reason for this is to be found in *Galatians* VI, 12-13 where Paul says of those who "compel you to be circumcised" that they do this "only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For not even they who receive circumcision do themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh." In other words, when Christianity merely manifested itself as a particular school of the old Judaism, the Jewish Christians were in large measure tolerated by the other Jews, notwithstanding a certain laxity in practice concerning the law which they continued nominally to accept *in toto*. But when uncircumcised Gentile Christians arose who could claim as coreligionaries the Jewish Christians, the latter began to be regarded as renegades to Jewry and suffered from the animosity of the Jews who had not accepted Christ. An attempt was being made at the time Paul wrote to avoid this persecution by forcing circumcision and the law on even the Gentiles whom Paul had converted to Christianity, so that the Jewish Christians might in face of the other Jews, glory in what Christianity had accomplished towards the spread of Judaism. The attempt was not successful; it was Paulinism, not the doctrine of the Mother Church which survived and became the progenitor of the "Christian" religion of our day.³ For many years, however, there was conflict between two bitterly hostile factions of Christians, the one taking the point of view of Paul, and the other that of James, the brother of Jesus. The believers who adhered to the original Christianity of Jesus as transmitted to posterity by his brother and those who had followed the Prophet of Nazareth in his lifetime, and hence refused to accept the innovations of Paul, were, in post-apostolic times, known as Ebionites, that is "Poor Men," this designation being probably a sneer, directed by the more prosperous Pauline Christians at their poverty. The name Nazarene was also used to designate them, and one ancient historian, Epi-

³ Even the most liberal theologians are inclined to balk at full recognition of this fact, and to take the stand that by some sort of compromise there was ultimately effected a reconciliation between the Judaizers and the Paulinists. And in fact it is not surprising that a biblical critic who finds it convenient to remain a member of some modern "Christian" Church should be loath to stultify himself by admitting he belongs to a religious body whose spiritual lineage is essentially anti-Christian.

phanus, draws a distinction between these two terms, under which the Nazarenes are described as less intransigent than the Ebionites, though it is doubtful whether there were really two distinct sects known by these names.

All the Judaizers held to the reputed saying of Jesus found in our present Bible: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. . . . Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." (*Matthæw*, V, 17-18.) In this they differed strikingly from the Pauline Christians of their own day and the orthodox Christians of ours. The less strict Judaizers, though they themselves adhered to the law, were willing to concede that Gentile converts were not bound by the Jewish ordinances and to grant Paul the rank of an apostle—but of an apostle to the Gentiles alone. They strenuously objected however, to the Jews among the Pauline converts breaking the Mosaic law.

The more intransigent Ebionites had a horror of Paul and all his works, and contended that the real acceptance of Christ, with Gentile as well as with Jew, necessitated circumcision and strict obedience to the Mosaic law. In the canonical Christian Scriptures there has survived what is very like an Ebionite work the so-called *Revelations of St. John the Divine*. Whatever view may be taken of the main body of the work the exhortations of the first three chapters to the "seven Churches of Asia" have plain reference to the factional disputes of the Christians of the day, and give us some interesting revelations as to the feelings of the Judaizers towards the followers of Paul. The writer was evidently a Jewish Christian who adhered to the old Jewish law and abhorred all Christians who did not submit to its yoke. He regarded the true Christians as *ipse facto* numbered among the Children of Israel, and heartily hated the brand of Christianity which disregarded the ordinances of Judaism. There can be no questions but that it is Pauline Christianity which is referred to in such passages as "the blasphemies of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan," "thou [the Church of Ephesus] hast tried them which say they are apostles and are not, and hast found them liars" and "thou [the Church of Pergamum] hast there some that hold the teachings of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit

fornication." Chief among those whom the Ebionites classed as liars, falsely claiming to be Jews and apostles, was Paul. We know from his Epistles how hard pressed he was to maintain his claims to apostolic dignity, and from other sources we find that his opponents did not always admit his claims to Jewish blood. For though, according to the *Epistle to the Phillipians*, Paul was originally "of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; as touching zeal, persecuting the church; as touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless," we learn from Epiphanius that the Ebionites had a different tale to tell. Their tradition, which would seem to be the more congruous with the assertion in *Acts XXII*, 28 that Paul was "a Roman born," alleged that Paul was not a Jew by birth but a "Greek," born of Gentile parents. Going to Jerusalem and settling there he had aspired to marry the daughter of the High Priest. With this in view he became a proselyte to Judaism and submitting to circumcision and accepting the yoke of the Jewish law, made himself prominent as a persecutor of the followers of Jesus. He was however frustrated in his ambition and did not obtain the spouse he desired, this, declared the Ebionites, being the cause of his coming over to the side of the Christians. It was, they said, to revenge himself for the affront put upon him by the High Priest that Paul decried circumcision, the Sabbath and the whole Mosaic law.

