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A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE METHODS  
OF ARGUMENTATION EMPLOYED BY THE  
WRITERS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

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A Thesis Presented to the Faculty  
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
Department of New Testament Theology  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Sacred Theology

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by  
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## CHAPTER I

### THE INTRODUCTION

At the very outset, I wish to state, as a basic assumption, that I hold to the divine origin of the Holy Scripture, pointed to by Paul in 2 Tim. 3:16. My conviction is that on account of this origin the apostolic writings are true and reliable in everything they say. When I discuss the methods of argumentation in the New Testament, that is not meant to throw doubt on the position of the Lutheran Church that these writings come from the eternal and infallible mind of God, and are the product of divine inspiration.

We probably never will discover the actual mode in which the apostolic writers were inspired and wrote by inspiration. But there are clear traces and evidences of supernatural guidance and divine safeguards in the apostolic documents. On this subject I need not dwell at present.

On the other hand, we must not forget that these writings are composed in human language, and that the style, the modes of thought and expression are those which we ourselves employ. We can go a step farther. The message of the New Testament is not couched in a mere series of tables and cold propositions. The Holy Spirit led the writers to clothe their words in beautiful figures of speech, as well as to employ a number of rhetorical devices. Furthermore, the



writers approach man through every possible avenue: not only making truth concrete, but also meeting man with many types of arguments. To make truth intelligible, meaningful, and convincing to the minds of the readers, the Spirit led the writers to employ several types of proof and methods of argumentation. The Spirit did not deliver truth, for example, in an atomistic manner; the writers expressed it in words that showed processes of thought. This condescension of the Spirit to finite man does not mean that the reader can fully understand the mysteries of God, but it enables man to grasp the divine message as far as this is possible for the human mind.

Most of the apostolic writers argue in some way or other for the Christian Gospel, with the exception of John. Although he includes a number of facts that could be used as proofs for his doctrine, he simply asserts what he has seen and approaches the reader with these direct declarations. Nevertheless, this confident manner contains a challenge to his opponents, Cerinthus and others, for, in spite of their *γνώσεις*, they had no experience like this to show, i.e., they had not seen, handled, heard, or touched Christ, 1 John 1:1 ff. This direct acquaintance which John had with Jesus was sufficient basis for his doctrines. In other words, John does not argue, but tells the Gospel story and testifies that it is true. The ultimate purpose of this Johannine simplicity was to move the readers to believe that Jesus is



the Christ, that, believing in Him, they might have eternal life through His name, John 20:31.

It is my conviction that, with all the variety of arguments employed by the writers of the New Testament, there is no real conflict among them. The reason for this harmony is the controlling influence of the Holy Spirit. In this connection it should be stressed that the apostles of the New Testament are not rationalizing theologians. They merely seek to give the world life eternal in the Redeemer, Jesus Christ. When they employ various modes of argumentation to lead men to think of their sins and of their Savior, they use reason only in an ancillary way, as a mere handmaiden in conveying truth to the human mind. Moreover, when we, as Lutheran theology does, associate their argumentation with the activity of the divine Spirit, Who always operates with the divine Word, we have something more than logical proof. In themselves, logical arguments refute, but never convert, people. However, with the attendant operation of the Holy Spirit, these arguments and proofs, both at the time of the actual writing and also at the present time when they are used, convince, persuade, and save.

With these considerations in mind, I shall endeavor to explore and to describe the various methods which the apostolic writers used in arguing for the Gospel message. We shall indicate, then, how they proved their doctrine true and how they demonstrated that their teaching came from God.



## CHAPTER II

### THE APPEAL TO THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES

If one were to characterize the apostolic writers rather briefly, one would call them "Scripture theologians." It is almost a platitude to say that they based their teachings on the authority of the Old Testament Scriptures. If we would trace the influence of the prophets on the writers of the New Testament, we would notice that they reflect this in various ways. For instance, there are certain allusions to customs or to narratives recorded in the Old Testament, as in 1 Cor. 10:4; 1 Cor. 5:7 f., and others. Moreover, there are also illustrations which are drawn from the Old Testament, as in Hebrews 11:4 ff., and in 1 John 3:12. Then, too, we find that the apostles use the vocabulary of the Old Testament, as the writer employs the special term, *ἐλαχίστος*, in 1 John 2:2.

However, before we examine the more direct use which the apostles make of the Old Testament Scriptures, it is essential to observe the conception of the "Law and the prophets" in the minds of the writers of the New Testament. In the first place, it is clear that they looked upon the writings of the Old Testament as the Word of God. This is evident from the very manner in which they introduce statements of the prophets. Invariably, they claim for these



ancient utterances divine inspiration: "As God said." Citing a quotation from Lev. 26:11 f., Paul indicates the apostolic evaluation of the Old Testament, 2 Cor. 6:16. Peter's remarks in Acts 4:25, as he calls attention to the words of Psalm 2:1 f., is a parallel to this: *διὰ πνεύματος ἁγίου λόγιατος Δ. Π. Γ. Εἰπών*. Prefacing the important statement from the Old Testament Scriptures in this way, the apostolic writers indicate how they regarded these writings. They looked upon the writings of Moses and of the prophets, as well as of the historians and poets of the Old Testament as the products of the Holy Spirit communicated to readers, however, through the agency of human authors. This estimate of the Old Testament Scriptures on the part of the apostles is, to be sure, basic for our consideration that they used the "Law and the prophets" in proving their doctrinal position. It is, therefore, not merely the style of the apostolic penmen which reflects an affinity with the Old Testament. They were so thoroughly permeated, as it were, with the thoughts of the Old Testament, that they also appealed to these sacred writings in order to prove their doctrines both true and divine. For instance, there are about sixty passages in the New Testament, chiefly in the Gospel according to St. Matthew, in which promises from the Old Testament are mentioned and shown to be fulfilled in the literal sense. Of the approximate number of passages quoted from the Old Testament, about two hundred and forty-two, perhaps



one-fourth of them supply proof for some historical or doctrinal statement by the apostolic writer. It is to be our present purpose to describe briefly how they proceeded in their various appeals to the Old Testament Scriptures to demonstrate that their teachings were true and that they came from God.

Furthermore, the apostolic writers looked upon the Old Testament Scriptures at times as their guide in church practice. This we observe, for instance, as James justifies the reception of Gentiles into the Christian Church, Acts 15:15 ff., basing his stand on the true interpretation of Amos 9: 11 f.

Not only do the writers of the New Testament explain or clarify their particular position by a reference to passages from the Old Testament, but they also take the offensive and cite Scripture to furnish proof for their doctrines. We might even say that they employ the Scriptural argument to a greater extent than any other to marshal the evidence for their claims. Moreover, when they do appeal to the Old Testament, they regard the authority of the Old Testament Scriptures not merely as a supplement to other arguments, but as the final word in a controversy. This means that, when Scripture has spoken, for them this constitutes the highest decision that can be rendered. The finality which the apostles saw in the statements of the Old Testament Scriptures is evident from Paul's appeal in Romans 4:3: "For what saith the



scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." (AV) For Paul this Scriptural characterization of that patriarch meant actually to corroborate the apostle's teaching of justification by faith without the deeds of the Law. He could think of no higher appeal here than the Old Testament Scriptures. In a similar way, Paul supports his doctrine of the death and resurrection of Christ in 1 Cor. 15:3 f., with the phrase: "according to the Scriptures."

#### The Methods of Appealing to the Old Testament

In general, we might say that most of the apostolic writers prefer to use the formula, *καὶ οὕτως γέγραπται*, in stressing that the prophetic utterance in the Old Testament proves that their teachings come from God, Rom. 9:33; 11:26; 15:21; Matt. 4:6; Mark 1:2; and others.

If one examines the various quotations further, however, there are certain characteristics of Paul's method of citing Scripture which are essential to the understanding of his approach. Inasmuch as this apostle had a professional training in the Rabbinical methods of argumentation as well as in the doctrines of the Pharisees under Gamaliel, it is not strange to find him adopting their formulae of quotation, even though he does not reflect the contents of Rabbinical theology.

In his formulae of quotation, St. Paul adopts forms



which seem to have been in use in the Rabbinical schools, and are found in Rabbinical writings. Even his less usual expressions may be parallels from them (11:2). Another point of resemblance may be found in the series of passages which he strings together from different books (cf. 3:10) after the manner of a Rabbinical discourse. St. Paul was in fact educated as a Rabbi in Rabbinical schools and consequently his method of using the O. T. is such as might have been learnt in these schools.<sup>1</sup>

At best, the Pauline method is difficult to analyze or to describe. Yet, the ease and familiarity with which this apostle employs the Old Testament Scriptures in order to verify his doctrinal statements and to place them on a proper basis, manifests the thrust of his entire theology.

Paul in his letters quoted from the Old Testament eighty-four times. The reader will understand that such a figure is approximate. Paul introduces the majority of his quotations with some such formula as, "It is written," but he seldom makes any further effort to identify the source of his quotation. In many cases, it is difficult to tell whether Paul is intentionally quoting. He is so saturated with the language of the Old Testament that he often speaks in this language, making it the vehicle of his own ideas without being conscious at all that he is actually quoting the language of the Old Testament.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, it does not surprise one that Paul quotes from the Septuagint in about seventy out of eighty-four instances. Not only did Paul quote, as we suppose, from memory

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<sup>1</sup>William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans," The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1896), p. 303.

<sup>2</sup>Holmes Rolston, Consider Paul: Apostle of Jesus Christ (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1951), p. 137.



in many cases, but he was compelled because of practical reasons to rely on the LXX with its imperfections, for this was the Bible of the people at this time. Yet, if one were to judge the method of Paul as he sought to draw on the authority of the Old Testament passages for proof, we probably could not go so far as Schweitzer, who says: "Scripture is never personally translated, but always cited in accordance with a recognized version."<sup>3</sup> We shall have to grant that Paul quoted rather freely and that more often than some would admit. This is especially a necessary qualification of Schweitzer's remark, in view of the apostle's independent manner of quoting in Rom. 14:10 ff.; 11:35; 1 Cor. 3:19, as well as numerous passages in 2 Corinthians. It has been pointed out, for example, that in Rom. 10:15 the quotation resembles the original Hebrew text more than the rendering of the Septuagint.<sup>4</sup>

What is probably of greater significance is the different method of quoting from the Old Testament which is employed by the anonymous author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Here the citations from the Old Testament Scriptures are unlike those of Paul.<sup>5</sup> For one thing, in harmony with the literary

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<sup>3</sup>Albert Schweitzer, Paul and His Interpreters: A Critical History, English translation by W. Montgomery (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1951), p. 89.

<sup>4</sup>Sanday and Headlam, op. cit., p. 302.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.



style of the epistle otherwise, the quotations in the Epistle to the Hebrews are lengthy and are introduced in a rather formal way. Then, too, one notices that, while Paul seems to quote largely from memory, the author of this epistle prefers to cite the passage in greater detail. Some have suggested that the one who wrote the latter epistle had a copy of the LXX in hand when he recorded his remarks, while Paul in his travels may not have had his copy with him, a fact which would explain the reason for his quoting from memory.<sup>6</sup> Others have noticed that there is a more studied method of quoting from the Scriptures of the Old Testament in the Pauline writings, while in the Epistle to the Hebrews we find the author moving in larger concepts. This comparison between the Pauline method of citing Scripture and that used by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews is particularly interesting because of the anonymity of the epistle.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the latter appeals to the Old Testament Scriptures in a manner not observed in the Pauline epistles

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<sup>6</sup>Rolston, op. cit., p. 143.

<sup>7</sup>For example, the fact that Paul and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews differ in their mood of quoting from the Old Testament Scriptures lends support to the contention that Paul could not have written this epistle. The whole method of quoting from the Old Testament, the use of the northern type of the LXX, the intimate acquaintance of the author with the Levitical rites rather suggest the name of Barnabas of Syrian Antioch, as the author, for he was a Levite (Acts 4:36), and also a companion of Paul. Cfr. E. L. Lueker, "The Author of Hebrews - A Fresh Approach," Concordia Theological Monthly, XVII (July, 1946), 510.



or addresses (recorded in the Book of Acts), namely, as to "the living voice of God."<sup>8</sup>

Although one could discover certain differences between the way in which Paul cites Scripture and the manner employed by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, we must grant also here a certain amount of similarities. For example, even in the latter epistle, to be sure, we find a number of "mosaics," i.e., composite quotations from the Old Testament, Hebrews 1:5-13; 2:12 f.; 3:7 ff.; and others. On the other hand, we do note that this tendency is more pronounced in the Pauline epistles. Rolston calls attention to Rom. 3: 10-18, as a "composite mosaic drawn from seven different Old Testament passages."<sup>9</sup> It is significant, however, that in the Epistle to the Hebrews we do miss the Rabbinical method of quoting the Old Testament Scriptures. The following remark indicates the rather staccato method of Paul as he draws from the Old Testament for proving his doctrines:

Die Schriftbenutzung des Hb weicht ausserlich von der paulinischen Zitierung mannigfach ab . . . Paulus hält sich meist an die rabbinischen Regeln und Methoden des Schriftbeweises; unser Brief dagegen ist in der Schriftbenutzung mehr an Begriffe und Anschauungen gebunden, nicht an Regeln und Methoden. Der Brief erinnert stark an die hellenistischsynagogale Lehrtradition und Zitationsweise-(Philo), doch zeigen sich auffallende Unterschiede. Pls und Hb zitieren beide gern nach Stich-

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<sup>8</sup>For this appeal, cfr. Infra, Chapter II. Nevertheless, Paul may be referring to Scripture in this unusual way in Gal. 4:24.

<sup>9</sup>Rolston, op. cit., p. 149.



worten (z.B. 2:11 "Brüder;" 4:3 "Ruhe"). Auch inhaltlich stimmen sie darin überein, dass die Schrift eschatologisch, d.h. von der Erfüllung durch Christus her verstanden werden muss. Christus ist das Zeichen Gottes, auf das der alte Bund hindeutet, und das der Neue Bund bezeugt. Ein alt.liches Wort kann aufleuchten auf Grund des Wortes und Werkes Jesu. Nicht jedes alt.liche Wort wird so vom Licht des Neuen Bundes getroffen, sondern das Wort des Alten Bundes, das eine exegetische Beziehung zum Christus hat. Diese exegetische Beziehung kann begrifflich, boldhaft und personhaft ausgerichtet sein, ist aber niemals durch das alt.liche Wort als solches gesichert, sondern nur durch die "aufgedeckte" (charismatische) Hinweisung auf den Christus. Diese Beziehung ist an die exegetischen Voraussetzungen Zeit gebunden, entwickelt also keine eigene Methodik und tritt in mythologischer Einkleidung vor uns (Hb 10:5). Die Schrift ist in dem Sinn Gottes Wort und Autorität für die Gegenwart, als ihr Sätze unmittelbar und ohne Rücksicht auf ihre geschichtliche Gegebenheit über eine theologische Behauptung des Verfassers entscheiden können.<sup>10</sup>

It is likewise essential to bear in mind the point of view taken by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews regarding the inseparable connection between the proclamation of the New Testament and the message of the Old Testament Scriptures:

In den vorangehenden Sätzen lag schon der Hinweis auf die Schrift (1:3): kein nt.licher Gedanke ist ohne Einfluss des at.lichen. Das AT wird als Autorität ernst genommen, weil es den Sinn und die Bedeutung der Endzeit enthüllt. Es wird darum zum Ausbau der Christologie, zur Auslegung des von Gott dargebotenen "Heiles."<sup>11</sup>

On the other hand, the method of a person with Paul's train-

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<sup>10</sup> Otto Michel, "Der Brief an die Hebraer," Kritisch-Exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1949), pp. 81 ff.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.



ing operates chiefly with a doctrinal thesis, followed by a substantiating Scriptural argument:

Der rabbinisch und exegetisch geschulte Schriftgelehrte stellt eine These auf, um erst nachträglich durch ein Schriftzitat die Herkunft und Entstehung ihrer Wahrheit preiszugeben. Diese exegetische Verbundenheit von These und Zitat entspricht also einem tief begründeten sachlichen Zusammenhang. Das Schriftzitat dient der Autorität einer Sache, nicht eines theologischen Satzes oder gar eine Person.<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, it is evident that, for the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (and, for that matter, for all the apostolic writers), the argument from Scripture involves more than a means of proving his assertions:

The writer uses the Old Testament, not just to prove arguments or to supply illustrations, but because it is upon the authority of the Old Testament that the validity of his own argument depends. The Old Testament is to him a revelation of God's purpose for the human race.<sup>13</sup>

When not only the apostle Paul and the unnamed author of the Epistle to the Hebrews,<sup>14</sup> but also the other writers, Peter and James, Jude and Matthew, cite the authority of the Old Testament in support of their doctrinal position, they follow the example and pattern set by Jesus Himself in the

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>13</sup>R. V. G. Tasker, The Old Testament in the New Testament (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1947), p. 114.

<sup>14</sup>Cfr. William Manson, The Epistle to the Hebrews: An Historical and Theological Consideration (London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd., 1951), pp. 21 f. In this work, it is shown that in Hebrews and in Romans, the Scriptural argument for the Christian religion "is presented consistently and exclusively in terms of its relation to Judaism."



conversation with the Emmaus disciples, Luke 24:25-27. It was the Savior's favorite method of argumentation to appeal directly to what the Old Testament Scriptures testified concerning a specific doctrine or event in the future. This we observe also in His discourse or homily at Nazareth, Luke 4:21 ff., and in His remarks about meekness in Matt. 12:19 ff.<sup>15</sup>

### The Appeal to Personages and Institutions of the Old Testament

The writers of the New Testament possessed, as we might say, a kind of historical insight, supernaturally endowed, which viewed the history of Israel as a whole, as a series of steps in the fulfillment of the divine plan of salvation. The lives of the patriarchs, as well as incidents involving leaders like Moses, Joshua, and the judges, signified something more than biographical data. They symbolized and pre-figured, as we shall see later, certain aspects of the New Testament teachings. But the lives of these people supplied important facts for the apostolic writers who wished to demonstrate that certain things were true, and proved their propositions in a concrete manner by showing how the prin-

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<sup>15</sup>There are many problems connected with the quotations which Jesus made from the Old Testament Scriptures. It has been said that in Mark 7:6, which records Jesus' citation from Is. 29:13, the "Septuagint" carries the thought of Jesus more accurately than the language of the Hebrew text." Rolston, *op. cit.*, p. 140. The difficulty is even more pronounced if we recall that Jesus uttered many of the remarks in Aramaic.



ciples applied in these ancient personages and institutions. While it is difficult at times to distinguish between the apostle's illustrations and his argumentation, we do notice that he uses examples like Abraham to show that his particular emphasis is by no means a doctrinal novelty.