Paul, as we know, explicitly repudiated the Jewish law, saying "All things are lawful for me." (*1 Cor.* X, 23.) He taught his followers to eat meat set before them without too closely inquiring into its origin (*1 Cor.* X, 25-27, VIII, 4-8) at a time when aside from the strictly kosher fare of the Jews practically all the meat eaten was the by-product of idolatrous sacrifices. The liberalism of Paul in this respect, though endorsed by the practice of the orthodox Christians in succeeding ages, was in flagrant disaccord even with the apostolic decision recorded in *Acts XV*, 20: that converts to Christianity must abstain "from the pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from what is strangled, and from blood." The best opinion of biblical critics is indeed that this alleged decision was never made by an apostolic council but represents merely the terms on which the author of *Acts* thought the differences between Ebionites and Paulinists might be compromised. And there is no

ground for believing that the compromise thus proposed in the guise of a decree of apostolic times was ever accepted by any considerable body of Christians of either faction. Moreover, as Zeller has pointed out, if James really entertained the principles which *Acts* represents him as enunciating at this apostolic council, if when he granted Paul the field of labor claimed by the latter he was not merely yielding to the force of an accomplished fact, but was also himself convinced that the Mosaic law was not binding on the Gentiles and openly and decidedly acted on this conviction, it is quite inconceivable how he could have been the highest authority of a party which everywhere zealously opposed the freedom of the Gentile Christians and assailed Paul, who advocated this, so vehemently and malignantly. Peter, likewise, can by no means have stood as far aloof from the Judaizers as *Acts* would have us believe. On the other hand if the Pauline faction had been unanimous in approving the adhesion of the Jewish Christians to the Mosaic law, the unquenchable hatred of the Ebionites against Paul and Pauline Christianity would have been incomprehensible. Ultimately the uncompromising Paulinists became predominant in Christianity, and succeeded in stigmatising as "heretics" the Ebionites, that is the Christians who held to the line of tradition handed down from the personal disciples of Jesus. Even with such of these as had become resigned to the violation of the Mosaic ordinances by the Gentile Christians and maintained these ordinances to be binding on the Jewish Christians alone, heresy was found, as we see from the fact of the "Nazarenes" who took this stand being denominated heretics by Epiphanius. And unquestionably any Christian faction which had accepted the decree imagined by the author of *Acts* and endeavored to constrain the Gentile Christians to conform to the Noachic ordinances (as those laid down by the alleged Apostolic Council are sometimes called) would have been more remote from orthodox "Christianity" than the Nazarenes and would in the time of Epiphanius have been deemed far more heretical. The Catholic Church has done all in her power to destroy the documents giving the Judaistic side of the controversy between Paulinists and Judaizers. But modern scholarship, by a critical survey of the data that has survived, has enabled us to read between the lines in many cases, and has shed much light on the relations between Ebionism and Pauline or "orthodox" Christianity.

The Balaam so vigorously denounced in *Revelations* is almost certainly Paul⁴ and Balak is presumably one of his chief lieutenants, perhaps Barnabas, though it is possible that some particularly uncompromising Ebionite, writing this denunciation, might couple together, under the names of Balaam and Balak, Paul and Peter, blaming the latter almost as severely as the former for this casting of a stumbling block before the children of Israel. Peter, by Paul's account, was shifty and evasive, and might have appeared to some of the extreme Ebionites as a traitor to their cause, though most of them supposed him to have shared their own views and to have been an invincible opponent of Paul. According to *Galatians* Peter, at Antioch, had no scruple in following the lead of Paul and disregarding the Jewish taboo against eating with Gentiles, until he saw there was danger of the news reaching James, when he timidly took on the yoke once more, while Paul openly defied the authority of the Bishop of Jerusalem. And incidentally it is noteworthy that here we are shown the spectacle of him to whom alone—the modern Catholic Church tells us—was given the power to bind and loosen on earth and in heaven: Peter, the first Pope, upon whose right to dominion depends all the authority of the Papacy, going around in fear and trembling of another leader and recognizing the superior authority of James. The "Clementine" *Recognitions* (IV, 35) gives an endorsement of this view of the supremacy of James, Peter being here quoted as telling his audience to "believe no teacher unless he brings from Jerusalem the testimony of James, the Lord's brother, or of whosoever may come after him," there being here no hint of Petrine supremacy or of authority of the see of Rome. The words can hardly be authentic, but they are interesting as showing that those who looked upon Peter as the champion of Ebionism as well as those who claimed he sanctioned the opposing doctrine of Paul, alike accepted as a matter of course the supremacy of James.

Most of the Judaizers, as has been said, claimed Peter as one of their champions, and the heretical work which corresponded to the orthodox *Acts of the Apostles* was usually referred to as *The Circuits of Peter*. This *Circuits of Peter* was an Ebionite Scripture alleged to have Clement of Rome as author, and there are still extant writings purporting to be the account, sent by Clement to James, the brother of the Lord, of Clement's own conversion and his adventures

⁴ For the grounds for identifying Balaam with Paul see an article by the present writer, *Jesus and Jewish Tradition*, in a future number of *The Open Court*.

as a companion of Peter. The story survives in two forms: the one in Greek, under the title of the Clementine *Homilies* and the other in a Latin translation by Rufinus, called the Clementine *Recognitions*. Both are regarded as having the Circuits of Peter as basis, though the narrative has undoubtedly been much garbled by the redactors. We notice in the "Clementine" writings passages in which ring unmistakably the voice of those early Christians who hated Paul, and these passages are in all probability part of the original tradition, since (as it has been put by Schmiedel) it is "psychologically impossible" that Paul should have been so intensely hated by Christians in later days.

That the *Recognitions* and *Homilies* which accredit themselves to Clement of Rome cannot be from his hand has long been known, but it was reserved for the brilliant critics of the Tuebingen School to discover that these works contained a bitter attack on Paul whose name is veiled under the alias of Simon the Magician. Whether the original Circuits likewise abstained from properly naming Paul in attacking him cannot be ascertained, but it is not impossible that this course may have been followed. Each of the Christian factions may have feared to make too open an attack on the other lest the scandal arising thereby should react to their own injury and excite the derision of their pagan and Jewish enemies. An expression of this fear is found in a parable which the *Gospel of Matthew* (XII, 24-30) attributes to Jesus, but which is thought to have really been an interpolation, originating at a later date during the conflict between the Ebionites and the Pauline Christians. In this Parable of the Tares among the Wheat an enemy (Paul) sows tares (false teachings) among the wheat (the original teachings of Jesus preached by the true apostles). When the growing tares make their appearance to the discomfit of the Master he cries out "An enemy hath done this" (Jesus being thus represented as emphatically condemning the work of Paul) whereupon his servants (certain over-zealous Ebionites) wish to pull the tares up by the roots. But he refuses to allow this lest the wheat too be uprooted, saying that both were to be permitted to grow until the harvest (the Judgment Day), when the reapers should first gather the tares (the Pauline Christians) and burn them, subsequently reaping the wheat (the Ebionite Christians) and putting it in his barn: that is, the Pauline Christians were foredoomed to hell, while the Ebionites alone would be granted entry into heaven.

An attack on Paul which appeared on its face to be against some one else outside the Christian fold could easily prove too subtle for Christian readers of later generations, who might take it at its face value, especially if the ultimate transcriber purposely modified what he could not suppress, and turned an unseemly attack on a fellow Christian into an edifying tale of controversy with a Samaritan magician. This, it is thought, is precisely what has happened with several passages that have found their way into the orthodox Scriptures, notably the story told in *Acts* VIII, 9-24. Here, remarks Zeller, if "we substitute the name Paul for that of Simon we have a narrative which says in a historical form what according to 2 *Cor.* XI, 4 sq., XII, 11 sq., 1 *Cor.* IX, 1 sq. the anti-Pauline Judaists affirmed as a general truth." And it is held that the redactor who gave to *Acts* its present form, perfectly aware of the true import of the story, to forestall any application of it by his readers to Paul, placed it before the latter's conversion in the narrative, thus falsifying the historical order of facts. Simon in the tale is represented as proffering money for the purchase of apostolic powers, and this seems to have been the Ebionite version of Paul's transaction with the Jerusalem Mother Church, whereby he bargained for liberty to proselytize in Christ's name as Apostle to the Gentiles, agreeing in return to contribute funds towards the support of the poor among the Jerusalem Christians. Paul, the Ebionites held, was, through his collections for the Jerusalem Saints (see 1 *Cor.* XVI, 1-3 and *Gal.* II, 10) attempting to purchase an apostleship; to bribe the Mother Church into recognizing him as a true apostle by means of the contributions of his Gentile converts to the needy Christians of Jerusalem. The feature of "Simon" offering money that he too might have the power of imparting the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands implies the thought that the power of conferring the Holy Ghost belonged exclusively to the apostles, and this (it has been shown) is an anachronism, being an unhistorical transference of the ideas of a later age into the times of the primitive Church. An interesting fact is that from this passage arose the horror Christians of later days professed for "simony," i.e. the purchase and sale of offices in the Church. In *Acts* "Simon's" offer is rejected with scorn, but according to Paul's story the transaction was carried through successfully, and in his Epistles he frequently reminds his followers to keep on sending to the Mother Church the subsidies