An outstanding example of an appeal to a personage of the Old Testament is seen in Hebrews 3:3 ff., as the author seeks to prove, by a triple Scriptural argument, that Jesus is superior to Moses. This latter objective, to be sure, forms part of the main purpose of the writer, namely, to demonstrate the superior excellency of the priesthood of Christ. In this instance, the author argues from the case of Moses that the founders of the two covenants, of the Law and of grace, are different. In chapters one and two, the writer had established the proposition that Christ, the mediator of the new covenant, is superior to the angels, the agents of the legal covenant. He then proceeds to demonstrate the superiority of Christ to Moses, and that in three respects. While Moses was like the house, Christ was the Builder of it, as the Son of God. He was the Originator of the legal covenant of ancient Israel. Moreover, the whole legal system under which Moses served was only preparatory to the covenant which was to come through the Messiah. Christ, on the other hand, through His covenant of grace, brought blessings to the adherents. Thus, the author argued for the superiority of Christ from Scripture and appealed to a character of the Old



# Testament history.

Here the force of the argument lies in the fact that Moses is identified with the system which was entrusted to him. He was himself a part of it. He did not originate it. He received it and administered it with absolute loyalty. But its author was God. And Christ is the Son of God. Hence the relation of Moses to Christ is that of a system to its author. The argument is indicated but not worked out in the next verse. . . . The compressed suggestiveness of the argument is not unlike John viii. 31-36.<sup>16</sup>

In Hebrews 7:1 ff., the author further takes up the subject of the superiority of the priesthood of Christ to the Levitical priesthood. It is here that he emphasizes the personage, Melchizedek, a type of Christ. He implies that, if Melchizedek was greater than Levi, from whose ancestor he received tithes, then Christ was greater than Levi as well.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, appealing to the institution of the Old Testament, the Levitical priesthood, the author shows that, inasmuch as the latter had to be replaced by a system (Christ's) like that of Melchizedek, then the priesthood of Christ must have surpassed that of Levi.

We encounter a similar appeal to a personage of the Old Testament as Paul refers to the example of Abraham in Rom. 4:9 ff. The apostle endeavors to prove that even in the Old Testament the people of God were justified by faith without

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<sup>16</sup>Brooke Foss Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), p. 76.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 179.



the deeds of the Law, even as now. In verse 11, the author states that Abraham received circumcision not as a means of being justified, but as a seal of righteousness that he had been justified. It is in this particular sense, Paul claims, that Abraham is the father of circumcision and also the father of those who follow him by faith. The apostle argues, then, from this example, that one receives the promise through faith and not through the Law, for the Law voids the promises. Here we note that an argument from an example appears to carry weight with the apostle. In itself, neither analogy nor example can supply proof. However, it is a fact that these examples have been drawn from Scripture that makes the difference. The example of Abraham, then, serves to prove Paul's contention that not only was the justification by faith a justification without the basis of works, but it preceded the institution of circumcision.

### The Use of Genealogies

Among the various genealogies of Scripture, we observe the one of Jesus in Matt. 1:2-16. The purpose of Matthew, writing to Jewish readers, is to show that Jesus was the promised Messiah. His main Scriptural argument is to quote the prophets and then demonstrate how the predictions have been fulfilled in the life and ministry of the Savior. As Matthew begins the Gospel story, he sets out at once to establish the fact that Jesus is both the son of David and the son of Abra-



ham. Confused as conditions had become in those days, because of the loss of Jewish power and prestige, records nevertheless remained intact, to which the leading scribes had access. While this type of argumentation may strike us as unusual and strange, if we recall the value which the Jews attached to these records, the point which Matthew makes is very pertinent. His genealogical table, while containing certain problems, would scarcely be challenged or questioned.

There is another genealogy, recorded in Luke 3:24-38, which is likewise employed, we believe, as an argument for the doctrine of the person of Christ. Luke, so it appears, tries to trace the legal ancestry of Jesus, as is indicated by the words, *ὡν ὑψός, ὡς ἐνομήζετο, Ἰωάννης*. He reverses the process of Matthew and begins with Jesus, going as far back as Adam, to demonstrate that Jesus is also human as well as divine. What did Luke have in mind when he listed this genealogical table, which, we may say, was another Scriptural argument or appeal to the Old Testament?<sup>18</sup> Plummer connects the evangelist's present purpose with the larger aim of his Gospel narrative:

That Lk. should take the genealogy beyond David and Abraham to the father of the whole human race, is entirely in harmony with the Pauline universality of his

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<sup>18</sup>The various genealogies in Gen. 5, 6, and 10, as well as those in 1 Chron. 2, 3, and 4, illustrate that Matthew may well have had written source materials from the Old Testament itself for writing the genealogical table in Matthew 1 and likewise for his table in Luke 3.



Gospel. To the Jew it was all-important to know that the Messiah was of the stock of Abraham and of the house of David. Mt. therefore places this fact in the forefront of his Gospel. Lk., writing to all alike, shows that the Messiah is akin to the Gentile as well as to the Jew, and that all mankind can claim Him as a brother.<sup>19</sup>

Plummer supplies the interesting comment that Luke reserves this genealogical table for the discussion of the beginning of Jesus' ministry rather than to place it into the infancy narrative. It is then that the proof which this genealogy furnishes becomes clear to the reader:

Not until Jesus has been anointed by the Spirit does the history of the Messiah, i.e. the Anointed One, begin; and his genealogy then becomes of importance. In a similar way the pedigree of Moses is placed, not just before or just after the account of his birth (Exod. ii. 1,2) where not even the names of his parents are given, but just after his public appearance before Pharaoh as the spokesman of Jehovah and the leader of Israel (Exod. vi. 14-27).<sup>20</sup>

These tables, moreover, do demonstrate with what precision the writers of the New Testament proceeded to establish the historical basis for their Gospel story. For this they went to the records which the statement of the Old Testament must have supplied.

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<sup>19</sup>Alfred Plummer, "The Commentary According to St. Luke," The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (Fifth edition; Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1922), pp. 104 f.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 101 f.



### The Argument from Descent

In Hebrews 7:5 ff., there is a unique argument which the author uses in order to build up and develop his proposition that the priesthood of Christ is superior to that of Levi. As an initial step in this argument for the superior excellency of Christ, he points to the inferiority of Levi by appealing to the incident in which Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek, king and priest of Salem. This reference was particularly apt, inasmuch as the Levites exacted the tithe of the other Israelites. Here, in the payment of tithes to Melchizedek by Abraham, of whose "loins" Levi would later come, it is shown that Levi is inferior. The author argues: there can be no dispute, for the lesser is blessed by the greater. Thus, he justifies this appeal to the descent of Levi from Abraham (who showed himself a vassal to Melchizedek) on two counts: the right to exact tithes and the privilege of blessing belong to the one superior by birth.<sup>21</sup> This incident forms the unusual Scriptural argu-

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<sup>21</sup>Westcott, op. cit., pp. 176 f.



ment,<sup>22</sup> then, for the proposition<sup>23</sup> that the Levitical priesthood was both limited and transitory. When, therefore, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews bases this thesis on the descent of Levi from Abraham (who really performed the act), he calls attention to a type of Scriptural argument which is always valid for him. This is indicated by the perfect tenses: *δεδεκάτωκεν, εὐλόγηκεν, δεδεκάτωται* : "The fact is regarded as permanent in its abiding consequences. It stands written in Scripture as having present force."<sup>24</sup> In Hebrews 7:14, for example, we notice the reminder that Jesus was of the tribe of Judah, not of Levi.

#### The Appeal to the Law

The teaching of Paul regarding the Law of God constitutes also another form of appeal to the Old Testament Scriptures. What he states about the Law also distinguishes him from the Rabbinical theology, which, we know, glorified the Law as the great liberator. In Rom. 7:12 ff., and in 1 Tim.

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<sup>22</sup>Note a similar argument from descent in Rom. 9:10 ff., to show that mere physical relationship to Abraham is not sufficient for being called a child of Abraham.

<sup>23</sup>This particular appeal to descent is based on an interesting assumption: "The force of the argument lies in the assumption that the descendants are included in the ancestor, in such a sense that his acts have force for them. So far as we keep within the region of physical existence the connexion is indisputable." Westcott, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

<sup>24</sup>Westcott, *op. cit.*, p. 177.



1:8, Paul indeed pays tribute to the Law for its goodness, justice, and holiness, but this in no way places him in a position of agreement with the Pharisees. On the one hand, in 1 Tim. 1:9, he implies that the Spirit-motivated man does not need the Law (which is for the unrighteous), at least as far as the new man is concerned. On the other hand, Paul makes certain appeals to the Law, not in defense of it as a means of justification, but he lets the Law speak for itself in order to prove that one cannot teach a justification on the basis of works. In Rom. 7:1-11, the apostle shows that, far from giving spiritual life, the Law incited him to sin. This was not due to the Law, but because of the depravity of the person upon which the Law sought to exert influence. Not only is the Law impotent, but it no longer has dominion over the believer, for, through Christ, he has become dead to the Law as well as to sin. The analogy which Paul uses for this is the law regarding the re-marriage of a widow. She is bound to her husband by law as long as he lives. But the law ceases to bind her when he is dead. Paul appeals to the impotency of the Law to demonstrate that it is by rebirth in Christ and through His Gospel that we actually begin to follow the will of God.

Again in Gal. 3:10, the same apostle lets the Law testify in defense of his doctrine of justification by faith, without the deeds of the Law. He quotes from Deut. 27:26: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which



are written in the book of the Law to do them." (AV) It is clear, then, he says, that the Law does not justify, but places every one under a curse. "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them." (AV)

Appealing to what the law itself demands and says, Paul makes it clear that the Law issues commands, but does not give life. In a similar way, the same apostle establishes the universality of sin and of depravity in Rom. 3:9-21. He cites a number of passages to show that all men have become corrupt and guilty. He asserts, therefore, that the Law convicts and informs men of their guilt instead of being a way of salvation. In Rom. 1, Paul established the guilt of the Gentiles. In Rom. 2, he proved that the Jews likewise are to be classed with the guilty, for they do the very things they condemn in the conduct of the Gentiles. He asserts, therefore, that, inasmuch as they have not complied with God's Law, they are in the same condemnation, for the Law calls for a perfect fulfillment, verse 13 (chapter 2). In view of how the Law condemns both the Jew and the Gentile, Paul concludes in Rom. 3:20 that there can be no justification of any individual on the basis of works, for through the Law the sinner arrives at the clear knowledge of his sin.

Finally, one can notice how Paul regards the authority of the Old Testament Scriptures as containing the condemna-



tory portions of the Law, Gal. 3:22: "But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." Here, Scripture carries the function of the Law: it condemns man so that he places his confidence in the promise of the Gospel rather than in the deeds of the Law. Here, as in other instances, Paul appeals to the Law in order to establish the doctrine of justification by faith.<sup>25</sup>

#### The Appeal to the Old Testament Prophecies

One of the most effective and potent arguments of the apostolic writers was that the Gospel story which they preached and recorded had its foundation in Old Testament prophecy. In other words, the apostles proved their message by appealing directly to a specific prophecy which foreshadowed the events which they related about the Savior. This is done by the evangelist in Matt. 24:4, when he remarks that the triumphal entry into Jerusalem is a fulfillment of the prophecy (Zech. 9:9). Another incident is interpreted by the same evangelist as the fulfillment of prophecy, Jeremiah being named as the prophet who foretold the betrayal of

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<sup>25</sup>It is possible that Paul appeals to the Law in 2 Cor. 13:1 ff., paralleling Deut. 19:15. Cfr. Alfred Plummer, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on St. Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians," The International Critical Commentary on the Old and New Testaments of the Holy Scriptures (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1915), pp. 372 f.



Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, Matt. 27:9.<sup>26</sup>

Certain details regarding the Passion narrative, too, are mentioned and then proved by a quotation from the prophecies, as in John 19:24, where the writer demonstrates that the act of the soldiers in casting lots for the garment of Jesus was a fulfillment of the prophecy. Another incident in which the Gospel writer appeals directly to a prophecy in the Old Testament is the fact that the soldiers refrained from breaking the legs of Jesus, since He had expired. In John 19:36 f., the writer takes note of this and states that this is a fulfillment of the prophecy, *ὁ πῶτον οὐ συνελθοῦσιν* *ἡτοιμασέν* . Regarding the piercing of Jesus' side with the soldier's lance, the same writer in verse 37 makes the comment that this, too, agrees with prophecy: *ὁ πῶτον εἰς ὃν ἐξεκέντηται*.

The apostles met a certain crisis and solved it by citing a prophetic utterance from the Old Testament Scriptures, as we notice in the handling of the vacancy incurred by the death of Judas Iscariot, Acts 1:20 ff. Peter, who addressed the Christian assembly, introduced the election proceedings of the successor to Judas with a remark that the death of Judas, as well as the present selection of another

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<sup>26</sup>In Luke 4:17 ff., we have the account of Jesus' discourse at Nazareth, during which He asserted that this was now being fulfilled before their eyes, namely, the prophecy of Is. 61:1 ff. Cfr. Luke 24:44 ff.



apostle, were both fulfillments of the prophecy. Luke, in recording this meeting, mentions the fact that the prophecies were contained in the book of Psalms.

Not only did the apostle Peter justify the election of a successor to Judas on the basis of prophecy, but he also proceeded in the same manner on the day of Pentecost. When, according to St. Luke's record in Acts 2:13, some had spoken disparagingly of the phenomena there, Peter defended this unusual series of miracles on the basis of the prophecy of Joel (Joel 3:1-5).

Furthermore, it is significant how precisely the apostles interpret Old Testament prophecy to prove their doctrine regarding Christ. For example, in connection with the same sermon on the day of Pentecost, Peter demonstrates, by a process of elimination, that the utterance of David regarding the resurrection (in Ps. 16:8 ff.) could not refer to himself, for his tomb was known to the hearers. Therefore, Peter says, it must refer to the resurrection of Jesus and to the fact that His body was preserved from decay, Acts 2:29-31.

We observe another example of this exact argument from Old Testament prophecy together with this process of elimination in Hebrews 4:1-9. In order to convince his readers that there remains a rest for the people of God, he carefully indicates that the "rest" could not refer to God's own rest in the creation story, for God had completed these works



long ago (verse 3b). Furthermore, many of the Israelites did not enter the rest of the land of Canaan (which was but an imperfect type of the complete rest promised by God) because of their unbelief. To this the author of Hebrews adds the reminder that the rest must still remain, for, if the entry into the Promised Land had been the real and complete rest of God, Joshua would not have spoken of a rest after these events (verse 8). Thus, the writer of Hebrews eliminates two possibilities for the interpretation of the term, "rest." Now, then, he bases his conclusion in verse 9, *ἄρα ἀπολείπεται εὐαγγελισμός*, on a citation from David's prophecy in Ps. 95:7 f., "Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart, as in the provocation." (AV)

The words of the Psalm, as used here, prove that there is a rest and that it has not been attained. It follows, therefore, this the writer assumes, that Christ has brought the rest within reach of His people, as indeed Christians know.<sup>27</sup>

There is another instance in which Peter and John relied on the Old Testament prophecies to show that Jesus was the Christ, Acts 3:20 ff. Peter expressed it in a way that explained the prophecy as a direct utterance of God Himself: *ἔλάλησεν ὁ θεὸς διὰ στόματος τῶν ἁγίων ἑκ' αἰῶνος αὐτ. προσφ. κ.τ.λ.* He then quoted the prophecy of Moses in Deut. 18:15-19, emphasizing that the hearers were to accept this Christ as the true prophet and Savior.

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<sup>27</sup>Westcott, op. cit., p. 95.



On the occasion of Paul's visit at the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch on his first missionary expedition, this use of the prophecies again comes to light, Acts 13:40. Like Peter on Pentecost day, Paul again treats the passage regarding the resurrection of Jesus, uttered by David in Ps. 16. Here, too, Paul specifies clearly that the prediction does not refer to David himself who died, but to Jesus. Then, in the same sermon, the apostle appeals to his audience to accept his message. He reminds them that the Law of Moses could not justify them, but that through Christ they are justified, verse 39. He climaxes his address with a warning from the prophet Habakkuk.

Thus the apostles, as they record the testimony which they gave before their judges, Acts 26:22.27, and when they argue the case of the Christian Gospel, whether in sermons or in their correspondence with the churches, frequently rely on the testimony of the prophets, whose words they see fulfilled in their own times.

#### The Argument from Language

While all the arguments which we are presently discussing rest on the authority of the Old Testament, they differ in respect to the form into which they are cast. In one instance, in Gal. 3:16, we encounter an appeal which has to do with the grammatical analysis of a passage from the Old Testament. This constitutes what we might call an ar-



gument from language. The apostle Paul shows that the promises which God had made to Abraham referred to Christ. He considers the term, "seed," and emphasizes that this is in the singular: "He does not state: and to seeds, as of many, but as of one: 'and to thy seed,' which is Christ." Paul argues from the fact that the singular can refer to one, and, therefore, it must here refer to Christ. He is calling attention to this because he is endeavoring to prove, among other things, that Abraham was justified by faith in the Messianic promise. This promise, repeated to this patriarch a number of times, is found in Gen. 22:18 especially, as well as in 13:15; 17:8; and others. While this appeal to language may well be a parenthetical statement rather than the main argument here,<sup>28</sup> it indicates the apostle's attention to the details of Scripture which prove of wider significance to him than the average reader would suspect on reading the Genesis passages.

This argument from the singular, sperma, however, contains certain problems. Is the argument of Paul rendered invalid since the term, sperma, is used in the collective sense? On the one hand, it is true that the latter word is at times employed as a collected noun to represent more than

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<sup>28</sup>Cfr. Ernest De Witt Burton, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians," The International Critical Commentary on the Old and New Testaments of the Holy Scriptures (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1921), pp. 181 f.



one of a species. Some authorities maintain that the solution lies in the suggestion that Paul here uses the Rabbinical method of interpretation. This does not mean that the apostle practices this consistently or that he entertains the Rabbinical view of Scripture.

By a rabbinical method of interpreting, opposed to the usage of the Hebrew *וְיָצָא*, which signifies the offspring whether consisting of one person or many, Paul lays such stress on the singular number in Gen. xiii. 15; xvii. 8 as to make it denote but one of Abraham's posterity, and that the Messiah: Gal. iii. 16, also 19; and yet, that the way in which Paul presses the singular here is not utterly at variance with the genius of the Jewish-Greek language is evident from *Ἀποστολικὴν ἐκκλησίαν ἀποστόλων*, 4 Macc. xviii. 1, where the plural is used of many descendants.<sup>29</sup>

This argument from language, therefore, is legitimate evidence for the apostle's proposition. His aim here was to demonstrate "the inviolability of the covenant and suggesting the impossibility of its having already received its fulfillment before the law came in."<sup>30</sup> For a survey of the various interpretations of this argument of Paul, see Burton.<sup>31</sup> This precise manner of employing Scripture is significant for what it proves regarding Paul himself and about

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<sup>29</sup> Joseph Henry Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm's Wilke's Clavis Novi Testamenti Revised and Enlarged (New York: American Book Company, 1889), p. 584.