which were the consideration he had promised to pay for recognition as Apostle to the Gentiles. Now it was from Pauline Christianity, not from the Ebionite Mother Church, that the orthodox "Christian" Church took its rise, and it must hence perforce be admitted that the whole of modern "Christianity" is tainted by simony at the very root.

The Pseudo-Clementine Homilies and Recognitions are two variations of a single tale of the adventures of Clement and preachings of Peter. Clement is portrayed as accompanying the apostle in a missionary tour beginning at Caesaria Stratonica and extending northward along the coast-lands of Syria as far as Antioch. The original Circuits of Peter would thus seem to have been a sort of Ebionite Acts of the Apostles, and even orthodox tradition admits as authentic a portion of this Ebionite work, though claiming that the greater part of the Circuits was a heretical fabrication. In the Clementines Paul is doubly assailed, on the one hand under the alias of Simon, on the other under the cognomen of the Enemy, the latter referring particularly to Paul's activities before he became a Christian. The Ebionite story is that once James, the brother of the Lord, was preaching in Jerusalem and the conversion of the whole populace of that city was imminent, when "The Enemy," that is, Paul, raised a tumult in the Temple where James was preaching, and caused the brother of the Lord to be thrown headlong down the steps of the edifice. As a result, the expected conversion of Jerusalem never took place, and The Enemy proceeded to Damascus where he had been commissioned by Caiphas to carry on his deadly work.

The animus of the author is clearly shown in the preface to the Homilies, where in a letter alleged to have been written by Peter to James, we find remarks that the most conservative scholars are constrained to admit are aimed at Paul. "For some of the converts from the Gentiles have rejected the preaching through me in accord with the law, having accepted a certain lawless and babbling doctrine of The Enemy. And this some people have attempted while I am still alive, by various interpretations to transform my words, unto the overthrow of the law; as though I taught thus, but did not preach it openly, which be far from me. For to do so is to act against the law of God as spoken through Moses, the eternal duration of which is borne witness to by our Lord. Since he said thus: 'Heaven and earth shall pass away; one jot or tittle shall not pass

away from the law.' Now he said this that all might be fulfilled. But they professing somehow to know my mind, attempted to expound the words they heard from me more wisely than I who spoke them, telling those who are instructed by themselves that this is my meaning, which I never thought of. But if they venture on such falsehoods while I am still alive, how much more when I am gone will those who come after me dare to do so."

The Simon of the Clementines cannot in every respect be identified with Paul, as there has been here put in the mouth of Simon doctrines which it was desired to refute but were not precisely Pauline. Especially is this noticeable as regards the Gnostic doctrines which the Ebionites probably regarded as the logical outcome of Paulinism. The "Christianity" of the Gnostics was more remote even than that of Paul from the earthly teachings of Jesus. Some Gnostics, in fact, utterly repudiated the God of the Old Testament, and represented him as the Lord of Evil, between whom and the Lord of Good: the God of the New Testament, revealed by Jesus Christ, there was an irrepressible conflict. The real Simon Magus, as depicted by such writers as do nothing towards identifying him with Paul, was indeed the reputed father of Gnosticism, being a native of Samaria, many of the people of that country having accepted his doctrines and his leadership. In giving the alias of Simon to Paul the Ebionites were able to express their contempt for the Pauline Christians by likening them to the Samaritans who had long vainly endeavored to secure their recognition as part of the chosen people. The Pauline demand that the uncircumcised be acknowledged as partakers in the Messianic salvation seemed, in fact, to the Judaizers, simply an attempt on the part of the heathen to intrude themselves into Israel. As Zeller puts it: "There was no more descriptive expression to denote the opinion of the severe Jewish Christians respecting Paulinism than to proclaim the Pauline uncircumcised Gentile Christians Samaritans." Another reason for giving Paul the alias of Simon may have been the fact that there was a Simon of ill repute connected with Felix, that Procurator of Judaea mentioned in *Acts* XXIII and XXIV and there depicted as inclined to shield Paul from his Jewish enemies. This Simon, Josephus tells us, was a Jew, claiming magical powers, who acted as a pander and go-between for Felix in the latter's amours with Drusilla, the wife of Azizus, King of Emesa.

“Simon” who taught a “Christianity” all his own, maintained (according to the seventeenth Homily) that he had a better knowledge of the doctrines of Jesus than the disciples who had seen and conversed with the Lord. As ground for this presumptuous statement he alleged that visions were as superior to waking reality as the divine is superior to the human. He is quoted as saying to Peter: “You professed that you had well understood the doctrines and deeds of your teacher because you saw them before you with your own eyes, and heard them with your ears, and that it is not possible for any other to have anything similar by vision or apparition. But I shall show that this is false. He who hears anyone with his own ears, is not altogether fully assured of the truth of what is said; for his mind has to consider whether he is wrong or not inasmuch as he is a man as far as appearance goes. But apparition not merely presents an object to view, but inspires him who sees it with confidence, for it comes from God.” Peter, in a crushing retort, remarks: “But can anyone be educated for teaching by visions? And if you shall say ‘It is possible’ why did the Teacher converse with waking men for a whole year?⁵ And how can he have appeared to you seeing that your sentiments are opposed to his teaching? But if you were seen and taught by him for a single hour, and so became an apostle, then preach his words, expound his meaning, love his apostles, fight not with me who had converse with him. . . . If you call me ‘condemned’ you are accusing God who revealed the Christ to me, and are inveigling against him who called me blessed on the ground of the revelation. But if indeed you truly wish to work along with the truth, learn first what we learnt from him, and when you have become a disciple of truth become our fellow workman.”

The insinuation here that Paul did not preach and expound the doctrines of Jesus is wholly justified by all that we know of the early Christian Church. For it is a curious fact that in the Epistles of Paul we find hardly a reference to any of the teachings of Jesus recorded in the Gospels. The Pauline Church from which modern “Christianity” has descended seems to have utterly ignored the exhortations of Jesus to his disciples and to have given ear solely to

⁵ Here is perhaps a confirmation from an independent source of the tradition of the Synoptic Gospels, fixing the public career of Jesus at the short period of one year as contrasted with the longer period of activity alleged by the fourth Gospel.

the doctrines originated by Paul. Peter in his remarks shows indignation at being called "condemned" by "Simon" and this is unquestionably a reference to Paul's criticism of him recorded in *Galatians* II, 11 where the same Greek word is used (a word which the King James version saw fit to translate by the milder periphrase "was to be blamed.") In retaliation Peter, in the Clementine and in the *Actus Petri cum Simone*, denounces "Simon" as a cheat and impostor, significantly using the very same words that were applied to Paul by his opponents.

Peter, in the Clementines, reproaches "Simon" for the fact that "instead of Christ he proclaims himself." He remarks that "as the true Prophet has told us, a false prophet must first come from some deceiver; and then in like manner, after the removal of the holy place, the true gospel must be secretly sent abroad for the rectification of the heresies that shall be." And "it would be possible, following this order, to perceive to what series Simon belongs, who came before me to the Gentiles, and to which I belong who have come after him, and have come in upon him as light upon darkness, as knowledge upon ignorance, as healing upon disease"—a passage which undubitably identifies "Simon" with the inceptor of the mission to the Gentiles, i.e. Paul. "Some men" remarks Peter, "do not know who is my precursor Simon. For if he were known, he would not be believed; but now, not being known, he is improperly believed; and though his deeds are those of a hater, he is loved; and though an enemy, he is received as a friend; and though he be death, he is desired as a saviour; and though fire, he is esteemed as light; and though a deceiver, he is believed as a speaker of truth." Peter affirms that Satan, "the prince of wickedness . . . fearing lest the true religion of the one and true God should be restored, hastened straightway to send forth into this world false prophets, and false apostles, and false teachers, who should speak indeed in the name of Christ, but should accomplish the will of the demon. . . . Let neither prophet nor apostle be looked for by you at this time, besides us. For there is but one true prophet, whose words we twelve apostles preach; for he is accepted year of God, having us apostles as his twelve months."