<sup>30</sup> Burton, op. cit., pp. 181 f.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., pp. 505 ff., in which Burton states that even the view which regards *ἐκκλησίαν* as a reference to a single individual would be "open to no serious objection on lexical grounds."



his doctrine:

L'élève de Gamaliel n'a pas oublié le littéralisme rabbinique qui autorise à prendre un mot suivant son sens le plus strict. Regeur philologique et exégèse de forme toute rabbinique. Dans la considération (Gal. 3:16) sur la promesse faite à Abraham, que la Loi ne peut rendre caduque, un mot biblique suggère une remarque lumineuse, une doctrine centrale, dont le rappel fortifie l'argumentation . . . Ici S. Paul fonde identification à la fois sur le singulier et sur la conviction que le Christ est par excellence la descendance d'Abraham, celle en qui s'accomplissent les divines promesses. Scribe? Oui! mais plus encore chrétien.<sup>32</sup>

The appeal of Paul to a single term has been called his "parenthetical argument," and has been pictured as a kind of fulcrum of what follows:

Parenthetical argument designed to make the application of this particular example to the general case perfectly distinct, and to obviate every possible misapprehension. The apostle seems to say: "this, however, is not a case merely of a διαθήκη, but an ἐπαγγελία, - yea, of ἐπαγγελία;" nor was it made merely to a man Abraham, but to Christ . . . "And to his seed:" emphatic, as pointing to Christ, and forming as it were the fulcrum of the argument which follows. . . . It may be true that similar arguments occur in Rabbinical writers; it may be true that σπέρμα (like ὕψος) is a collective noun, and that when the plural is used, as in Dan. 1:12, "grains of seed" are implied. All this may be so, - nevertheless, we have here an interpretation of the Holy Ghost deliberately propounded, and which, therefore (whatever difficulties may at first appear in it), is profoundly and indisputably true. We hold, therefore, that there is as certainly as mystical meaning in the use of ὕψος in Gen. 13:15; 17:8; as there is an argument for the resurrection in Ex. 3:6, though in neither case was the writer necessarily aware of it. As ὕψος in its simple meaning generally (except Gen. 4:25; 1 Sam. 1:11) denotes not the mere progeny of a man, but his

<sup>32</sup>Joseph Bonsirven, "Exégèse Rabbinique et Exégèse Paulinienne," Bibliothèque De Théologie Historique (Paris: Beauchesne et Ses Fils, 1939), pp. 298 f.



posterity as viewed as one organically-united whole; so here in its mystical meaning it denotes not merely the spiritual posterity of Abraham, but Him in whom that posterity is all organically united, *πληρουν* the *κεφαλη*, even Christ.<sup>33</sup>

In a similar manner, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews in 8:8-13, forms the conclusion that the covenant of the priesthood of Christ replaced the Levitical system and the covenant of the latter, by emphasizing the term "new" in Jere. 31:31-34.<sup>34</sup> The fact that the prophet had foretold Jehovah's establishment of a new covenant demonstrates that the former covenant would be voided.

#### Special Historical Arguments

The apostolic writers would quote from the Old Testament also to construct a number of historical arguments. Probably the chief emphasis in these arguments was that the principle prior in point of time takes precedence over the later. In 1 Tim. 2:13 f., Paul, for example, proves that the position he has taken regarding the sphere of women in the Church is in agreement with the divine order. First of all, he recalls that it is not proper for a woman to teach in the Church, that is, if the situation involves an exercise of authority over the man. Now, then, the apostle

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<sup>33</sup>Charles J. Ellicott: A Critical and Grammatical Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians: With a Revised Translation (Andover: Warren F. Draper, 1884), pp. 76 f.

<sup>34</sup>Bonsirven, op. cit., p. 300.



proves the superiority of man to the woman in two ways:

Adam was the first to be created, and this implies that, regardless of the fall, Eve would have been subservient to him. Furthermore, man is superior to woman because of Eve's priority in transgression. Since she was the first to sin, she is placed into a lesser sphere.

We notice a similar argument from priority in time in Gal. 3:17.<sup>35</sup> In order to convince his readers of the fact that justification is by faith in Gospel promise rather than on the basis of works done in conformity with Law, Paul points to the historical fact that the Law, which came in four hundred and thirty years later, could not destroy the covenant of grace nor could it annul the promise. Because the promise was made long before the Law was given, it stood in spite of the Mosaic ordinances. No doubt Paul here includes the period from Abraham to Moses. Even if the apostle makes an understatement here, for the stay in Egypt itself was four hundred and thirty years according to Ex. 12:40, this does not reduce, but rather enhances his argument. The period after the promise was most likely much more than four hundred and thirty years. At any rate, the apostle probably referred to it in approximate numbers, as we do about certain events today. Burton calls attention to the chronology

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<sup>35</sup>Inasmuch as this passage is an argument from the human covenant to the divine, it is also an argumentum a minore ad majus.



of Stephen in Acts 7:6, which states that Israel was in bondage four hundred years.<sup>36</sup>

A fitting parallel to this appeal to priority is seen in Rom. 4:11. Again the apostle takes up the important question of justification. He wishes to prove that Abraham was accepted by God through faith in the divine promises. To demonstrate that Abraham's case is evidence for the doctrine that we are justified, not on the basis of the works done by man, but by faith, Paul calls attention to the historical fact that Abraham was accounted as righteous while in the state of being uncircumcised. The circumcision, Paul explains, was but the seal of the righteousness which he had received by his faith previously. He then shows that this happened in Abraham's case in order that he might be the father of not only the circumcised, but also of those who follow his footsteps, his faith, even while uncircumcised.

Another argument of a similar nature is seen in Rom. 9: 10-13, in which the same apostle proves that the election of believers to salvation is by grace in Christ and not on account of works. While he cites the case of Jacob, he does not refer to him merely as an illustration. The circumstance that Jacob had been chosen before he was born, before there was opportunity to do either good or evil, is Paul's proof that God elects persons by grace in Christ, but independent-

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<sup>36</sup>Burton, op. cit., p. 184.



ly of their works.

We also include here an argument which Paul uses in Rom. 5:12-21, which satisfactorily outlines and demonstrates that sin was present even before the Law was given. This he shows by reminding his readers that death ruled over all before the commandments were given. If death could again control over all through one, Adam, Paul argues, how much more could life come over all through one, Christ. Here Paul had stressed the historical period from Adam to Moses, for in that period there was no law given like that of Moses (Paul does not include the Noachite ordinances, apparently). The point he wishes to make is that universal death, even prior to the Law, was a declaration of the universality of sin.<sup>37</sup>

#### The Appeal to an Omission in Scripture

It seems that in some instances, the writers of the New Testament argue from the silence of Scripture in certain matters. We would not hazard the guess that this is identical with the argumentum e silentio, for the simple reason that the situation of the apostles and that of the average thinker are not parallel. While we perhaps would rather avoid argu-

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<sup>37</sup>Cfr. Justus Koeberle, Sünde und Gnade: Im Religiösen des Volkes Israel bis auf Christum: Eine Geschichte des vorchristlichen Heilabewusstseins (Muenchen: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1905), p. 570. This work refutes the claim that Paul leaned on the Apocalypses in his arguments.



ing from silence, since it would be both weak and unconvincing, we cannot apply the same standard to the writers of the New Testament. Operating with truths beyond metaphysics and with some methods which were unique for their day, endowed with an enlightened intellect through divine inspiration, they were able to perceive implications in the Old Testament Scriptures which the average reader would not detect. In Hebrews 7:3, for example, we encounter an appeal to an omission. The author argues on the basis of facts about the person of Melchizedek which Scripture does not record. In connection with his rather complicated argument from the priesthood of Melchizedek, he establishes the inferiority of the Levitical priesthood as well as the superiority of the priesthood of Christ. Melchizedek is here regarded as a type of Christ, who is eternal. The author explains the reason for calling attention to Melchizedek: *ἀφανισμὸς δὲ τοῦ νεώ του θεού, κ.κ.κ.κ.*. This shows that Melchizedek is presented as the type of the Christ.

The delineation of Melchizedek is expressive also negatively. The silence of Scripture, the characteristic form, that is, in which the narrative is presented, is treated as having prophetic force. Melchizedek stands unique and isolated both in his person and in his history. He is not connected with any known line: his life has no recorded beginning or close.<sup>38</sup>

The parallels drawn between the Scriptural characterization of Melchizedek and of Christ involve the eternity of Christ

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<sup>38</sup>Westcott, op. cit., p. 172.



as Priest. While the Levitical priests died in office and left their task to others, both Melchizedek and Christ apparently have no successors. Inasmuch as Scripture records the death of Aaron and of other priests after him, but has no reference to the death of Melchizedek, the author takes this as a prophetic indication of the transitory nature of the Levitical priesthood. Because Scripture omits the data regarding the birth, death, and ancestry of Melchizedek, this indates for the apostle the superiority of the priesthood of the latter.

No provision for a successor to him is recorded in Scripture. . . . Melchizedek appears there simply in the power of life. So far he does not die; the witness of Scripture is to his living. What he does is in virtue of what he is.<sup>39</sup>

The way, then, in which Scripture presents the character, Melchizedek, without these usual biographical details, as a distinct type of Christ, according to His divine nature, eternal, that is, without beginning and without end. The argument, then (which we consider again in connection with the discussion about the types of Christ), is intended to establish: first, that the office of Melchizedek is superior to, and more enduring than, the Levitical; second, that the priesthood of Christ must replace the latter, since Melchizedek foreshadows the work of Christ.

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., pp. 174 ff.



## The Argument from Types Involving Difficulties of Interpretation

We proceed now to those passages in which the apostolic writers continue to rely on the Old Testament Scriptures, but in a manner that involves exegetical problems. In 1 Cor. 9: 9, the apostle refers to the divine ordinance in Deut. 25:4, which provides for the humanitarian treatment of animals used in the process of threshing grain. The apostle Paul is arguing for the fact that spiritual workers are to be remunerated for their services. In calling attention to this passage from the Old Testament to prove his remarks about the ministry, he does not eliminate the literal meaning. Instead of allegorizing in supplying proof for his statement here, Paul merely gives the divine ordinance a wider application: "For it was written for our sakes." The words of the original command were intended not merely for the benefit of beasts, but also for man, for the constituents of the apostles. It may well be, as Torm suggests regarding Paul's arguments, that we have here no true allegory, but something approaching an argumentum ad hominem. In other words, the argument, while based on the broader application of the passage, appeals to a motive which every reader would accept and even possess,



as a Christian.<sup>40</sup>

Another example which is frequently adduced to show that Paul allegorizes is his analogy of Hagar in Gal. 4:21 ff. Here, it is said that Paul argues by way of allegory, a method practiced by the Rabbinical schools. The key term which comes under consideration is ἀλληγορούμεν. If this term meant, "these things are to be allegorized," the matter would be solved. However, we know that the ancients were not as precise in their terminology as we are today. This term referred to everything that had a deeper meaning, that is, which had a figure. This term, we might add, actually emphasizes that the story of Hagar is introduced only as a kind of confirmatory climax of previous statements, and, therefore, is not on the same level with what we call arguments. In fact, six proofs for the apostle's main doctrine, justification by faith without the works of the Law, had been supplied. With Form we would suggest that here we have an argument which is a typical interpretation of the story instead of an example of an allegorical argument.<sup>41</sup> Form also offers the suggestion that in Paul we have an illustration of the typical interpretation, and that here one sees the distinction between an allegory and a type rather

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<sup>40</sup>Fr. Form, Hermeneutik des Neuen Testaments (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1930), p. 222.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 223.



clearly. He shows that, while the allegorical interpretation can eliminate the literal meaning, the typical interpretation actually stems from the literal one directly and naturally.<sup>42</sup> We mention this to point out that Paul's method of arguing in no way violates the meaning of the Old Testament Scriptures. From the point of view of many scholars, it seems that we do not have a true allegory here, in spite of the term, ἀλληγορούμενα :

It may be observed that the ἀλληγορεῖν properly means to "express or explain one thing under the image of another." . . . and hence in the pass., "to be so expressed or explained." . . . The remarks made above, ch. iii. 16, apply here with equal force to the late attempts of several modern expositors . . . to represent this as a subjective, i.e. to speak plainly, - an erroneous interpretation of St. Paul arising from his Rabbinical education. It would be well for such writers to remember that St. Paul is here declaring, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, that the passage he has cited has a second and a deeper meaning than it appears to have: that it has that meaning, then, is a positive objective, and indisputable truth.<sup>43</sup>

Burton, on the other hand, prefers the view that here we have an example of the allegorical proof as employed by Paul.<sup>44</sup>

We take the position that the apostle argues from the story of Hagar and that he adheres to the literal meaning of the narrative. However, in arguing against the restoration of the legal system, he bases his remarks on the supposition

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Ellicott, op. cit., p. 110.

<sup>44</sup>Burton, op. cit., pp. 253 ff.



that the meaning of the story had not been exhausted when originally recorded. Hagar and her son represent, according to Paul, those who are under the legal system. Sarah and Isaac represent those who are under grace. The case of Hagar and her son is sufficient proof that even mere physical relationship to Abraham is of little account if one is in bondage. Anyone who relies on legal or physical relationship and who rejects the promise of the Gospel, is, like Hagar and her son, rejected. One must have the faith of Abraham to be a true descendant of Abraham. In furnishing evidence for his declaration that there is no compatibility between the theology of righteousness by the works of law and the theology of righteousness by faith in Christ, Paul points to the two types, Hagar and Sarah, who symbolized these different covenants. He goes on to show that, even as the son of the slave-woman could not be permitted to be heir with the son of the free woman, thus the people who submit to the legalistic ordinances of the Judaizers will revert to spiritual bondage and not share in the blessings of those who are justified by faith alone.

Another passage which contains a similar problem is Hebrews 7:1 ff. Melchizedek, as we have previously indicated, served as the author's evidence that the Levitical priesthood was inferior and transitory. The question which we encounter here is: Did the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews employ the allegory as an argument? Again we reply that, since the



author deals with the narrative of the career of Melchizedek in such a manner as to leave the historical account intact, we cannot speak of an allegory. The argument from Melchizedek's life is placed side by side with the literal meaning and the narrative, but is never used in opposition to them. Once more we have an example of an interpretation that involves the deeper significance of an incident taken from the Old Testament without a coloring of the facts.<sup>45</sup> It is also of interest to emphasize that the points of similarity between Melchizedek and Christ, as indicated by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews in his argument for the superiority of the priesthood of Christ, are not a matter of mere coincidence. There is rather an objectivity about this argument, resting as it does on historical facts. Melchizedek is the bearer of those qualities which point to Christ. As representative of the idea of a person bearing both priestly and kingly titles at the same time, Melchizedek is the type of Christ. The author shows that the appearance of this unusual character in sacred history was intentional, and, being superior to the Levitical priesthood, his office prefigured that of Christ.

Finally, there is the appeal which the evangelist makes to Is. 53:4 in his comments about the miracles of Jesus in

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<sup>45</sup>Cfr. Westcott, op. cit., p. 200; Bonsirven, op. cit., p. 305; Torm, loc. cit.



Matt. 8:17. The Savior healed many on the day on which He had restored Peter's mother-in-law to health. Matthew, then, regards this demonstration of Jesus' divine power as a fulfillment of prophecy, and for this he quotes the passage from the book of Isaiah: *αὐτὸς τὰς ἀσθενείας ἡμῶν ἔλαβεν καὶ τὰς νόσους ἐφόραγεν*. This constitutes an argument from the Old Testament Scriptures for the evangelist's doctrine that Jesus was the true Messiah of prophecy. The problem here is: If Matthew cites the reference to establish the fact that Jesus had come as the One Who was to bear human sickness, does the evangelist allegorize? This inquiry has its point here because the passage in Isaiah refers to transgressions rather than to human sicknesses. Apparently, Matthew is not arguing as an allegorist. He rather treats the problem of sin comprehensively here, including the results and the consequences of man's total depravity. While the Savior bore the sins of men (the cause of these maladies), we do not have to say that He experienced the pain of these afflicted people. In no way does Matthew contradict or change the passage from Isaiah. M'Neile, on the other hand, would solve the problem of Matthew's argument by saying that the evangelist employs the prophetic passage in a manner that has no bearing on the doctrine of the atonement. This, how-



ever, would not agree with Matthew's purpose.<sup>46</sup> The evidence that Matthew argues here after the fashion of the Rabbinical school is rather weak. In fact, it has been said that this respective representation of the Messiah on the basis of Is. 53 occurs in Judaism only at the beginning of the third century after Christ, and that in the Targum of the prophetic writings.<sup>47</sup> From all these indications, it would seem that Matthew does not employ the allegorical method in his argumentation. In fact, we might say that Matthew actually combines the atoning work of Christ with His healing ministry, without denying the former:

Like the prophet, Matthew does not separate the two. For only Jesus would die for our sins on the cross and work an eternal redemption from sin; only He could work a ministry of healing men from disease. . . . He had the power to heal the diseases because He expiated the sins immediate or remote which brought about those diseases. . . . Since this prophecy is fulfilled by Jesus' activity, it proves that Jesus is the true and long-awaited Messiah.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Alan High M'Neile, The Gospel According to St. Matthew (London: Macmillan and Company, Limited, 1949), pp. 107 f.

<sup>47</sup>Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, "Das Evangelium Nach Matthäus," Kommentar zum Neuen Testament Aus Talmud und Midrasch (Muenchen: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, Oskar Beck, 1922), I, 481.

<sup>48</sup>Herbert W. Goerss, "The Fulfillment of Old Testament Prophecy in the Gospel of St. Matthew Exegetically and Doctrinally Treated" (Unpublished bachelor's thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1940), pp. 22 ff.



## The Pauline Method of Arguing from the Old Testament Scriptures specifically compared with the Rabbinical Method

It is relevant to our purpose, as we consider how the apostolic writers used the Old Testament Scriptures to establish their teachings to be true, that we turn to the basic considerations of Paul's own outlook and method. On the one hand, some are led to feel that Paul never lost the habits of his earlier Rabbinical training as he argued for the Christian Gospel:

Die Methode der theologischen Beweisführung, welche er in die Rabbinische Schule gelernt hat, ist ihm so in Fleisch und Blut übergegangen, dass er sich auch als Apostel Jesu Christi und als er innerlich längst dem Judentum entwachsen war, von ihr nicht hat los-lösen können. Der Galater- und der Römerbrief legen dafür beredtes Zeugnis ab.<sup>49</sup>

It is conceivable that, while Paul rejected the contents of most of the Rabbinical theology, he retained some of the Rabbinical methods of argumentation. As a parallel, we might mention the dogmatists of the Lutheran Church after the Reformation period, who, though they despised the philosophy of Aristotle, reflect their training in the Aristotelian method of presentation.

Yet, while we cannot draw conclusions from the almost non-existent literature of Paul's Judaistic contemporaries

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<sup>49</sup>Paul Feine, Der Apostel Paulus: Das Ringen um das geschichtliche Verständnis des Paulus (Guetersloh: Verlag von C. Bertelsmann, 1927), p. 425.



ies,<sup>50</sup> he did possess a different outlook on the Scriptures. He respected, in his argumentation, the literal meaning of the text, without, however, elevating the incidental parts in a literalistic manner (as the Rabbis did). Paul's inspired thoughts move in larger concepts, not in exegetical devices. Living as he did in the period of fulfillment, he perceived the deeper meaning of the institutions and personages, the prophecies and ordinances of the Old Testament period.

This new outlook of Paul, as reflected in his dependence on the authority of the Scriptures in arguing for his message, involved certain claims, too. He claimed to be the servant of Christ, one who had broken with the past, and, we might add, also with Rabbinical theology, 2 Cor. 10:5; 2 Cor. 3:13-16; 2 Cor. 6:4-10; 2 Cor. 5:17. He said this because he was convinced that he had been made a captive of Christ, and, therefore, argued as a Christian theologian, Phil. 3:12; 2 Cor. 5:14. Only in a relative sense, however, as he argues for the Gospel of Christ does he consider himself a Pharisee after his conversion: Acts 23:6; Phil. 3:5; Acts 26:5; Rom. 11:1; 2 Cor. 11:22; Acts 22:5; Gal. 2:14; Rom. 9:1-5. In these passages, as well as in those portions of the New Tes-

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<sup>50</sup> The name Gamaliel (who was Paul's teacher) is duplicated often without identification or date. Therefore, it is difficult to determine what Paul's teacher actually wrote.



tament in which he makes an appeal to the fact that he worships the God of the fathers: Acts 24:14; 2 Tim. 1:3, in which he appeals to his conservatism, he agrees with the Pharisee's doctrine of resurrection and monotheism. Nevertheless, the apostle Paul, whether in his argumentation or otherwise, saw in Christ the key to his Scriptures, and in the rejection of Christ on the part of many of his countrymen, he saw that the Scriptures were closed, 2 Cor. 3:14-15. It is significant to note that Paul never makes his arguments rest on any utterance of Gamaliel or other Rabbinical scholars. Although he does appeal to the Pharisee's doctrine of the resurrection in Acts 23:6 ff., Paul enjoyed too intimate a relationship with Christ to be obliged to lean on the authority of Rabbinical teachings.<sup>51</sup> He also had a deep concern for employing Scripture objectively and cautiously, as he indicates in 2 Cor. 4:2.5. Thus, as much as one can observe of Paul at work, fortifying his Christian Gospel with every possible proof from the Old Testament Scriptures, he was, first and last, the Christian theologian.