The Clementines take the ground that genuine Christianity and the old Judaism differ only as regards whether or not Jesus was "the prophet whom Moses foretold, who is the eternal Christ. For on

this point only" says Peter "does there seem to be any difference between us who believe in Jesus and the unbelieving Jews." It is rather curious however that although Judaistic ordinances are so vociferously upheld in the Clementines, there is not the slightest question of requiring circumcision of Gentile Christians. This, provided it were also the case in the original Circuits of Peter, would indicate for the latter a date at which even the Ebionites had, for the most part, given up as hopeless the attempt to force this surgical operation upon the Gentile converts. It appears indeed that circumcision must have been very soon put in the background, for although it loomed large in the controversy when Paul wrote to the Galatians, he did not need to argue about it in his subsequent Epistles, but was able to give all his attention to others of the points at issue between him and the Judaizers.

It seems to have been upon the Jewish dietary laws that the Ebionites laid the most stress, and they saw grave danger in eating meat derived from pagan sacrifices, holding that this food, which Paul deemed innocuous, might cause those who partook of it to become subject to diabolic influences. It was, they contended, with a deliberate view to this end: to putting people in subjection to his masters, the powers of evil, that Paul told his followers: "Whatsoever that is sold in the shambles eat, asking no questions. . . . If one of them that believeth not biddeth you to a feast, and ye are disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no questions." (1 *Cor.* X, 25-27.) "Simon" had, in fact, the Clementines tell us, successfully made use of this scheme at Tyre where he found many opponents "who attempted to prove him an impostor." Beguiling these adversaries into a reconciliation "under pretence of a banquet, having slain an ox, and given them to eat of it, he infected them with various diseases, and subjected them to demons." And from this we may quite fairly conclude that Paul actually did give a noteworthy banquet at Tyre and succeeded in inducing some of the Jewish Christians of that place to throw aside the Mosaic food ordinances, which had as ultimate result the entire abandonment of the Jewish law by his guests.

The necessity of accepting the Jewish scheme of life is emphasized in the Ebionite version of the event mentioned in *Mark*, VII, 24-30. The Clementines tell us that on this occasion a Canaanite woman whose daughter was oppressed with a grievous disease

came to the Lord entreating him to heal her daughter. "But he" narrated Peter "being asked by us, said 'It is not lawful to heal the Gentiles, who are like unto dogs on account of their using meats without distinction and such practices, while the table in the kingdom has been given to the sons of Israel.' But she, hearing this, and begging to partake like a dog, of the crumbs that fall from this table, having changed from what she was by living like the sons of the kingdom, she obtained healing for her daughter, as she asked. For she being a Gentile, and remaining in the same course of life, he would not have healed her had she remained a Gentile, on account of it not being lawful to heal her as a Gentile." In other words, the woman had first to conform to the Mosaic dietary laws and other ritualistic ordinances before Jesus would heal her child.

Going beyond the demand that Christians should eat only ritually pure food, the Ebionites took the stand that eating at the same table was an admission of religious brotherhood, and that dining with an unbelieving Gentile was a grievous sin. Peter will not even allow a baptised Gentile convert to eat with his converted but as yet unbaptised father, saying to the latter: "But this also we observe, not to have a common table with Gentiles, unless they believe, and on the reception of the truth are baptised, and consecrated by a certain three-fold invocation of the blessed name; and then we eat with them. Otherwise, even if it were a father or a mother, or wife, or sons, or brothers, we cannot have a common table with them. Since, therefore, we do this for the special cause of religion, let it not seem hard to you that your son cannot eat with you, until you have the same judgment of faith that he has."