Thus Paul, together with the other writers of the New Testament, rely chiefly on the authority of the Old Testament Scriptures as the decisive argument to prove that their doctrine came from God. All other arguments appear as complements of the Scriptural one.

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<sup>51</sup>Cfr. Feine, op. cit., pp. 3 ff.



## CHAPTER III

### THE APPEAL TO SACRED ORAL PRONOUNCEMENTS

Although the writers of the New Testament often appealed to the Old Testament Scriptures, they had also recourse to another form of argumentation in which they directed attention to sacred oral pronouncements. The divine statements which the apostolic authors cite as proof for their doctrinal position may not always appear as lucid to us as they did to the writers themselves, inasmuch as they had the advantage of being personally associated with Jesus.<sup>1</sup> In observing how the apostles argued on the basis of oral pronouncements in addition to written words of God, we have to do with an appeal that is pointed and also direct as well.<sup>2</sup>

#### The Sayings of Jesus

Foremost among the sacred oral pronouncements were the sayings or discourses of Jesus. If the apostolic writers made use of the fact that their Master substantiated His claim to be the Son of God by performing miracles,<sup>3</sup> they

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<sup>1</sup>Infra: "The Appeal to Things Heard and Seen," Chapter III.

<sup>2</sup>This does not mean that we separate Scripture from the words of Jesus.

<sup>3</sup>Infra: "The Appeal to Miracles," Chapter VIII.



could also point to His numerous sayings in order to win acceptance for their teachings. Their written message consists largely of words of Jesus which they quote. They let Jesus speak - that is enough. They do not, for instance, endeavor to prove that what the Sermon on the Mount sets forth is true; it is sufficient that they can declare that Jesus actually spoke these teachings. His great pronouncements have their way of authenticating themselves as divine. It is clear that we are here dealing with one of the fundamental concepts touching the nature of our four Gospels. The Gospels are reports of what Jesus said and did. They are not metaphysical disquisitions; they are not moral essays. They bring to us, for one thing, the very words of Jesus. It is true that special divine acts and miracles are related now and then as substantiating the teaching of Jesus. But very often the words of Jesus are brought before us in their simple majesty, without a report of any accompanying miraculous demonstration. We may think here of the parables which are submitted, and concerning which the evangelists do not pause to bring proof and arguments that the teaching of the parables is true. In other words, the writers of the New Testament appreciated the value of the sayings, as well as of the works of Jesus. This ability of the disciples of our Lord to recall what He had said is not to be classified under ordinary human power of recollection, but this was in fulfillment of the promise of the Savior in



John 14:26; 16:6.16. The Master had assured the disciples that, after He would ascend into heaven, they would receive the Holy Spirit, Who would refresh their memories about His words and thus enable them to be real witnesses of the Word. The Holy Spirit would not only give them a host of pleasant reminiscences, but would also deepen their understanding of the words of Jesus, which they had previously failed to comprehend and apply.<sup>4</sup> Since the Holy Spirit brought these remarks of Jesus to their attention, it is not necessary to assume that the apostles, in appealing to the sayings of Jesus, were quoting from a specific collection of the sayings of Jesus.<sup>5</sup>

When they recalled the sayings of Jesus by the Spirit's direction, the apostles were not merely reviewing the preaching of Jesus. They were presenting to their hearers and readers the crucified Christ as the Savior of the world in connection with these reminiscences. In a practical manner, they applied the words of Jesus to the present situation in the various congregations under their care.<sup>6</sup> Thus, we may say, the apostles preserved a doctrinal continuity with the

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<sup>4</sup>This is indicated by the bewilderment of the disciples on various occasions, Matt. 16:21-23; 16:6 ff.

<sup>5</sup>Cfr. F. F. Bruce, The Acts of the Apostles (London: The Tyndale Press, 1951), p. 383.

<sup>6</sup>Theodor Zahn, Grundriss der Neutestamentlichen Theologie (Leipzig: A. Deichetsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, D. Werner Scholl, 1928), p. 64.



teachings of Jesus, although some scholars seem to think that there is a vast difference between the discourses of Jesus and the theology of Paul.<sup>7</sup> This latter opinion, however, we reject, inasmuch as the apostolic writers, Paul included, wished to be known as the "servants of Christ." When they appealed to the sayings of Jesus, they wished to be known as heralds of the Master. Therefore, when they refer to the sayings of Jesus, it is an appeal not merely concerning Jesus, but they are bringing the Savior forward, as it were, to speak as their foremost witness in behalf of the doctrine which they teach. When the apostles claim to be servants of Christ and state that they are preaching the Gospel of Christ, it is Christ Who is speaking through them. This is the import and also the point of emphasis in every appeal to the sayings of Jesus.

Alle Predigt und Lehre der Apostel wollte also degradatione Fortsetzung der Predigt aufgefasst sein (Hebr 2:3 f.; 1 Jo 1:1.3.5; Rm 16:25; AG 10:36; 2 Pt 3:3). Ebendies ist die Meinung, so oft die christliche Predigt des Evangelium Christi oder Zeugnis oder Lehre oder Wort Christi genannt wird (gl 1:7; 1 Kr 1:6; 9:12; 2 Kr 2:12; 10:14; Rm 1:9; 10:17; 15:19; Mr 1:1; 2 Jo 9; Ap 1:9; 12:17; 19:10; Kol 3:16; 2 Th 1:8). Dasz in solcher Verbindung *Χριστου* oder *Κυριου* nicht ein Genitivus objecti, sondern ein Genetivus subjecti gleicher oder ähnlicher Verbindung (Rm 1:1; 1 Th 2:2.9.13; 1 Kr 2:1; 14:36; 2 Kr 11:7). Gott ist der letzte Urheber und der Christus ist der erste grundlegende Verkündiger der Heilsbotschaft (Hebr 1:1; Ap 1:5), welche dadurch nicht aufhört Gottes und Christi

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<sup>7</sup>Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, translated from the German by Kendrick Grobel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), I, 188 f.



Botschaft und Wort zu sein, weil Menschen sie weitertragen (1 Th 2:13; Ap 1:2; 2 Pt 3:2; 2 Kr 5:20).<sup>8</sup>

We see, then, that the apostolic writers were men who claimed to reproduce the doctrine of Christ accurately. They could easily demonstrate to their people that the apostolic doctrine coincided with that of Jesus by citing what the Savior had said. In fact, their doctrine was simply the message which Jesus had preached and which they repeated in His very words.

There are instances of a slightly different nature in which the holy writers proved their doctrine correct by quoting a word of Jesus or of God. Among the instances in which the apostles appealed to a particular saying of Jesus is that found in Acts 11:16, the account of Peter's self-defense. He defends what he has done, speaking before the believing Israelites (who, it should be added, felt that the Gentile converts should submit to circumcision as requirement for entering the group of Christians). He was convinced that he must answer the criticism which this "party of the circumcision" had raised against him when he had fellowship with Gentiles and ate with them. He then recalled the vision he had received from God telling him to go to Caesarea to the Gentile's home for the purpose of bringing the Gospel to that family. As Peter relates the incident, he shows

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<sup>8</sup>Zahn, op. cit., p. 64.



that those people received the Holy Ghost. This convinced him that God was putting divine approval on his action. What is more, Peter also calls attention to a word of Jesus as a prophetic utterance that included his present activity. While this remark of Jesus does not constitute the apostle's main proof here, it reflects the importance which the apostles gave to the words of the Savior: "Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that He said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence" (Acts 1:5). (AV)

As we examine the passages in which the writers of the New Testament appeal to the sayings of our Lord, we find that some appeal to a prophetic remark of Jesus. The words cited by Peter in the previous incident are an example of this type. Another time the same apostle only infers that Jesus had said a definite fact to him, 2 Pet. 1:14. Peter mentions a personal statement which Jesus had made regarding the apostle's death: *εἰδὼς ὅτι ταχὺν ἔσται ἡ ἀπόβρεξις τοῦ ἐκκληνώματος μου, κ. κ. ὁ κύριος. . . ἐδήλωσεν*

. . . . While this is rather indirect, Peter is alluding to a specific prophecy of Jesus regarding the apostle's departure as a martyr, John 21:18 f. This is further clarified for us, if we recall the "post-event" comment by John, who writes in verse 19 as follows: "This He said, signifying by what kind of death he should glorify God." Peter's particular interest in this word of Jesus at the time was to impress upon his



readers the importance of abiding by the apostolic doctrine. He wished to be certain that, after his departure, his readers would continue to keep in memory the truths they had learned from the apostles. His allusion to the prophetic word of Jesus about his own imminent death was not a mere biographical detail. It was an intentional reference to emphasize the authority behind his word of admonition regarding the false teachers.

In addition to prophetic sayings of Jesus, the apostolic writers also draw from the many utterances of the Savior regarding behavior. The apostle calls attention to the specific words of Jesus in Acts 20:35: "I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." (AV) The Apostle is reminding the elders of the Ephesian congregation in his farewell words that he has done physical labor to support himself and to be able to help the poor. He has used this method in order to be an example to them so that they also might learn how to relieve the suffering. But he does not feel that his own example suffices. He then proceeds to prove that it contributes more to personal happiness to give than to receive a gift, and for this claim he quotes the words of Jesus. However, this passage constitutes a problem. These words, as Paul quotes them, do not occur in the discourses of Jesus or in the private conversations which He had with the disciples, as reported in



the Gospels. Nevertheless, that Jesus spoke these words is confirmed in what He said in Luke 6:38; 11:9; John 13:34, as Bruce reminds us.<sup>9</sup> Another passage in which the apostle Paul urges a certain practice because of the words of Jesus is 1 Cor. 9:14. Although the main burden of his argument rests on an analogy of the Old Testament, namely, that the priests and the Levites were given portions of the corn, wine, oil, and sheep, as well as other sacrificial things (Deut. 18:3 ff.), yet Paul appeals to the Lord's direct command in verse 14: *οὗτος ὁ κύριος διετάξατο*.<sup>10</sup> The apostle is advocating the practice of giving monetary support to the servants of the Word for their labors. We feel that Paul is arguing not only on the basis of the Old Testament, namely, that a practice of the Church under the old covenant ought to be permissible or commendable even under the new. He adds a second argument to this, appealing to the words of Jesus, recorded in connection with the narrative of the preaching mission, Luke 10:7 ff. The Master's words, to which the apostle here alludes, establish the principle that the ministers of the Gospel receive remuneration for their

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<sup>9</sup>Bruce, op. cit., p. 383.

<sup>10</sup>We feel that Paul is not merely referring to God in a general way, but when he uses *κύριος* in verse 14, he is thinking of Jesus. The different usage of *κύριος* in the epistles as compared with the usage in the Gospels, cf. A. T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research (Fourth edition; New York: Hodder and Stoughton, Geo. H. Doran Company, 1923), p. 795.



spiritual service. Furthermore, when the apostle elsewhere seeks to persuade his readers to take up responsibility for the sake of fellow Christians, he refers to the "law of Christ," in Gal. 6:6. This term, together with what James calls "the perfect law of liberty," in James 2:12, constitutes an indirect appeal to a saying of Jesus.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, when Paul deals with the question of the proper conduct in the estate of marriage as well as with the problem of divorce, he appeals to the command of the Lord regarding married people, 1 Cor. 7:10: "And unto the married I give an order, yet not I, but the Lord." In verse 11, Paul evidently reflects the instruction of Jesus in Mark 10:11: "Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, commiteth adultery against her." (AV) The apostle makes this binding on his readers, for it is a command of the Lord (Jesus).

Of special concern is that appeal to a saying of Jesus which is said to be contained in 1 Cor. 11:23-25, the account which Paul gives of the institution of the Lord's Supper. The discussion centers about the words: "For I have received of the Lord." (AV) While certain lexicographers may differ as to the distinction between the prepositions *παρὰ* (which is the prefix to the verb involved, *παρέλαβον*), and *ἐκ*, it is evident that the latter preposition does

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<sup>11</sup>The fact that Paul, in 1 Cor. 7:25, admits that he has no commandment from the Lord specifically applying to virgins, indicates how Paul relied on the words of Jesus.



not occur in this connection, and, therefore, Paul must have received his information directly from God, not from men or through the agency of men, Gal. 1:12. Apparently, then, Paul refers here to a direct communication from God in which he received the words of institution of the Sacrament. However, the real issue revolves about the preposition *ἀπό*, about which we read:

Of origin: whether of local origin, the place whence, or of casual origin, the cause from which . . . After verbs of learning, knowing, receiving, *ἀπό* is used of him to whom we are indebted for what we know, receive, possess.<sup>12</sup>

A similar statement agrees with this interpretation of the passage, which we encounter in connection with the term,

*παράκλησιν* : "To receive with the mind, by oral transmission: *τί* followed by *ἀπό* with a gen. of the author from which the tradition proceeds, 1 Cor. xi. 23."<sup>13</sup>

We believe that, therefore, Paul refers here to a saying of Jesus uttered at some time after his conversion. This, we maintain, is indicated by the preposition, *ἀπό*, which denotes source. Moreover, the emphatic way in which he introduces the words of his appeal, *ἔγω γάρ*, seems to prove that he has received the information regarding the

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<sup>12</sup>Joseph Henry Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm's Wilke's Clavis Novi Testamenti Revised and Enlarged (New York: American Book Company, 1889), p. 584.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 484.



Eucharist independently of any oral tradition and of the Twelve.<sup>14</sup>

A number of passages could be cited here to illustrate how much the apostles relied on the sayings of Jesus, but many of them are only allusions to what He said during His life and ministry, as for example, Rom. 14:14, a reflection of Mark 7:19; Rom. 12:14 (of Matt. 5:44); 13:9 f. (of Mark 12:31); 16:19 (of Matt. 10:16); and others. One cannot conclude from the paucity of utterances of Jesus in the writing of Paul that this indicates a difference between the teaching of Jesus and the theology of the apostle.<sup>15</sup> One would rather expect Paul to quote less from the direct sayings of Jesus, inasmuch as he was not one of the Twelve, intimate with the Savior on earth.<sup>16</sup>

There is extreme difficulty in settling the question as to whether a writer of the New Testament is appealing to the sayings of Jesus which were current or to a special revelation.

We find it difficult at times to know whether Paul is preserving a word of the Lord spoken in the days of His flesh or whether he is expressing a word of the Lord

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<sup>14</sup>Cfr. Jean Hering, "Le Première Epître De Saint Paul Aux Corinthiens," Commentaire Du Nouveau Testament (Neuchâtel et Paris: Delauchaux et Niestle, 1949-1950), VII, 100.

<sup>15</sup>Bultmann, op. cit., pp. 188 f.

<sup>16</sup>Paul Feine, Der Apostel Paulus: Das Ringen um das geschichtliche Verständnis des Paulus (Guetersloh: Verlag von C. Bertelsmann, 1927), pp. 3 ff.



which he has received direct from the Lord. There are some cases such as 1 Thessalonians 4:15 and 2 Corinthians 12:9 in which Paul is clearly not preserving a word in the days of His flesh. There are other cases where we cannot be sure whether Paul is referring to a saying of Jesus or is giving us the will of his Lord as he received it in a mystical experience.<sup>17</sup>

The interest, as we have observed, which the apostolic writers had in appealing to some of the sayings of Jesus to prove their doctrines, is easy to understand. Intimately associated with Jesus, they had been commissioned to proclaim His words, as is evident from Matt. 10:27; 28:20; Mark 13:37. Then, too, they had been urged to abide in the word of Jesus, as we note in John 8:31 and 14:23, as well as in 15:7. The writers of the New Testament attached great importance to the words of Jesus, and, in fact, regarded them, together with Scripture, as the source and the norm of their doctrine.<sup>18</sup> Conversely, as we read in 1 Tim. 6:3, those who do not teach according to the norm of Jesus' words, are "proud, knowing nothing, but dotting about questions and strifes of words," verse 4 (AV).

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<sup>17</sup>Holmes Rolston, Consider Paul: Apostle of Jesus Christ (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1951), p. 51.

<sup>18</sup>There are also allusions to the words of Jesus which seem to fortify a specific emphasis of the apostles. In 1 Thessalonians 4:17, it appears that Paul thinks of the utterance of the Savior in John 12:26 regarding the last day. In James 1:12 there is also a suggestion of a dependence on Jesus' sayings: "which the Lord has promised to all persons who love Him."



## The Appeal to the Living Voice of God

The next group of oral pronouncements which we consider among those to which the apostolic writers appealed is both unique and striking. It is rare in any type of argumentation. Here we encounter an argument for the doctrines of the New Testament which views God's Word, recorded long ago, as living in the present.<sup>19</sup> While the words themselves are found in Scripture, they are quoted as if God were still uttering them in the present, for the benefit of the readers. While there is something similar to this in Gal. 4:24, where Paul regards the Old Testament Scriptures as still testifying, this kind of argument is found chiefly in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Generally it must be observed that no difference is made between the word spoken and the word written. For us and for all ages the record is the voice of God . . . as a necessary consequence the record is itself living. It is not a book merely. It has a vital connection with our circumstances and must be considered in connection with them. The constant use of the present tense in quotations emphasize this truth: ii. 11 *οὐκ ἐπικρατύνεται* . . . *καλεῖν* . . . *λε- γων* . . . 111. 7 *καθὼς λέγει τὸ πνεῦμα ἐδ' ἔχον* xii. 5 *ἦ* . . . *δοκ* . . . There is nothing really parallel to this general mode of quotation in the other books of the N. T. Where the word occurs elsewhere, it is for the most part combined either with the name of the prophet or with "Scripture." . . . When God is the subject, as is rarely the case, the reference is to words spoken directly

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<sup>19</sup>According to what is mentioned in 2 Cor. 13:3, the apostle Paul was concerned with proving that Christ spoke through him.



by God.<sup>20</sup>

Very little has been said of this type of approach, although recently, William Manson has indicated parallels between the address of Stephen and the Epistle to the Hebrews, among them this emphasis on the Word of God as living.<sup>21</sup> This kind of argument, to be sure, views doctrine as an unchanging word of God, valid for all times:

The Old Testament is, however, something more than just the record of past utterances of God. In it the voice of God can still be heard . . . In this way the writer shows clearly that the message of God spoken of old time remains a message which God speaks at all times in the present circumstances of men's lives.<sup>22</sup>

While we do notice similar dramatic personifications in the Scriptures akin to this, as in Hebrews 11:4, where Abel is represented as speaking even after his death, and also in Gal. 3:8, in which Scripture is pictured as foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles through faith, there is nothing that quite approaches what we have in Hebrews 3:7. 15; 4:3; etc. The grammarians appear reticent on this matter. When the anonymous writer to the Hebrews calls attention to what God says, he employs the present tense rather frequently, λέγει . This is a phenomenon which

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<sup>20</sup>Brooke Foss Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews (London: Macmillan and Company, 1889), p. 475.