Simon Magus is represented as having a wonderful command of the necromancer's art. At his command statues walk about like men and locked doors fly open of themselves—a feature of his career that is perhaps to be correlated to the tale of Acts XVI, 26, where we are told that when Paul and Silas were imprisoned at Philippi at midnight miraculously "all the doors were opened; and everyone's bands were loosened." He promenades through blazing fires without injury, and at his will is transformed into a serpent or a goat. From town to town goes Simon, followed up by Peter, who refutes his false teachings, and expounds the true Christian doctrine. The climax comes at Antioch, precisely where *Galatians* records there took place a heated controversy between Peter and Paul in the

course of which the former was denounced by the latter in no gentle terms. According to the Clementines, Peter, at Antioch, was told that Simon "doing many signs and prodigies in public, has inculcated upon the people nothing but what tends to excite hatred against you, calling you a magician, a sorcerer, a murderer." Finally Simon bewitches Faustus, the father of Clement, imposing his own personal appearance upon the latter, whereupon Peter, turning this to the advantage of the true believers, has Faustus stand in a public place and make a recantation of the Simonian aspersions upon Peter, saying "I, Simon, declare to you, and confess that all that I have said concerning Peter was false." As reason for his confession the pseudo-Simon gives out that he has been soundly scourged by angels the preceding night. "I will tell you" he says "why I now make this confession to you. This night an angel of God, rebuked me for my wickedness, and scourged me terribly, because I was an enemy to the herald of truth." And Schmiedel holds that here the author, seizing upon Paul's own words, recorded in *2 Cor. XII, 7*. "There was given me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me" has spitefully twisted an utterance of Paul regarding himself to his own disadvantage.

While the open conflict in Palestine and Syria came to an end with this occurrence, Simon, we are told, subsequently "began, though secretly, to go amongst his friends and acquaintances, and to malign Peter worse than before." Peter however, in another pseudo-Clementine work, *The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, after giving a summary of the struggle against the false teachings of "Simon" (recorded at greater length in the Homilies and Recognitions) boasts that "when I had overcome him by the power of the Lord, and had put him to silence, I drove him into Italy." Here, evidently, we have the Ebionite version of Paul's going to Rome. It is probable that the lost Circuits of Peter gave an account of how Peter, following "Simon" to Rome there renewed the warfare, but no record of this has been preserved in the Clementines. The missing finale is however to be found in the apocryphal *Acts of Peter*, a work of Ebionite tendencies, which seems like the Clementines to have taken the Circuits as a source. Several fragmentary versions of these Acts are now extant, these documents, in their present form, bringing Paul on the stage as well as Peter and "Simon," thus covering up the original use of the latter name as an alias for

the Apostle to the Gentiles. Peter here relates that he "drove this Simon out of Judaea where he did many evils with his magical charms, lodging in Judaea with a certain woman, Eubula, who was of honorable estate in this world, having store of gold and pearls of no small price. Here did Simon enter in by stealth with two others like unto himself, and none of the household saw them two, but Simon only, and by means of a spell they took away all the woman's gold and disappeared." Eubula lamenting complained that she had received "Simon" as "a servant of God, and whatsoever he asked of me to give to the poor, I gave much by his hands, and besides I did give much unto him!" Obviously this story, in the original Circuits of Peter, may have had a geographical setting quite other than that of Judaea, so there is some ground for identifying this Eubula with one mentioned in a work of which Niphorus tells us: *The Travels (or Acts) of Paul*. The Eubula of the latter work was an "attached disciple" of Paul and the wife of an "eminent Ephesian."

Simon subsequently settled in Rome where he "with his charms of sorcery and his wickedness made all the brotherhood fall away this way and that" and Peter was warned by a vision to pursue him there. Taking ship at Caesarea, Peter sailed to Puteoli where he disembarked and received an urgent message to "go up unto Rome without delay, lest the teaching of this wicked man prevail yet further." In the imperial city Peter found his adversary lodged "in the house of Marcellus a senator, whom he had convinced by his charms." Going to the senators' house, Peter "called the porter and said to him: 'Go, say unto Simon: Peter because of whom thou fleddest out of Judae waiteth for thee at the door.' The porter answered and said to Peter: 'Sir, whether thou be Peter, I know not; but I have a command, for he had knowledge yesterday that thou didst enter into the city, and said to me: Whether it be by day or by night, at whatsoever hour he cometh, say that I am not within.'" Peter then, seeing "a great dog bound with a strong chain, went to him and loosed him, and when he was loosed the dog received a man's voice." This beast Peter sent inside to say to Simon: 'Thou Simon, Peter the servant of Christ who standeth at the door saith unto thee: Come forth abroad, for thy sake am I come to Rome, thou most wicked one and deceiver of simple souls.' And when Simon heard it and beheld the incredible sight he lost the

words wherewith he was deceiving them that stood by, and all of them were amazed."