<sup>21</sup>William Manson, The Epistle to the Hebrews (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1951), p. 36.

<sup>22</sup>R. V. G. Tasker, The Old Testament in the New Testament (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1947), p. 114.



is not easily explained by the historical present. Yet, it agrees with what the author says about the Word of God in Hebrews 4:12, namely, that it is powerful, penetrating, and convicting. That this term, *λέγει*, presents an argument to the readers and appeals to the word of God as to a living voice, is very evident. This, we observe, happens to be one of the outstanding characteristics of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

It is characteristic of the Epistle that the words of Holy Scripture are referred to the Divine Author and not to the human instrument. . . . His voice, that is the voice of God spoken through Christ as the Apostle applies the words. The application to Christ of that which is said of the Lord in the Old Testament was of the highest moment for the apprehension of the doctrine of His Person.<sup>23</sup>

An example of this type of appeal is found in Hebrews 3:7, where the author represents the Holy Ghost as speaking the words of the Old Testament. He pictures the Spirit as the voice speaking in the present time as well. The author indicates that, while in ancient times men turned from the voice of God, the same voice urges them not to harden themselves against the truth. While this voice still addresses them, they are to obey it, if they would receive the promised rest of God. Again, in Hebrews 1:6-12, the writer establishes and proves the superiority of Christ to the angels by quoting the words of the living voice of God. Drawing

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<sup>23</sup>Westcott, op. cit., p. 80.



from Ps. 114:4; 45:7 f.; and 102:26-28, the author develops the thought that the Son and the angels are different in essence. He introduces his points with two rhetorical questions, which actually constitute his argument: first, "To which of the angels did God ever say: 'Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten thee?' And again: 'I will be a Father to Him, and He will be My Son?'" Then the writer actually shows what God is saying: "Let all the angels of God worship Him." Then, to the angels, who are subordinate to Christ, He says: "He makes His angels spirits, and His servants flames of fire." Thereupon, in verses 8-13, He establishes that Christ is superior to the angels by citing what God says about the enthronement of Christ, of His immortality, of His rule (after His saving work has now been completed). Another interesting example of this appeal to the voice of God is in Hebrews 12:5, where the writer endeavors to encourage the readers in the time of persecutions lest they deviate from the truth. He has given them the example of Christ, Who, after suffering, was glorified. Then he proceeds to persuade them to accept this consolation and encouragement, and to bear divine chastisement instead of taking the easier course and return to error. He regards the admonition as an utterance of God in the present: "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him." (AV) This is introduced with the pointed admonition: "And ye have forgotten the exhortation



which speaketh unto you as unto children." (AV) Here the author suggests, and regards the utterance in a manner that it is God Who presently addresses them:

The utterance of Scripture is treated as the voice of God conversing with men. Through the written word the Wisdom of God addresses us. This peculiar use of *ἡ γὰρ φωνὴ τοῦ λόγου τοῦ θεοῦ* does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament, but the personification in Gal. 3:8 (*πρὸς ὑμᾶς*) . . . is even bolder.<sup>24</sup>

This appeal occurs again in connection with the final argument of the author for the superiority of Christ and His priesthood to that of the old covenant. In the new covenant, this closing proposition claims, there is no room for Levitical sacrifices. How does the author prove this? He appeals to the voice of God, Hebrews 10:15 f., as follows:

Whereof the Holy Ghost is also a witness to us: for after that He had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. (AV)

Previous to this, the author had proved that God no longer demanded the sacrifices which had been obligatory under the old covenant. He pointed, therefore, to what God says (*λέγει*), Psalm 40:7-9:

Wherefore when He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifices and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me; In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure (Hebrews 10:5). (AV)

When Christ came into the world, the author emphasizes, He

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 399.



made clear that the old sacrifices were no longer necessary. These words show that this body, that is, the body of Christ, will please God, atone for man's sins, in the sacrifice on the Cross.

The words of the Psalmist are ideally the words of the Christ; and they are not past only but present. Compare ch. 1:6 f.; 3:7; 5:6; 8:8. No person is named. The thought of the true speaker is present to the mind of every reader.<sup>25</sup>

### The Appeal to a Divine Oath

From some of the remarks of Jesus in the Gospels, one gains a glimpse of the Jewish emphasis on oaths, in Matthew 5:35; 23:16 ff. There is something more emphatic and striking in the Epistle to the Hebrews, however, when the author appeals to a divine oath in order to support a doctrinal statement. This constitutes, too, an appeal to a sacred oral pronouncement. Furthermore, the divine oath is cited as a proof which God Himself furnished to establish the superiority of Christ's priesthood to that of Aaron. In Hebrews 6:13-18, we notice how the author treats this divine oath: "The Lord has sworn, and He will not repent: Thou (art) Priest continuously."

As usual, he likes to give a biblical proof or illustration, God's famous promise to Abraham, but the main point in it is that God ratified the promise with an oath. . . . God, in his desire to afford the heirs of the Promise a special proof of the solid character of

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 309.



his promise, interposed with an oath.<sup>26</sup>

The author proves, then, the superiority of Christ's eternal priesthood to the Aaronic by reminding the readers of the fact that, while the former was established by a divine oath, the latter was not, Hebrews 7:20-22. The appeal, therefore, to the divine oath was essential to the author's purpose. Some might have objected to his reference to the priesthood of Melchizedek, for the priesthood of Aaron, coming in later, seems to have had more prominence and a longer existence than the former. To anticipate this objection, the author draws the conclusion from the divine oath that the covenant ushered in with Christ was vastly superior.<sup>27</sup>

#### The Appeal to the Apostles

As the first generation of Christians pass from the scene, the words of the apostles became increasingly important. Whatever the apostles had once said about a certain principle, this proved to be helpful in settling many

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<sup>26</sup>James Moffatt, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews," The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924), pp. 86 f.

<sup>27</sup>We notice the importance of the divine oath to the author in Hebrews 3:11 and 4:3, as he establishes the certainty of the rest for the people of God. Here the divine oath asserted that the unbelievers would not enter it. Therefore, the rest was intended, the author develops the thought further, for those who believe.



a question in the future controversies. This was evident, no doubt, in the period when John was the only surviving apostle. We can well imagine that his counsel was often sought and followed. The apostles were often consulted because the Christians could discover from them what Jesus had said about an important question of doctrine or of life.<sup>28</sup>

One thing which is strange about this appeal is that one of the apostles made use of it, first of all. When Peter reminds his readers of the doctrine of the apostles, he recalls how they taught about the coming of Christ to judgment. This type of appeal is found in 2 Pet. 3:1-2: "This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Savior." (AV) Thereupon the apostle proceeds to show how the scoffers err in their conclusions, pointing out that in the past God has sent visitations of judgment. There is a special emphasis in this appeal to the apostles, for they belong to the servants of Christ, and are one with them in faith. It is this appeal that Peter uses to call on his readers to accept his admonitions regarding the last days. "Your apostles" are the men you ought to trust; do not listen

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<sup>28</sup> While it is not often that the apostles themselves appeal to their authority, there seems to be an example of this in 2 Cor. 13:10.



to these false teachers, with whom you have neither part nor lot."<sup>29</sup>

Once more Peter emphasizes the second coming of the Christ and the destruction of all things, 2 Pet. 3:15 f. Here he stresses in particular the teaching of Paul about the preparations for the return of Christ:

And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which some things are hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. (AV)

Here there is an appeal to the writings of Paul, made, no doubt, in order to emphasize that Peter's doctrines agree with the teachings of Paul. We suppose that while Peter was acting as a "vacancy pastor" for Paul (who was probably touring Spain at this time), he wrote these lines. During this period, he addressed the congregations in Asia Minor.<sup>30</sup> If Peter, then, was the acting shepherd for Paul, he would certainly be right in emphasizing his agreement with the

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<sup>29</sup>Charles Bigg, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary of the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude," The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905), p. 290.

<sup>30</sup>This tribute to Paul (while considered by some as a reason for rejecting the Petrine authorship) serves as a reply to those who see conflicts between the Pauline and the Petrine doctrines. There was a clash only when Peter became inconsistent in practice (Gal. 2:11 f.), but his doctrine was never at variance with Paul's.



great apostle. This appeal which Peter made to Paul would probably convince the individuals among his readers who were weak and who perhaps hesitated to accept Peter's counsel. They would thereby be moved to regard his teaching in the same way as they had done with Paul's, believing it to be the message from God.

Finally, in Jude 17, we have another appeal to the words of the apostles, which may well be an allusion to, if not a direct quotation of, 2 Peter 3:2 f. Jude recalls in a simple way what his readers had previously learned:

But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts.  
(AV)

Thus the writer of this brief epistle adds weight to his own instruction regarding the last days. He does this by reminding the readers that, after all, this is not a new teaching. The apostles had predicted the coming of scoffers in the days before the end, as one of the signs of the destruction of all things.<sup>31</sup> While it is difficult to determine whether Jude alludes to a spoken word of the apostles or to

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<sup>31</sup>There may be a slight difficulty in this passage, at least for some scholars, who feel that Jude, being himself an apostle, speaks of the apostles in the third person instead of saying: "We apostles." This, however, would not necessarily prove that the present writer was not an apostle, for Paul mentions the "foundation of the apostles and prophets," Eph. 2:20, without referring directly to himself. We admit that Jude, unlike Paul, does not use the term "apostle" in his salutation.



a passage in one of the epistles, there is at least the possibility that he may here recall a sermon of Peter or of Paul. In a recent study, this appeal has been examined, with the following considerations:

Jude speaks of these predictions as having been spoken by the apostles of the Lord. Had he said "by us apostles," there could be no doubt that he claimed apostolic authority for himself. But he did not choose to express himself in this way, either because he did not feel any necessity for doing so, or because he was not an apostle of the Lord in the sense in which he understood that term. If he knew both usages (the wider and the narrower sense) he was not an apostle in any sense of the term; but if he knew and recognized only the more restricted meaning of that word, he might still have been an apostle in the broader sense which the word *ἀποστόλος* sometimes bears. Jude says that the apostles *ἔλεγον* to their readers. This verb does not necessarily say that it was by means of an oral communication that they spoke to them, although it may be very well understood in that way. Written warning may also be included (cf. Rom. 4:3; 9:17; 10:11; 11:2; Gal. 4:30). If this is the case, the prophecy of 2 Peter 3:2 appears to be the one to which Jude is specifically referring, though not excluding similar predictions, both written and oral, of similar import, made by others of the apostles.<sup>32</sup>

A number of possibilities have been suggested for this appeal to the apostles:

A comparison with 2 Pet. iii. 2 will show that either Peter has greatly complicated the expression of Jude, or Jude has greatly simplified that of Peter. The latter seems more probable; see ver. 10 above. The substance of this apostolic warning may be found in 1 Tim. 4:1 (where the words *τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα ὁμιλοῦν λέγει* may introduce a prediction given orally by a Christian prophet); 2 Tim. iii. 1-5; Acts xx. 29. These passages show that similar admonitions were current. But the

<sup>32</sup>William J. Hassold, "An Interpretation of the Epistle of St. Jude" (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1949), pp. 87 f.



exact form of the prophecy, as it is there expressed, is found only in 2 Pet. iii. 3, and it is there given by an apostle as his own. Neither *ῥῆμα* nor the following *λέγω* need be taken to show that St. Jude was referring to mere words, for *ῥῆμα* is constantly used of scripture, and the phrase *ἡ γραφή λέγει* is familiar. But even if the words are taken in their strict sense, the possibility of a direct quotation from 2 Peter is not excluded. St. Jude reminds his readers that the apostles had often said that mockers would come, and then proceeds to quote an apostolic document in which this saying was recorded in a particular shape.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, for the writers of the New Testament, there were occasions for this forceful appeal to the apostles. The readers who received these epistles must have looked upon these appeals as encouragements to accept the doctrines verified in this manner.

#### The Appeal to a Special Divine Revelation

In the prophetic books of the Old Testament, the inspired writers frequently refer to special divine revelations which they received from God Himself. For example, Isaiah and Jeremiah repeatedly mention their visions and direct commands from God. When the prophets came with the familiar *נאם יי* ("the oracle of Jehovah"), the people were to be impressed with the fact that the utterance was genuine and true. In a similar way, we note that the apostles also appeal to special divine revelations so as to demonstrate that their teaching comes from God.

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<sup>33</sup>Bigg, *op. cit.*, p. 337.



This appeal, as we notice, was used extensively by the apostle Paul. The specific reason for his dependence on this type of argument is not difficult to find:

The chief emphasis in this appeal was the insistence of Paul on the fact that he had derived his doctrine independently, that is, directly from God Himself. The revelation of which the apostle spoke was independent in five respects: independent of human teaching; of Judean churches; of Judaizing brethren; of apostolic pressure; of selfish interest.<sup>34</sup>

In Acts 9:3 ff., there is the narrative of the conversion of Saul, which includes that vision which he experienced on the Damascus Road. Here we have what might be called "both a personal encounter and the impartation of truth," inasmuch as Christ met Paul there and also gave him divine instructions.<sup>35</sup> Paul appeals to this divine revelation which he received from Jesus, the risen Lord, when he answers the royal judge in Acts 26:19. The reason which Paul gives for his present Gospel ministry is that in that vision he received the commission to be a witness for Christ. The apostle was always conscious of this fact, that he was an individual to whom God had given a special revelation. He shows in his defense, therefore, that he obeyed the vision and went out to preach the Gospel of Christ the Crucified. He wishes to point out that he is not acting merely from im-

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<sup>34</sup> Merrill C. Tenney, Galatians: The Charter of Christian Liberty (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), p. 35. Cfr. Acts 16:6,7.

<sup>35</sup> Rolston, op. cit., p. 41.



pulse, but in accordance with an instruction given him in this vision on the way to Damascus. In Acts 22:1 ff., in his address on the castle stairs, he once more appeals to this revelation received at his conversion. He declared that it was God's will that he serve as a witness for Jesus. In this address, furthermore, Paul inserts that he had a vision also while in the temple at Jerusalem, in which the Lord had warned him to flee because of his persecutors and also because God had appointed him to preach to the Gentiles.<sup>36</sup>

Both Luke and Paul, needless to say, regarded the experience as shot through with divine meaning . . . For him its major significance lay in the fact that the experience made him a witness of the Resurrection and thus qualified him to be an apostle. He cites it twice (1 Cor. 9:1; Gal. 1:11-17) as proof for the Resurrection (but with secondary reference to his apostleship, as the following verses show). But he never cites it as the explanation (although it was undoubtedly the occasion) of his Christian faith and life. This particular way of conceiving of the meaning of the Damascus revelation is in line with what we have already observed of Paul's reticence in speaking of "visions and revelations of the Lord." The Christian life is the shared life of love, faith, and hope, which is the life of the Spirit. No vision of the Lord is essentially a part of it.<sup>37</sup>

In a different setting, Paul recalls another vision

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<sup>36</sup>We reject the notion that during his experience on the Damascus Road, both Hellenistic and Judaistic elements merged in Paul. A refutation of this is to be found in Albert Schweitzer, Paul and His Interpreters, translated from the German by W. Montgomery (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951), pp. 71 ff.

<sup>37</sup>John Knox, Chapters In A Life Of Paul (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1950), p. 116.



which he had while on his way to Rome. In Acts 27:23 f., the apostle urges the seamen to listen to his counsel, for he has been visited by the angel of God during the night, telling him that the voyage would not involve any loss of life among them. Furthermore, he related, according to the revelation given to him by the angel, that he would be brought before Caesar. While this appeal did not establish any particular doctrine, it certainly emphasized his place as an apostle of God. In this instance, it was a revelation cited to prove that the counsel of Paul here was infallible. It serves to illustrate the importance which the apostle gave to experiences of this kind. We have probably few narratives with an appeal as dramatic as this.<sup>38</sup>

The apostle Peter, too, had occasion to speak of his visions. When he was accused of violating divine law because he had gone to preach to the Gentiles, he rehearsed before the people that vision which he experienced before going to Caesarea, recorded in Acts 10:9 ff., of the great sheet descending from heaven. Here he received the special divine revelation which removed his anti-Gentile prejudice and sent him along with the delegation from Cornelius. In obedience to this vision, Peter went and preached at the home of Cor-

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<sup>38</sup>The apostle Paul also appeals to a possible vision in 1 Thess. 4:15, proving that the living will be transformed on the last day. In 2 Cor. 12:2-5, while not disclosing the words spoken there in paradise, Paul appeals to his experience in that ecstasy, to prove that he is an apostle.



nelius, and with favorable results.

Of primary interest for Paul was the source of his doctrine, and, therefore, he makes much of the special revelations which he received from God. Accordingly, then, in Gal. 1:12, he mentions the fact that the message he proclaims is that truth which he had been given from God Himself in a special way. Although less significant, in Gal. 2:2, he alludes to an incident in which he received a special revelation. He went to Jerusalem, he says, "by revelation." Here he does not set forth a specific doctrine, but, inasmuch as he is under the attacks of Judaizers, he wishes to emphasize in every possible way and detail that he has been conducting his ministry in accordance with the will of God. The implication is: if he acts in accordance with the commands of God, then he teaches in harmony with the divine Word. Moreover, we include here also a special revelation which he mentions in 1 Cor. 11:23 ff., to prove the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. He appeals to a certain revelation in which God gave him the words of institution.<sup>39</sup>

While both Peter and Paul mention the revelations from God in order to give support to their teachings, John prefers to appeal to the revelation of God in the incarnation of the Logos, in the living Christ, as is apparent from John 1:14.

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<sup>39</sup>Supra: Chapter II, the section entitled: "Appeal to the Sayings of Jesus."



18, and others. Although John, in the Book of Revelation, states what visions he had, beginning with the vision on the isle of Patmos, he does not employ the visions in order to demonstrate the correctness of his doctrinal position. Nevertheless, since the visions of John were correctly reported, we hold that they show the content of the Book of Revelation to be divine.

The appeal to divine revelation was, therefore, an effective weapon in the hands of the apostolic writers.<sup>40</sup> It may well be that there was a polemic argument behind this appeal to their special revelations. In other words, the apostles meant to convince their readers that their doctrine rested on genuine revelations, utterly different from those which the anti-christs had in their day.<sup>41</sup>

#### The Appeal to Past Instruction

The final type of oral pronouncement to which the apostolic writers appealed is that of past instruction. This appears to be more an indirect proof for the doctrine of the New Testament. Our impression is that the apostles remind

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<sup>40</sup> Cfr. Paul's warning in 2 Thess. 2:2; 2:4; and others.

<sup>41</sup> We might add that divine revelations served not only in a positive way, to direct the apostles in their activity and to support their teachings, but the revelations also had a negative purpose of restraining the apostles, as we observe in Acts 16:6-7. Paul had intended to go to Mysia and preach in Asia. Instead, the restraining revelation from God sent him to Macedonia.



their people of that oral instruction which they have received, and that whatever the apostles were now teaching was no different from what they had previously learned,<sup>42</sup> although certain points of doctrine may have been elaborated upon in greater detail.<sup>43</sup>

In general, there are a number of admonitions which recall this past instruction and urge fidelity to what has been learned, 2 Thess. 2:15. For example, in 2 Tim. 2:2, the apostle Paul tells his understudy to commit what he has learned to faithful men. Then, too, in 2 Tim. 3:14, he urges Timothy to continue in the truth which he has learned and of which he has been convinced, as he faces the deceivers. Moreover, Titus 1:9 gives as one of the bishop's qualifications the steadfast adherence to the word which he has been taught.

A similar emphasis is found in Paul's reminder that draws attention to what has been committed to one's trust, 1 Tim. 6:20: "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust." (AV) Likewise, in 2 Tim. 1:14, we note this appeal to what one has been given: "That good thing which

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<sup>42</sup> Colossians 1:23.

<sup>43</sup> The apostle takes his readers back to that oral instruction, which, according to scholars, was known as the *Κανὼν τῆς ἀληθείας*, regula veritatis, *Κανὼν τῆς πίστεως*, regula fidei. . . . This was probably formulated in the form of a simple creed.



was committed keep by the Holy Ghost. . . .<sup>44</sup>

Furthermore, when Peter teaches his readers about their eternal election and entrance into glory, he expresses an appeal to what they have learned, 2 Pet. 2:12 f. He says, in summary: "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth." (AV)

When the apostolic writers appeal to past instruction, they also employ the term, *παράδοσις*, which unfortunately has been construed to mean a kind of tradition. For instance, in 1 Cor. 11:2, Paul praises his readers for remembering his instructions, adding: *κατὰς παράδοσιν ἣν ἔλαβον ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου καὶ τῆς ἐκκλησίας* . . . . They had kept whatever he had delivered to them as doctrine from God. It seems that these instructions included several matters in addition to brief fundamentals of faith: "Instructions of a wider scope than ordinances in the limited sense . . . instructions concerning the gatherings of believers."<sup>45</sup> The opinion has also been expressed that, in the churches of the apostolic age, these instructions concerned either doctrine or behavior. At any rate, we can visualize what effect the appeal to past instruction could and did have on the readers who were to

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<sup>44</sup>Infra: "The Appeal to an Existing Custom," Chapter XII.

<sup>45</sup>W. E. Vine, An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words (London: Oliphants Limited, 1944), IV, 147 f.



accept the apostolic teaching as the Word of God.

These "traditions" (see notes on 2 Thess. 2:15) were instructions in relation to doctrine and discipline which the Apostle, either orally, or possibly, in the letter which has not come down to us (see notes on ch. 5:2), had given to his converts at Corinth. The traces of many such deeper *παράδοσεις* may be observed in this Epistle (comp. 6:2), and elsewhere in the Apostle's writings.<sup>46</sup>

It has been suggested, in a general way, that the writers of the New Testament appeal to past instruction so as to make it clear that their theology is not their own, but that it is the confession of all believers:

Paul uses the term *παράδοσις* to avoid any possible charge of imposing his own notions upon the Church. He delivers to them what had been delivered to him.<sup>47</sup>

Another interesting view is that, when the apostolic writers mention these *παράδοσεις* (instructions handed down to others), they refer to an early catechism or creed based on the sayings of Christ, but the evidence is rather meager to support this.<sup>48</sup> If one bears this in mind, this appeal to past instruction, *παράδοσεις*, appears all the more forceful. However, we admit that it is wise not to modernize this appeal, as Burton correctly warns.

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<sup>46</sup>Charles J. Ellicott, St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1887), p. 199.

<sup>47</sup>Marvin R. Vincent, "The Epistles of Paul," Word Studies in the New Testament (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905), III, 250.

<sup>48</sup>James Moulton and George Milligan, The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949), p. 483.



*παράδοσις* itself signifies an act of transmission or that which is transmitted (in N.T. always in the latter sense and with reference to instruction or information), without indicating the method of transmission, or implying any lapse of time such as is usually associated with the English word tradition. Thus Paul uses it of his own instructions, both oral and written, 1 Cor. 11:2; 2 Thess. 2:15 (though possibly referring to elements of his teaching received from others), etc.<sup>49</sup>

Not only does Paul urge his readers to exercise patience in waiting for the second coming of Christ (one of the doctrines of which he now reminded them), but he also issues a command that they separate themselves from those who do not follow and walk according to the *παράδοσις* which they had received from the apostles, 2 Thess. 3:6. Here the writer must have in mind the doctrines as set forth by the messengers of Christ. In order to show the Thessalonians how to conduct themselves before the Advent of Christ, Paul enlightens them about certain limitations in their fellowship. In other words, those who do not follow the apostolic instructions are not to be their associates.<sup>50</sup> Although it may seem as if, in this instance, Paul refers more to directions about Christian behavior (since he mentions the indolence and disorderliness of some of the people), the term *παράδοσις* here includes also doctrine. The error of

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<sup>49</sup> Ernest De Witt Burton, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians," The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), pp. 47 f.

<sup>50</sup> Cfr. Romans 16:17.



the readers was one of conduct, but stemmed from an error in doctrine, from a misunderstanding of the past instruction which Paul had given them regarding the Advent of Christ. His appeal to what he had once delivered to them serves to refute their wrong eschatology.

Likewise, in his exhortation in 2 Thess. 2:15, the apostle Paul urges the Christians to keep the "traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle." (AV) While he does not seek to prove a particular doctrine here, the apostle tells the Thessalonians to cling to those teachings ( *παράδοσεις* ) which he had given them.<sup>51</sup> "The apostle's use of the word constitutes a denial of the idea that what he preached originated with himself, and a claim for its divine authority."<sup>52</sup>

Thus, the writers of the New Testament furnish arguments by directing attention to certain sacred oral pronouncements. Some of these utterances had been known to the readers, while some of them belonged to the individual experience of the writers themselves who disclosed them as they wished to bring evidence for the doctrines which they

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<sup>51</sup>We think here of passages, while not including the term at least point to a fixed revelation and a finished body of truth to which Christians adhere: Jude 3; 2 Tim. 2:1; 1:13.14; 1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim. 3:14. Paul lays particular stress on the content of the Gospel as unchanging, 1 Cor. 15:1 ff. Another related term, *παραθήκη*, "deposit," which also suggests the doctrines as a body of truth to be kept, 1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:14; 1:12.

<sup>52</sup>Vine, op. cit., p. 147.



taught and explained.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE APPEAL TO THINGS SEEN AND HEARD

As we consider how the writers of the New Testament seek to prove that their doctrine is true and that it comes from God, it is not amazing that they refer to the things which they themselves had seen and heard as eye-witnesses of the Lord. As we shall observe, they draw on the memories of the past, with its vivid and significant details, showing that their message was based on first-hand acquaintance with the data involved in the Gospel story.

First of all, there is the Refusal of Peter and John before the Sanhedrin in Acts 4:13. Arranged before this original demand they had declared the specified and risen Jesus as the Christ, the apostles offered no detailed argument in self-defense. When they were forbidden to preach or even to mention the name of Jesus, they were able to appeal to evidence which was indisputable prior to their message. In reply to the prohibition not to speak of Jesus, the apostles asserted that it was impossible for them to refrain from mentioning the things which they had both heard and seen. To such a type of appeal as this, the judges could offer no rebuttal whatever.

Furthermore, in 2 Pet. 1:15-18, the apostle declares that he and the other apostles were eyewitnesses of Christ's



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First of all, there is the defense of Peter and John before the Sanhedrin in Acts 4:20. Arraigned before this tribunal because they had extolled the crucified and risen Jesus as the Christ, the apostles offered no detailed argument in self-defense. When they were forbidden to preach or even to mention the name of Jesus, they were able to appeal to something which was irrefutable proof for their message. In reply to the prohibition not to speak of Jesus, the accused men asserted that it was impossible for them to refrain from mentioning the things which they had both heard and seen. To such a type of appeal as this, the judges could offer no rebuttal whatever.

Furthermore, in 2 Pet. 1:16,18, the apostle declares that he and the other apostles were eyewitnesses of Christ's



majesty. Here Peter recalls the transfiguration of Jesus, which he, together with James and John, had seen long ago.<sup>1</sup> The inspired writer, therefore, reflects on this impressive incident in order to demonstrate that his doctrine of Christ's return in glory is not based on fables. No, the claims of the apostle rest on a far different kind of evidence. The case of the apostles is based on what they themselves have seen and heard. Here Peter's argument amounts to this: Why should it seem incredible that Christ should return in glory? We apostles have seen Him in glory on the mount; surely, then, He can appear once more in like glory. It is evident that the apostles were concerned with vivid realities rather than with abstractions.

For the future Parousia no ocular testimony could be adduced, but as the Second Coming is the *ἐποκάλυψις τῆς δόξης Χριστοῦ*, 1 Pet. 4:13, no apter confirmation of glory could be found than the revelation of glory at the Transfiguration. It is to be observed that St. Peter uses the Transfiguration to prove, not the *παρουσία*, but the credibility of the apostles who preached the *παρουσία*. If we may suppose, what is by no means improbable, that the False Teachers, while explaining away the Resurrection, admitted the historical truth of the rest of the Gospel, we can see a strong reason for St. Peter's choice of this particular incident.<sup>2</sup>

A similar appeal takes us into the Johannine account of

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<sup>1</sup>Matt. 17:2 ff.; Mark 9:3 ff.; Luke 9:29 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Charles Bigg, "The Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude," The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905), p. 266.



the death of Jesus in John 19:35. Here the writer speaks like an historian, but in the manner of one who has been on the scene, as a contemporary of the events of the story of Jesus. As one who had been an observant bystander at the cross of Jesus, John certifies that the Savior died. He takes particular note of the water and the blood flowing from the pierced side of Jesus, affirming that the Savior had actually expired. To give added weight to his assertion, the apostle remarks: *καὶ ὁ ἑωρακὴς μεμνημένος, καὶ ἀληθινὴ αὐτοῦ ἔστιν ἡ μαρτυρία, καὶ ἐκεῖνος οὐδεν ὅτι ἀληθὴ λέγει, ἵνα καὶ πιστ.* . . . .

Herewith John actually strengthens his previous affirmations regarding Jesus.

This is (as again at 21:24) the attestation of Jn. that the evidence of the Beloved Disciple is genuine and trustworthy (see on 1:10 for *ἀληθινός*). . . . The evangelist's tribute is his own, and so is not exactly like the certificate of 21:24 which is that of the elders of the Church. Jn. assures his readers that the aged apostle knows exactly what he is saying.<sup>3</sup>

John, therefore, lays claim to being a reliable narrator of these events, inasmuch as he has witnessed them himself.

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<sup>3</sup>J. H. Bernard, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John," The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), II, 649.



This is the import of his self-testimony.<sup>4</sup>

In a similar vein, the same apostle in 1 John 1:1, prefaces his defense of the incarnation of Christ by asserting in concrete language that he and the other apostles had close contact with Christ. He was not a phantom, as Cerinthus proposed, but He was the reality which the apostles have heard, beheld, seen, handled, and touched.

*ἡμεῖς* . . . . Here it is naturally suggesting all the evidence available for sense-perception other than hearing and sight. Possibly it emphasizes the reality of that which they had been brought into contact, in opposition to the Docetism which may have characterized the views of the writer's opponents. It certainly marks the intimate character of their personal intercourse with the Lord. Their opportunities included all that was necessary to make their witness *ἀληθινὴ* as well as accurate as far as it went. They were competent witnesses who spoke the truth.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to these appeals, there are numerous references to the fact that the apostles are eye-witnesses. When, for example, Peter declares to his Pentecost audience that God raised up Christ from the dead (in Acts 2:32), he says: "Whereof we are all witnesses." (AV) To be sure, he was saying this in conformity with Christ's command, Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8; and others. While Christ had not appeared

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<sup>4</sup>Cfr. A Recent study views John 20:6 ff. as John's intention to narrate an "experimental" proof of the resurrection of Christ. The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, XIV (October, 1952), 373.

<sup>5</sup>E. A. Brooke, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Johannine Epistles," The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912), p. 5.



to His enemies on earth in His resurrection glory, He had appeared to specially chosen witnesses, Acts 10:41. It was in this capacity as divinely appointed witnesses that the apostles testified to the resurrection of Jesus. Also, the apostle Paul, in his defense before Agrippa, makes much of the fact that, on the day of his conversion, God made him a witness of the things he had seen regarding Christ, Acts 26:16.<sup>6</sup> According to Acts 13:31, the same apostle addresses the people in the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch, asserting that God raised Jesus from the dead.<sup>7</sup> Paul supports this statement by showing that the risen Savior "was seen by them (the apostles) who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses to the people." (AV) Finally, in 1 Cor. 15:5-9, St. Paul lists the various witnesses of the resurrection: Cephas (Peter), the Twelve, the five hundred brethren, James, all the apostles, then, last of all, himself. Despite the fact that Paul refers to himself in this humble way, he is actually appealing to the fact that he saw the risen Lord, and this is a final proof in his first section of the Resurrection Chapter of the Easter Gospel. As one of the foundational doctrines, the resurrection of Christ is here pictured and presented as a certainty, based on the testimony not only of other witnesses,

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<sup>6</sup>Cfr. Acts 22:15.

<sup>7</sup>This was during Paul's first missionary journey.



but also on his own encounter with the risen Christ on the Damascus Road. This appeal was Paul's own argument for his apostleship:

The claim to be an apostle is closely related to the claim to have seen the risen Lord. . . . In 1 Cor. 9:1-2, Paul writes: "Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? . . . Here we have a claim to have seen the risen Lord as the proof of his apostleship."<sup>8</sup>

Thus, in an effective manner, the writers bear witness from their intimate, firsthand acquaintance with the events of the Gospel story. Their positive declarations, uttered with profound conviction, produce that effect which moves the readers to accept the apostolic statements as reliable and true<sup>9</sup> to the facts.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Holmes Rolston, Consider Paul: Apostle of Jesus Christ (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1951), p. 64.

<sup>9</sup>It is interesting to note, too, how Paul in 2 Cor. 12:6 wishes to be judged according to what his readers have seen and heard of him.

<sup>10</sup>It is significant that this appeal to sensory experience is made by Jesus, first of all, as we see in John 14:9 ff. There He proves His deity by stating, that, whoever has seen Him, has seen the Father. Likewise, in 8:38, Jesus stresses that, whatever He has seen of the Father, that He utters and to that He testifies.



## CHAPTER V

### THE ARGUMENT FROM GREAT SPIRITUAL TRUTHS

When the apostles presented their doctrines, they also paid due attention to the facts which were known to their readers. It seems that the writers of the New Testament assume that certain truths were familiar to their audiences. To these groups the apostles apparently furnish some arguments based on their natural knowledge of God. It is not always clear whether or not the readers or hearers agreed with these appeals, but we do notice that the truths to which the apostles did appeal, were largely of a general nature as to be easily recognized.

#### The Appeal to the Attributes of God

The Savior recalled many of the great spiritual facts which were known to the Jews, as He defended and proved His doctrines. For example, in Matt. 22:31 f., Jesus is described as He argues for the resurrection of the dead. This was occasioned by the effort of the Sadducees to overthrow this doctrine with their conundrum about the woman who had married seven husbands successively, and all of whom were brothers. After showing at length to His opponents how this absurd argument rested on a fallacy, that is, it ignored the fact that the affairs in the life to come will be far dif-



ferent from those of the present. Jesus directed them to one of the known attributes of God. He quotes from the Old Testament Scriptures and says: "Have ye not read what has been said concerning the resurrection of the dead by God, saying: 'I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'?" Although Jesus appeals to Scripture, He is specifically mentioning one of the attributes of God: "He is God not of the dead, but of the living." The Savior argued that, as God of these patriarchs, He was God of living persons. The attribute, "living," was an attribute of God known to the Israelites in the Old Testament. But Jesus indicates something more: God evidently said this after these three patriarchs had passed away (Ex. 3:6). Inasmuch as God regarded Himself as their God, although they had died, He must have looked upon them as living creatures. This proof is most profound, and yet, it establishes for Jesus the doctrine of the resurrection.

Furthermore, as Jesus explains to the woman at Jacob's well the essence of true worship, He points out (in John 4: 23 f.) that worship is not to be restricted to a particular place or locality, since God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. Because God has this nature, it follows that He is not confined to man-made dwellings. This argument of Jesus is paralleled by a similar appeal of Stephen in Acts 7:48, by which he defends himself against the charge that he sinned against the



temple by his doctrines. He reminded them of that familiar truth that God does not dwell in temples made by human hands. Stephen's appeal, too, was directed to the attribute of the infinitude of God.

The apostle Paul, as one steeped in the Old Testament theology, also based his arguments at times on a particular attribute of God, as we notice it in Rom. 3:29-31. He wants to clarify his position about the justification of Gentiles before God. Previously, he had stated that, since man is justified by faith without works, there is no boasting. (We remember that he had also discussed some of the advantages which the Jews had in possessing the Law, Rom. 3:1 f.) Nevertheless, he wishes to prove that God justifies both Jew and Gentile in the same way: through faith. Here the Jew has no advantage over the Gentile, for the law of faith eliminates all boasting. He says that God is the God not only of the Jews, but also of the Gentiles. Then he appeals to the unity of God: God is one Who justifies the Jew, *περὶ ἡμῶν*, on the basis of faith, and the Gentile, *καὶ τῶν ἑθνῶν*, through faith.<sup>1</sup> This would mean that, since God is one, there is no contradiction in Him, and therefore, He has a uniform way of justifying both Jew and Gentile, through faith.

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<sup>1</sup>In 1 Cor. 14:32 f., Paul bases his admonition to orderly worship on the basis of God's attribute of orderliness.



In Rom. 3:5 f., moreover, we have an appeal to another attribute, namely, to the justice of God. Paul had shown the strange fact that our unrighteousness establishes God's righteousness by contrast. If we, the apostle suggests, should prove unfaithful to the Word like many of the Israelites did, we put the righteousness of God into bold relief. What will the Christian answer to this, he asks. If God then punishes the ones who prove unfaithful to the Word, this in no way makes God to be unjust. As He bears His wrath and permits it to strike those who err against His Word, Paul says, this is not unrighteous. How else could God judge the world? This applies to both Israel which had the Word (*τὸ λόγον*), as well as to Christians of Gentile origin. The apostle proves that God's ways and acts are righteous, for He could not otherwise function as Judge of the world. He has the right to punish, for He is just, Paul says in effect.

When the same apostle must defend himself and his co-workers against the charge of being deceptive and unreliable in their promises, we notice that in 2 Cor. 1:18 ff., he bases his proof on the faithfulness of God. The difficulty revolved about a misunderstanding of Paul's change of plans, for he had previously promised to come to Corinth, according to 1 Cor. 16:6. At this point, Paul does not even mention the reason for the change. However, he makes it clear to the readers that God is faithful in His promises. The faithful-



ness of God is proof that Paul's message is true and that his pledges are reliable, for he and his fellow-workers are the instruments of God, carrying the promises of God to men. Even as there was no vacillation or fickleness in God's promises, nor yet in His Gospel preached by the apostles, thus the words of Paul and his co-workers are to be regarded as true and consistent. (In other words, God is faithful, and this is true also of His ambassadors.)

It was an effective way for the apostle not only to defend his own policies and teachings to appeal to God's attributes, but it also helped to furnish evidence for his argument for the conduct of his hearers and readers. In 1 Cor. 10:25, he advocates the exercise of Christian liberty on the part of a Christian who knows no offense is involved if he purchases meat where it is sold and not trouble their conscience by inquiring first if it is meat once offered to idols. He then repeats the words of Ps. 24:1: "For the earth is the Lord's and the fulness of it." The apostle does not quote in a direct way, and yet, the readers will recognize the words of his appeal. This statement is really another appeal to an attribute of God, to the sovereignty of Him Who possesses all. They can use liberty in buying and eating these meats, because this food belongs to God (Who gave it and created it) and not to the idols.