Simon, none the less, continued his evil practices, and one day defiantly "ran unto the house where Peter lodged, even the house of Narcissus, and standing at the gate cried out: 'Lo, here am I Simon; come thou down Peter.'" On this message being brought to Peter the latter sent unto Simon "a woman which had a sucking child, saying unto her: 'Go down quickly, and thou wilt find one that seeketh me. For thee there is no need that thou answer him at all, but keep silence, and bear what the child whom thou holdest shall say unto him.' The woman therefore went down. Now the child whom she suckled was seven months old, and it received a man's voice and said unto Simon: 'O thou abhorred of God and man, and destruction of truth, and evil seed of all corruption. O fruit by nature unprofitable, but only for a short and little season shalt thou be seen, and thereafter eternal punishment is laid up for thee. Thou son of a shameless father, that never putteth forth thy roots for good but for poison, faithless generation void of all hope! Thou wast not confounded when a dog reproved thee; I a child am compelled of God to speak, and not even now art thou ashamed. But even against thy will, on the Sabbath day that cometh, another shall bring thee into the forum of Julius that it may be shown what manner of man thou art. Depart therefore from the gate wherein walk the feet of the holy; for thou shalt no more corrupt the innocent souls whom thou didst turn out of the way and make mad; in Christ, therefore, shall be shown thine evil nature, and thy devices shall be cut to pieces. And now speak I this last word unto thee: Jesus Christ saith to thee: Be thou stricken dumb in my name, and depart out of Rome until the Sabbath that cometh.' And forthwith he became dumb, and his speech was bound; and he went out of Rome until the Sabbath and abode in a stable."

On the Sabbath there was duly staged in the forum a public contest between Peter and Simon in the presence of "the senators and the prefects and those in authority." The corpse of a youth named Nicostratus was brought forward, and Simon, to demonstrate his power of raising the dead, "went to the head of the dead man and stooped down and said thrice: 'Raise thyself;' and showed the people that he lifted his head and moved it and opened his eyes and bowed a little unto Simon." But when Simon was constrained to remove to some distance from the body "again the dead man lay as

he was before." Peter now surpassing his rival, merely touched the side of the dead lad and said "Arise!" when "the lad arose and put off his grave clothes and sat up and loosed his jaw and asked for other raiment; and he came down from the bier."

None the less Simon, though "they that were firm in the faith derided him" continued to do "many lying wonders." "For in dining-chambers he made certain spirits enter in, which were only an appearance, and not existing in truth. And . . . he made lame men seem whole for a little space, and blind likewise, and once he appeared to make many dead to live and move as he did with Nicostratus." Finally Simon announced he would give an exhibition of his power to fly through the air. "And already on the morrow a great multitude assembled at the Sacred Way to see him flying. And Peter came unto the place to see the sight, that he might convict him in this also; for when Simon entered Rome he amazed the multitudes by flying; but Peter that convicted him was then not living at Rome; which city he thus deceived by illusion, so that some were carried away by him." "And behold when he was lifted up on high, and all beheld him raised up above all Rome and the temples thereof and the mountains, the faithful looked towards Peter. And Peter seeing the strangeness of the sight cried unto the Lord Jesus Christ: 'If thou suffer this man to accomplish that which he hath set about, now will all they that believe on thee be offended, and the signs and wonders which thou hast given them through me will not be believed; hasten thy grace, O Lord, and let him fall from the height and be disabled; and let him not die but be brought to nought, and break his leg in three places.' And he fell from the height and broke his leg in three places. Then every man cast stones at him and went away home, and thenceforth believed Peter. . . . But Simon in his affliction found some to carry him by night on a bed from Rome unto Aricia; and he abode there a space, and was brought thence unto Terracina to one Castor that was banished from Rome upon an accusation of sorcery. And there he was sorely cut by two physicians, and so Simon, the angel of Satan, came to his end."

This story and Simon's claim of special knowledge of things above the heavens have been correlated to Paul's remark about a man who had been "caught up even to the third heaven." And indeed in the Recognitions Peter reproaches Simon for thinking "there is easy access for your mind above the heavens." It is

probable that in the tale of the original Circuits of Peter the fall of Simon did not bring about his death, for there is extant another account which implies that Simon ultimately recovered from his injury, telling us that subsequent to his fall "many left him, but some who worthy of perdition continued in his wicked doctrines. After this manner was the most atheistical heresy of the Simonians first established in Rome; and the devil wrought by the rest of the false apostles also." At all events we may quite safely surmise that the death of Paul, alias Simon Magus, was the occasion, not of the shedding of tears, but of grim rejoicing among the Ebionites—the Christians who took James, not Paul, as their master.