While not always constituting the main argument in the preaching of the apostles, the appeal to God's attributes



has a place, as we see, in the motivation of their teaching in Acts 10:34. Here Peter, after being welcomed at the home of Cornelius, justified his presence there at a Gentile gathering as well as his preaching of the Gospel to these people by pointing to the impartiality of God. His appeal agrees with Old Testament language: God is not a respecter of persons. He repeats this emphasis in Acts 15:9: *οὐδὲν διεκρίνεν μεταξὺ Ἰουδαίων καὶ ἐθνικῶν*. His purpose in mentioning this impartiality of God was to show that it was the will of God that the Gentiles also be evangelized and be saved even as the Jews. This appeal to God's fairness and equality was to support the Gospel which Peter preached as well as his policy of contacting the Gentiles, too.

Occasionally we find that the writers discuss a certain profound difficulty that meets one in the study of the dealings of God with man. For example, there is the problem suggested in the difference between Jacob and Esau. The former God loved, while the latter He hated. In Rom. 9:19 ff., the apostle discusses the difficulty. Man will rebel at this, Paul says, inasmuch as God will have mercy upon whom He will have mercy, and whom He will harden, He will harden. The apostle then appeals to the sovereignty of the Creator over the creature, man, in verse 21: "Does not the potter have power (authority) over the clay to make of the same lump one a vessel for honor, the other for dishonor?" As Paul appeals to this sovereignty of God over men, he proves that God, in



rejecting Pharaoh and Esau, but in accepting Jacob, was justified. Nevertheless, we bear in mind when Paul employs this appeal here, that he does not present God in such a way as to teach determinism. If we recall that the examples which Paul discusses here are instances of the voluntas consequens of God (His verdict on man's resistance against the Word), rather than His voluntas antecedens, we understand Paul's position better.

The same apostle also treats the problem of God's justice in Rom. 3:25 ff. Because God had passed over the sin of man in the past, this would involve a question about the holiness of God. How could God, man would ask, fail to punish sin, and yet be holy? The apostle solves this by pointing to the manner in which God demonstrates His righteousness, namely, by Christ's being the propitiation for sin by His blood, and then with the sinner accepting the merits of Christ, by faith.

In 2 Cor. 1:18 f., Paul argues that, since he and his co-workers are laborers for God, Who is always faithful, then the apostle's message must be reliable and acceptable, too. If God is not wavering or inconsistent, then, His messengers who come from Him, cannot be thus. This rebuttal of Paul against the claim that his words and teachings are not reliable here rests on an appeal to the attribute of God's faithfulness.

They have his letters, they have in their minds what



he and others taught them, and there is no inconsistency or insincerity in the Gospel which they possess; it is a reflexion of the faithfulness of God. Chrys. paraphrases, "Mistrust not what is from God, for what is from God cannot be untrue." The argument is one from "ethical congruity." God is faithful in the fact that the Gospel which is proclaimed by His messengers is not a Gospel of duplicity, full of misleading statements and of promises which are not fulfilled.<sup>2</sup>

In verse 19, the argument continues with the appeal, and adds that God certainly would not have a son who is unfaithful and vacillating.

Here he is appealing to the probability that there is moral resemblance between master and servant. The Son of the God who cannot lie is one who may be trusted and has proved to be trustworthy. Therefore the message which His ministers bring - is likely to be trustworthy.<sup>3</sup>

There is another significant appeal to God's attributes in Hebrews 2:10, which is a reply to the offense which the readers had taken to the death of Jesus Christ. The author maintains that it was proper for God, Who upholds all things and governs all things, Who leads many sons to glory, to bring the Captain of our salvation to the intended goal through sufferings. That Jesus suffered, he argues, actually agreed with God's attributes.

The suffering of Christ in the fulfillment of His work corresponds with the truest conception which man can

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<sup>2</sup>Alfred Plummer, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians," The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1915), p. 35.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 36.



form of the Divine Nature. . . . The standard lies in what man (made in the image of God) can recognize as conformable to the divine attributes. For man still has a power of moral judgment which can help him to the interpretation of the action of God, and also of his own need (c. vii. 26.). The "fitness" in this case lies in the condition of man. His life is attended by inevitable sorrows; or, to regard the fact in another light, suffering is a necessary part of his discipline as well as a necessary consequence of his state. It was "fitting" then, in our language, that God should perfect Christ the "One" Son by that suffering through which "many sons" are trained (xii. 5 ff.) because He, in His infinite love, took humanity to Himself. . . . This argument from "fitness" is distinct from that of logical necessity . . . and of obligation from a position which has been assumed.<sup>4</sup>

#### The Appeal to God as a Witness, using an Oath

While it is true that Jesus censured His contemporaries for their excessive use of oaths, as we observe in Matt. 5: 34 and in Matt. 23:16 f., He Himself made use of the oath which the high-priest Caiaphas uttered and demanded that He answer, as is evident from Matt. 26:63. Thereby He proved that He was the Son of God, as He had previously asserted. (The usual form of this oath is found in John 9:24: "Give God the praise.") On an earlier occasion, when the Greeks came to Jesus, He expressed His feelings about the imminent suffering and death before Him, and to His Father He prayed: "Father, glorify Thy name." Here the Savior was actually appealing to God to attest to, and corroborate, His past doc-

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<sup>4</sup>Brooke Foss Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text With Notes And Essays (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), p. 48.



trine. The Father verified and bore witness to the Son by saying: "I have glorified (it) and I will glorify it again," verse 28. In a similar manner, at the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus prays to His Father to testify to His message by hearing His request, and grant Him success in reviving Lazarus, in order that the bystanders might believe in Him. We have here an example of calling upon God to attest to the truth of doctrine.

While it is true that the apostolic writers are sparing in their use of oaths and asseverations, we do observe how they enforce their presentation of certain doctrinal truths in this way. It may seem that an oath is a strange kind of proof to employ in order to establish something of the nature of divine teachings. Nevertheless, oaths do have a legitimate place in argumentation, as one scholar has observed:

Testimony confirmed by oath, as is done in our courts of justice and elsewhere, is as a rule a fair guarantee of the veracity of the witness. Great weight is, of course, added to the evidence for the truth of the testimony, if the same fact is attested by numerous independent witnesses of different age, temper, and education.<sup>5</sup>

Probably the clearest example is found in 2 Cor. 1:23: "I call upon God as a witness to my soul." The apostle here explains that change which had been made in his plans, although he had promised to come soon to Corinth. He swears before

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<sup>5</sup>Sylvester J. Hartman, A Textbook in Logic (New York: The American Book Company, 1936), p. 240.



God, he tells them, that he altered his travel plans so as to spare them sorrow and regret. After some of the grievances had disappeared, no doubt, it would be easier to meet with them. It would not only mean that God would vouch for Paul's sincerity in this matter, but actually, it would have ultimately involved his doctrine, for had he been proven insincere, his doctrine and his preaching would have been largely negated, much to the advantage of his opponents and of the false teachers in Corinth.

Another oath by Paul appears in 2 Cor. 11:31, after he has enumerated his sufferings for the sake of Christ. He is defending his apostolic office. He addresses his readers with assertions that he is saying the truth both about doctrine and about his ministry. Therefore he adds this emphatic asseveration: "The God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, God blessed eternally, knows that I lie not." This type of argument occurs also in 2 Cor. 12:19, after he has mentioned his revelations and visions. He swears before God that he is giving his readers a truthful account of them.<sup>6</sup> Likewise in Gal. 1:20, an oath seems to be implied in which Paul claims that he teaches the truth. Probably he intended this as a verification of what he had been saying in the past to the Galatians. This was his attitude in all his preaching, namely, that God was his witness, 2 Cor. 12:19.

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<sup>6</sup>Cfr. Plummer, op. cit., pp. 367 f.



### The Appeal to Conscience

As the apostles presented their message and applied it in various exhortations and admonitions, they appealed, as we have noted, to great spiritual truths. Here we also include the references which they made to conscience in order to strengthen their assertions with this additional proof. However, we do bear in mind that there is the element of error in the functioning of conscience, because of the depravity of man. Therefore, when we speak of the apostolic appeal to conscience, we have in mind the conscience of persons influenced and guided by Scripture.<sup>7</sup>

First of all, the apostolic writers appeal to their own conscience in bringing certain truths to their readers. In Acts 23:1, as Paul defends himself as well as his doctrine before the Sanhedrin, he states that he has lived in a good conscience to this day. His good conscience is evidence, in a way, that he has proclaimed the truth, for otherwise, he would feel differently. The apostle is not boasting, but is calling attention to the fact that no guilt has attached it-

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<sup>7</sup>We feel that the appeal to conscience belongs to a different category and is not to be identified with the argumentum ad hominem. 1 Tim. 4:2 shows that the conscience of those outside of the influence of the divine Word is dulled. Cfr. In Gal. 6:4 f., Paul proves that every man must submit his work to a test, for every man has his burden of faults to bear. The latter is a general truth known by the majority of people and accepted by them, for their conscience tells them of this.



self to his activity as the servant of Christ in preaching the Gospel. He does not now refer to his past wrongs, which, to be sure, he admitted frequently. On the contrary, he undoubtedly thinks of his preaching and the doctrines which he has taught. In this respect, he has a good conscience: he has proclaimed something both true and divine. That he is innocent of the charges brought by the Jewish leaders, he feels, is indicated by his good conscience. This also means that Paul had the conviction that his message was true, for had it been otherwise, his conscience would have registered the opposite feeling. Again in his defense before Felix, the governor, in Acts 24:16, Paul emphasizes that his purpose is to exercise himself to have a good conscience before God and before men. Although this appeal to his conscience here is not his main argument, it is effective in a context like this, as he wishes to prove that his message is an acceptable one. He repeats this statement about his conscience in 2 Tim. 1:3, but with no special intention to support a doctrinal position. Another interesting appeal to his conscience is in Rom. 9:1: "I Speak the truth in Christ, I am not lying, (for) my conscience bears witness with me by the Holy Spirit, that I have great heaviness and unceasing sorrow in my heart (for my countrymen)." The apostle apparently offers this as an auxiliary proof that his doctrine of universal grace is true. He demonstrates by this reference to the witness of his conscience that his portrayal of God's re-



vealed design for the benefit of the Jews is genuine, accompanied by a personal interest in his countrymen's spiritual welfare. We meet an appeal to his conscience again in 2 Cor. 1:12, as he reminds his readers that his conscience is his witness that he and his fellow-workers conducted themselves in a sincere and upright manner, not using human wisdom, but the grace of God. This assertion that he had a supporting witness in his own conscience was essential to his next claim: we write none other things to you than what ye are reading and accepting. That he has relied on the testimony of his conscience seems to be an indication that he intended this as a proof that he was teaching the truth and not a new Gospel. It was an appeal that was personal, as well as convincing.

The apostles were also thoughtful to consider the conscience of their readers as well as their own, in these appeals by which they hoped to prove their claims. We have a reference to the conscience of his readers in 2 Cor. 4:2. He places all his teaching before their consciences, in order that they might judge them and find them to be true. This Paul aptly offers in reply to their insinuations that he has corrupted the message of Christ with deceitful arguments and interpretations.

Passion and prejudice are no safe judges; reason cannot always be trusted; even conscience is not infallible, for the conscience of this or that individual, or class, or profession, may give a faulty decision. St. Paul takes a wider range. He appeals to every kind of con-



science among men, confident that they will all admit the justice of his claim. . . . He appeals, not only to every form of human conscience, but to Him whose mercy (v. 1) he owes the high calling which has subjected him to so much criticism, and under whose eye every conscience works.<sup>8</sup>

When Paul defends his ministry and his teaching in 2 Cor. 5:11, he also appeals to the consciences of his readers.

"Against the mistrust of men he has appealed to God, who sees him through and through. He trusts that he may appeal also to what his converts know about him."<sup>9</sup> What we have been saying is that Paul appealed to something which conscience would give assent and also supply the information. There were truths which conscience, guided by past instruction in the Word, would second. Conscience, enlightened and stimulated by Scripture, would give support to the doctrines which Paul set forth.

#### The Eschatological Appeal

As we notice from the writings of the New Testament, the early Christians lived with a consciousness of the approaching end of all things. This outlook of theirs was largely the result of apostolic preaching, which emphasized the nearness of the return of Christ. While the readers often had misconceptions of eschatology that led them into errors in con-

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<sup>8</sup>Plummer, op. cit., pp. 112 f.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 169.



duct, as we notice in the attitude of the Thessalonians, the writers of the New Testament did motivate their instruction by pointing ahead to the last day.<sup>10</sup> This reminder of the day of the Lord is brought to the attention of the readers in connection with certain admonitions, as for example, the writer does when he urges the Christians to attend divine services, Hebrews 10:25, inasmuch as they see the day approaching.

This great spiritual truth, namely, that there will be an end of all things accompanied by divine judgment, was also essential for the proof which the writers of the New Testament gave for their teachings. Accordingly, in 1 Cor. 3:13-15, the apostle leaves the judgment of the last day to prove whether or not his doctrines harmonized with divine truth. This is an eschatological appeal, for it is a kind of evidence which rests on the ultimate fulfillment of the Christian expectation for the Savior's return and for the consummation of all things. On that day, Paul is confident that his message will be vindicated by God Himself. This is his reply to those who questioned his apostleship and misrepresented his doctrine. He is not so much concerned about the verdict which his contemporaries will pass on his Gos-

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<sup>10</sup>While not employing the eschatological appeal in order to prove doctrine, John nevertheless returns to this theme again and again in the Apocalypse: "Lo, He cometh!" He also emphasizes the objective of having "boldness at His coming."



pel, but carried his appeal to the judgment of the day of the Lord.

Furthermore, when the apostle discusses a case of discipline, which is described in 1 Cor. 5:1 ff., he advises the Christians to excommunicate the fornicator. But what is significant for us is that he connects the verdict with the last day. Verse 5 includes the directive to "deliver such a one to Satan" in order that his body might be saved at the day of the Lord. The intention of the excommunication was to save the guilty individual. To be sure, Paul has another reason for mentioning "the day of the Lord" in this instance, for the day of Christ will reveal the fact that the congregation has acted rightly, and also that the apostle's doctrine (of the keys), as applied to this case, was true. The verdict on the last day, which will declare that this disciplined fornicator is saved, will testify that the apostle has counselled and taught in accordance with the will of God.<sup>11</sup>

As the same apostle considers the defense of his own apostleship, he minimizes, and justly so, the estimate which men make of his ministry. In 1 Cor. 4:4, therefore, he appeals to the manner in which God will judge him, and of this

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<sup>11</sup>Other passages in which Paul confidently looks forward to the last day as the time when his teachings will be corroborated do not always contain argumentation: Phil. 1:6; 2:14; 1 Thess. 2:19 f.; 2 Cor. 1:14; 2 Tim. 4:8.



verdict he expresses no fears. It agrees with his usual attitude: he is a man who believes that he is teaching the truth. In verse 5 he mentions the coming of the Lord directly as a kind of corroboration of his teaching. In view of that day, the readers are not to make any premature judgments about his ministry or about his message. They are rather to suspend judgment until the Lord returns and Himself verifies his Gospel. At that day, God will reveal the things that are now hidden, Paul asserts, including the facts about his service to Christ.

If one turns to the epistles written by St. John, one cannot discover any argumentation that rests on an appeal to the last day, and yet, the emphasis is there:

Such a pastoral treatise as the First Epistle of St. John was written under the stress of an urgent need to deal with a situation that had arisen in a group of churches. The peril seemed grave to the venerable leader. In such a mood the language of eschatology emerges to meet the crisis that threatens the whole Church with disaster.<sup>12</sup>

Thus the writers of the New Testament laid the foundation for the evidence of their message partly by appealing to great spiritual truths. This form of argumentation included pointed references to the attributes of God, the employment of oaths, the appeals to conscience, and, finally, to the eschatological appeals.

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<sup>12</sup>W. F. Howard, Christianity According to St. John (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1946), p. 18.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE APPEAL TO THE ACTS OF GOD IN GENERAL

In their defense of the Gospel of Christ, the apostolic writers looked back also to the acts of God as verification for the truths which they expressed. By directing attention to the fact that the events stressed in connection with the Gospel message were essentially the acts of God, they sought to win acceptance for their doctrinal statements.

It is very evident, too, that, in using this appeal to the acts of God, the apostles made a careful selection of what particular acts of God they were to emphasize. They did not approach every group of people in the same manner. While they stressed the acts of God both before Gentiles and Jews, they saw fit to introduce the discourse with more general statements when they faced an audience which had little or no Christian background. On the one hand, we consider the fact that the Gentiles were often found in the audiences in the synagogues of Athens, Corinth, and other centers in which Paul spoke.<sup>1</sup> (The distinction, therefore, between the "Church of the Gentiles" and the "Church of the Jews" in the

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<sup>1</sup>This appeal to the acts of God is a characteristic emphasis frequently found among the Israelites. Recall the doxologies of Moses, Deborah, Hannah, Zecharias, Simeon, as well as the remark of Gamaliel in Acts 5:38 regarding the Christian movement.



early Church is an artificial one, for proselytes were with the Jewish Christians from the very outset, on the day of Pentecost.) On these occasions, the apostles would assume that the audience was versed in the "Law and the prophets." But the approach was different when they faced persons who were largely agnostic or pagan. Then they would appeal, we might say, to the acts of God in general. Under these circumstances, then, the apostles would refer to those acts of God which man would know outside of the revelation of Scripture, namely, from the natural knowledge within himself. Although the apostles continually bore in mind the fragmentary nature of this knowledge after the fall of Adam, they proceeded from the known to the unknown in order to convince these individuals of the truth of their Gospel.

This appeal is very evident in the address which Paul delivered on Mars' Hill, for example. He spoke in a strikingly different manner, commenting on the religious interest of the Athenians. Turning to their altar to the unknown God, he proposed to reveal to them the true God. He assumed that they were worshiping Him in ignorance, not in a contemplative way or in spirit of confidence. Paul, probably trained in the study of Greek literature at the University of Tarsus, must have heard about the speculations of Greek philosophers regarding the origin of things (cosmogonies). Since his audience included persons with an academic background of this kind, his appeal to creation, therefore, was



appropriate to the occasion. Perhaps Paul could notice a certain cynical attitude here which no longer accepted the myths of the gods nor was ready to embrace the Christian Gospel. It was a type of spiritual vacuum which the apostle was to fill with his message, if the audience would give his message a fair hearing. He enters upon a problem which his audience handled many times before, but only in an academic way. Here he takes up the matter in a direct and personal manner. He does not begin with their theories and speculations, but proceeds at once to the doctrine that God created all things. His appeal was to that act of God, creation, which should have been familiar to them. As he developed his theme, Paul ran counter to many favorite premises of the Greeks. Instead of assuming that the world originated by a gradual process, he taught that God had made it. What is more, while Plato and others regarded matter and the human body as evil, the apostle accepted the truth that what God had made was good. Although he was touching on a subject close to their interests, Paul brought them a conception of God which was totally different from anything that they had previously entertained. He took the problem of the origin of all things out of the sphere of speculation into the field of natural knowledge. After demonstrating that this unknown One is the true God by pointing to the act of creation, the apostle describes God as sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, transcendent over all things, not dependent on places of



worship. In showing that God gives life and breath to all creatures, he clearly set aside those materialistic ideas which the Greeks held about God.

What he proves by this reference to the creative act of God is that He is not hidden, but that He reveals Himself in His creatures. The apostle points out the general presence of God in His creatures, verses 27 and 28. He goes on to say that, as their own poets have said, men are the offspring of God. Since this is true, they are not to regard God as a being like silver and gold.

Paul then closes his address with an appeal to the act of God's judgment. While his audience may at first have welcomed the novelty of his message, they did not accept the apostle's appeal. He made it clear to them that he was not speculating, but was citing God's self-revelation. He shows that God will reveal Himself on another occasion, on the day of judgment. This day, the apostle declares, is fixed and will be controlled by that Man Whom God has ordained for this judicial function.

He concludes his address with a reference to the fact that the One Who will judge the world rose from the dead. This doctrine of the resurrection was the point which startled many, but it was an effective climax to the discourse.

We see, then, that Paul did not cite proofs from Scripture in this instance, inasmuch as his audience was pagan.



His rule seems to have been that the group was normative for the approach which he was to employ. Nevertheless, this appeal to the acts of God met with favorable results, for at least two converts are mentioned who were convinced by this address: Dionysius the Areopagite and also Damaris (verse 34).

Another example of this appeal to the acts of God in general is seen in the words of Paul to the citizens of Lystra, Acts 14:15 ff. The occasion for this address was the healing of the cripple, a miracle which caused quite a disturbance in the city. After the apostle had performed this wonder, the people were amazed, saying, "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men." After some time, the admirers of the miracle proved uncontrollable, calling Barnabas "Jupiter," and Paul "Mercury." After a while, the priest of Jupiter led oxen and brought garlands to celebrate the coming of Jupiter and Mercury, much to the dismay of the apostles. It was then that Paul arose and urged the people to turn away from these ideas regarding idols and worship the true God. To prove to them that this was true, he appealed to God's work of creation. The point which Paul makes is that the citizens of Lystra ought to worship the true God, for He has created all things. Then he proceeds to demonstrate that this is evident also in the way God discloses His ways in nature, verse 17: "Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave



us rain from heaven, and fruitful season, filling our hearts with good and gladness." (AV) Paul makes a general appeal to the fact that God made all things and that He reveals Himself by His providence in nature. Nature, then, together with God's care of His creatures, is the evidence which the apostle gives for the existence of the true God. He illustrates this by showing that God sends rain for the benefit of man.

This appeal of the apostle is reminiscent of the procedure of Jesus in connection with His defense of His activity on the Sabbath, in John 5:17 ff. The Savior defended His doctrinal position regarding the Sabbath by appealing to the benevolent acts of God which are without interruption.<sup>2</sup>

A similar emphasis occurs in Hebrews 11:16, in which the author shows that God accepted the faith of the patriarchs. (While this example belongs in a category by itself, inasmuch as this act of God would not be known by the unregenerate, we include it here because the appeal constitutes a reminder of one of the gracious acts of God.)

The proof of God's acceptance of the patriarchs lies in what He did for them. Their faith truly corresponded with His purpose. They entered into His design and He acknowledged their devotion and trust. He was pleased to establish a personal relation with them, and to fulfill His spiritual promise; for "He prepared for them a city." He made provision for their

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<sup>2</sup>George Barker Stevens, The Johannine Theology: A Study of the Doctrinal Contents of the Gospel and Epistles of the Apostle John (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907), p. 62.



abiding continuance with Him in the fulness of His human life.<sup>3</sup>

Thus the apostle drew on the record of the acts of God in order to give proof for his doctrine. Inasmuch as the particular acts were those which were known to the hearers and readers, this argument was effective and fitting.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Brooke Foss Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text With Notes And Essays (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), p. 364.

<sup>4</sup>There is a similar appeal to the judicial acts of God in 2 Pet. 3:5 f., in which the apostle mentions Sodom and Gomorrah as an indication that God will judge the wicked. Likewise, the reference to God's rejection of the fallen angels, 2:4. Other appeals to the acts of God occur in 2 Cor. 1:21 and Rom. 3:25 f.



## CHAPTER VII

### THE APPEAL TO PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

#### The Appeal to Sufferings

The apostle Paul was not a man who preferred to speak about himself. Only when enemies misrepresented his message or questioned his motives, did he feel compelled to argue in their manner and list his various experiences. But when he did so, he would qualify his remarks with the phrase, *κατ' ἀνθρώπων*, that is to say, "I am speaking in a purely human fashion," or excuse his boasting as he does in 2 Cor. 11:17 ff. and 6:4 ff. The reason why the apostle mentioned his sufferings was to prove that his doctrines had come from God. This appeal naturally involves the consideration that the writers of the New Testament would have gained nothing by telling an untruth, and what is more, they would not have suffered voluntarily for these statements, had they been guilty of fraud. This type of argument has a legitimate place, as we note from the following:

The veracity of a witness is based on the inductive law, "The natural tendency of all men to tell the truth can be interfered with only by the prospect of an advantage to be gained by telling the untruth." Proof has to be furnished, therefore, that the operation of this law has not been accidentally impeded; that no advantage was actually gained or was to be expected by telling a falsehood. This negative argument can be quite often supplemented by the positive proof of the habitual truthfulness of the witness; by the evidence that the facts reported were of a public nature and that in



consequence a lie would have been readily detected and exposed; and, above all, by establishing the point, if possible, that the giving of the testimony brought not advantage, but harm, persecution, and perhaps death.<sup>1</sup>

Paul had many opportunities to appeal to his sufferings as a recommendation of his Gospel. For instance, when he had to answer the Judaizers as to the charge that he was inconsistent in his teaching when he advocated the reception of uncircumcised Gentiles into the Christian Church, he pointed to his current sufferings, Gal. 5:11. If it be true that I am preaching circumcision, Paul declares, (that is, as a prerequisite for justification), why am I still being persecuted? (τί ἐτι διώκομαι) If the apostle had advocated this strict adherence to the ceremonial laws also for Gentiles, this would not have aroused antagonism, but it would have won the approval of the Jews. There would then be no possible answer to Paul's appeal, for all knew that he was being slandered and persecuted for his stand. Indeed, the apostle does not specify what this suffering was, but it probably includes the feeling of one maligned as he must have been. In connection with the same controversy with the Judaizers, he makes a second appeal to his past sufferings as a real proof that he is the apostle of Christ and the servant of God. He says, therefore, in Gal. 6:17: ἔχω γὰρ τὰ στίγματα . He expresses weariness and disgust at the endless

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<sup>1</sup>Sylvester J. Hartman, A Textbook in Logic (New York: American Book Company, 1936), pp. 347 f.



contentions of the Judaizers who question his apostolic office. His patience has reached its limit and now he closes his arguments with a forceful appeal to the "scars of the witness" for the Gospel. The injuries which he received as he preached Christ the Crucified verify his claim.

St. Paul closes the epistle, as he had begun it, with an uncompromising assertion of his office: "Henceforth let no man question my authority: let no man thwart or annoy me. Jesus is my Master, my Protector. His brand is stamped on my body. I bear this badge of an honorable servitude."<sup>2</sup>

The value of these sufferings, therefore, for the apostles was that they served as evidence for their teachings. Paul hints or implies this also in 2 Cor. 4:8 ff., as he demonstrates how the source of their forcefulness is not in themselves, but in God. Since their doctrine originates in God, they can be disturbed, but never forced to surrender or despair. All this the apostles are able to do, Paul says, because the light which they proclaim is from God. Thus the writers of the New Testament apparently appeal not merely to sufferings alone, but to their ability, under God, to endure these sufferings for Christ. The latter grace to bear persecution was, therefore, proof that the apostles were the messengers of God.

Again in 2 Cor. 6:3 ff., Paul appeals to his sufferings and to the afflictions which befall his co-workers. They do

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<sup>2</sup>J. B. Lightfoot, The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1950), p. 225.



not wish, the apostle says, to give offense in any respect, lest the office of the ministry be charged with neglect or be placed into disrepute. By his submission to suffering and affliction for the sake of the Gospel, Paul wishes to commend himself to his readers. Thereby he proposes to prove that he is a servant of God and that his doctrine is true. He includes all manner of suffering, physical, mental, and spiritual. This appeal is contained in 2 Cor. 6: 4-10.

When Paul uses this approach, he has a challenge in mind. It is Pauline polemics at its best. In other words, as he recounts the various trials and struggles he has experienced in his capacity as the apostle of Christ, he is also calling on his opponents to match his record. The implication always is: those who speak disparagingly of Paul's message and ministry have nothing of the kind to show. The advantage, therefore, is all on his record, for they have not suffered in the way that he has, nor to that extent.

In 2 Cor. 11:23-33, moreover, we have another catalogue of sufferings, but more detailed than any other list in his writings. Paul asks: Are they (whoever his opponents may be in the Church) servants of Christ? If they claim to be real apostles, he urges, how much more can I do the same! Then he tells the readers to listen to a recital of his sufferings. Enumerating over twenty different types of suffer-



ings which he endured for the sake of the Gospel, Paul shows that he is not behind the other apostles in this respect. Yes, he even claims to be ahead of them on this score. Not even the other apostles have equalled the number and intensity of his sufferings. Thus he establishes for the Corinthians, who have heard much about Paul's inferiority to Apollos or to Peter, that he is an apostle in the truest sense of the word. His message, therefore, is genuine and also divine.<sup>3</sup>

What appears to be merely a closing word in Col. 4:18: "Remember my bonds," has been nevertheless regarded as another appeal to his sufferings for the teaching of Christ which Paul made. The apostle indicates not so much the personal achievements of his ministry, as the fact that he suffered much for the Gospel, and that this verifies his message.

His bonds establish an additional claim to a hearing. He who is suffering for Christ has a right to speak on behalf of Christ. The appeal is similar in Eph. 3:1, *τούτου χάριν ἐγὼ Παῦλος ὁ δέσμιος τ. Χριστοῦ*, which is resumed again after a long digression, in Eph. 4:1. *Παρακαλῶ ὑμᾶς ἐγὼ ὁ δέσμιος ἐν Κυρίῳ ἄξιος περὶ τῆς ἡμέρας, . . . ὑπερ οὗ κ.τ.λ.* Also, Philemon 9. . . . These passages seem to show that the appeal is not for himself, but for his teaching - not for sympathy with his sufferings but for the obedience to the Gospel. His bonds were not his own; they were *τὰ δέσμια τοῦ εὐαγγελίου* (Philemon 13). Cfr. Hebrews 10:34. Somewhat similar is the appeal to his stigmata in Gal. 6:17: "Henceforth let no man

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<sup>3</sup>There is a similar emphasis in the repeated reference to himself as "a prisoner of Jesus Christ," Eph. 3:1; Col. 4:3; Phil. 1:12.



trouble me."<sup>4</sup>

One of the less prominent arguments offered for the doctrine of the resurrection, but nevertheless useful, is the apostle's appeal to his sufferings in 1 Cor. 15:32: "If in a human fashion I fought with beasts at Ephesus, what does it profit me?" Here he maintains that, if one is to grant that there is no resurrection, then all his intense suffering for the Gospel is to no purpose. It would be all in vain, for it was also for the Gospel of the resurrection that he submitted to that suffering. That ordeal at Ephesus proves that there must be a resurrection, for he would never have resigned himself to an experience of that kind. Thus the apostles refer to their own sufferings with a view to proving what they teach.

Finally, we also note that Paul not only mentioned the sufferings of the ministers of the Word as evidence that their Gospel was true and divine, but he also took note of the readers' sufferings to prove that a teaching of his was founded on God's Word. This we encounter, for example, in 2 Thess. 1:5: their present persecution and sufferings were a proof of the just judgment coming in the future.

In the present instance, therefore, the meaning is that the heroic faith of the Thessalonians under persecution is in itself a "proof," a "sign" (Est. argumentum et

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<sup>4</sup>J. B. Lightfoot, St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon (London: Macmillan and Company, 1875), p. 311.



indictum) of what God's final judgment in their case will be.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, it is possible that we have an appeal to the readers' suffering to establish the doctrine of the justification by faith in Gal. 3:4, depending on how one construes the term, *ἐνδολεα*. This could refer to experiences in general, or, specifically to sufferings. The point which Paul makes is: "Surely you have not suffered so many things in vain for the Gospel, and then revert to a religion of legalism?" The argument is in the form of a dramatic question, and somewhat condensed.<sup>6</sup>

Thus the apostles refer to their own sufferings and to those of their readers with a view to proving what they teach.

### The Appeal to the Divine Call

One of the personal experiences which the apostles vividly recalled was the incident in which the Master commissioned them to be witnesses of His Word. Several epistles, in fact, begin with the reminder of this particular fact that they were called by God into this service: 1 Pet.

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<sup>5</sup>George Milligan, St. Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1952), p. 88. (Cfr. Philippians 1:28.)

<sup>6</sup>The appeal to the sufferings of the readers is to be found also in Hebrews 10:32-35 for a proof of the readers' hope and faith in the unseen.



1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1; Tit. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Jude 1; James 1; Rom. 1:1; and others. The writers of the New Testament thus identify themselves as men with a divine call to proclaim the Gospel of Christ.

But the apostles do not merely mention this divine call as a means of identification, but also as an appeal to an experience which qualifies them for this activity and which proves their teaching true and divine. Paul relates the story of his life in Gal. 1:13 ff., to show that he was not dependent on men for his doctrines, but received his Gospel directly from God, verse 12. In verse 15, he recalls how God had appointed him by His grace and had revealed His Son to him (evidently thinking of the experience on the Damascus Road). Here Paul makes an appeal to a divine call that is profound, for he states that God set him apart for this office from his very birth: *ὁ ἀφορέων με ἐκ κοιλίας μη-τροῦ μου*.<sup>7</sup> He declares that God has appointed him for the apostleship. If this appeal would have any significance for his readers, it would mean that they were to accept his teaching and his judgments in the controversy with the Judaizers. In an emphatic manner, Paul is building up the evidence for his office and doctrine against the claims of the "false brethren."<sup>8</sup> He also appeals to a special divine call

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<sup>7</sup>The term, *ἀφορέων*, does not refer merely to separation from the womb, birth, but: "set apart for special service."

<sup>8</sup>Cfr. Paul's similar appeal in Acts 26:16 ff.



in Gal. 1:1, as he makes it clear that he is an apostle, not by appointment of men or by an individual, but by direct divine ordinance: ἀλλὰ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ θεοῦ

πατρὸς τοῦ ἐξείρακτος αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν

The apostle Peter, too, in Acts 15:7 draws attention to the fact that God elected or determined to have the Gentiles both hear and believe the Word of the Gospel through his mouth (Peter's). While this appeal is not the chief argument, it was important in his effort to convince the Jewish Christians to accept the apostolic policy regarding the reception of Gentiles. If the people would understand that God had chosen to use Peter for the evangelization of Gentiles as well as for serving the others, they would be more ready to accept the non-Jewish people into their fellowship without certain ceremonial conditions. No doubt, this initial appeal to divine appointment for this activity had a bearing on the later acceptance of the suggestions of the apostles to the Council.<sup>9</sup>

In 2 Cor. 10:8, the apostle Paul considers the fact that his opponents have challenged his authority. Yet, he does not say that he denies their office. Rather, he appeals to the fact which he has experienced, namely, that God

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<sup>9</sup>There are numerous references by Paul to the fact that God had appointed him for this work as an apostle, but they do not involve specific arguments: Phil. 1:16; Philemon 1.9. 13; Col. 1:23; Tit. 1:3; 1 Tim. 1:12; Rom. 15:15; and others.



has given him apostolic authority and called him. Here, too, he adds the purpose of his divine call: to "build up" his people rather than to "tear them down."

Likewise, in 1 Cor. 1:1, the apostle stresses the divinity of his call as evidence that his message is of God. Again, it is a polemical argument, indirect though it may seem to be.

An Apostle, not by the appointment of man, but by the special calling of God, "vocatione Apostolus," Beza: designation of himself in his most solemn official character, not without some oblique reference to those undervaluing his Apostolical authority. . . . Here he tacitly maintains his special apostolic calling against gainsayers and *ψευδοαποστόλοι* (cfr. 2 Cor. 11:13); there he states his full credentials to a Church which he had not yet visited.<sup>10</sup>

We encounter an appeal to a divine call in Rev. 22:16, although this is not actually meant as an argument in the real sense of the word. John quotes the word of Jesus Himself: "I, Jesus, have sent My Messenger to testify these things to you regarding the churches." Nevertheless, this statement indicates that the message of John is reliable and true.

### The Appeal to their Apostolic Record

When apostolic writers draw on their personal experiences in arguing for the trustworthiness of their message,

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<sup>10</sup> Charles J. Ellicott, St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians: With a Critical and Grammatical Commentary (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1887), p. 1.



they remind the readers of those aspects of their past as servants of Christ which vouch for the integrity and sincerity of the apostles. This kind of appeal is commonly known in rhetoric as "the ethical appeal" of the speaker, in which he bases an argument on his own character. In other words, the audience is to accept his view and his claims because he has proved himself worthy of their patronage.

In the first place, the apostle Paul asserted that he was not preaching in order to glorify himself, but to magnify the story of Christ the Crucified, 2 Cor. 4:5. Like Jesus, Paul defended his motives, reminding us of what the Savior uttered regarding His zeal for the glory of the Father in heaven, John 8:50; 8:54; 8:55; 7:17,18. Although Paul does not set out to prove specific doctrines here in 2 Cor. 4:5, the point of the controversy is clear. The group at Corinth had been divided by error and by strife. There was a question about Paul's apostleship: Was he really an apostle of Jesus Christ? This he now had to demonstrate in a number of ways. He chose to enumerate the characteristics of his ministry among them and to bring evidence that he, by the grace of God, had exercised his office in accordance with divine precepts.

As Paul argued to prove that he was the servant of the Lord Jesus, he took up a number of the charges which had been raised against him. One of the accusations raised



against him was that he should have been insincere. For any teacher, Paul felt, sincerity would be a prerequisite. He defends himself by appealing to his sincerity in 2 Cor. 2:17. This he has shown by his simplicity of language. To be sure, he has a significant purpose in mind: he wishes to answer those who claim Apollos, the able speaker, as their apostle. They regard Paul as inferior because he does not seem to be eloquent. But he replies that he came not to preach the wisdom of men, but the Gospel of Jesus Christ, 1 Cor. 3:2 f.<sup>11</sup>

Moreover, Paul also defended himself against the charge of inconsistency. His critics charged that when he was absent, he used a different approach from that which he employed when he was in their presence, 2 Cor. 10:10. In verse 11, he assures them that he is the type of person who will rather be the same in his direct contact with them as he has been in his correspondence. When he comes to Corinth, he will corroborate everything that he has written to them. This appeal of Paul to the consistency of his method offered another proof of the fact that Paul was teaching the truth.

That the apostle considered these criticisms reflects

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<sup>11</sup>Other appeals to the apostolic record, to apostolic virtues as evidence for his doctrine, are to be found in Acts 23:1; 2 Cor. 1:23; 1 Thess. 1:5; 2:10 ff.; and 2 Cor. 6:6-10.



the serious nature of these charges against him. They were not merely personal; they were important and damaging accusations against his office. Therefore, Paul felt compelled to defend his character and his method to refute these disparaging remarks. He centers much of his argumentation on his practice of refusing financial support from the very congregation which condemned him, 2 Cor. 11:7 and 1 Cor. 9:12. This he also mentions in 1 Thess. 2:3-6. This was an appeal which his readers could not reject or refute. Paul had received no financial assistance from them, nor had he ever solicited their help. They would have to agree that a man like this, who labors without remuneration, must be a teacher sent from God and that his instruction must be true.<sup>12</sup>

In connection with his lengthy defense of the doctrine of the resurrection, in 1 Cor. 15:15, the same apostle utters another ethical appeal. He states that, if the Savior had not risen from the dead, the apostles then would be false witnesses. On the contrary, he replies, they were reliable.

Another side of Paul's character is seen in his extreme caution not to interfere with the work of another missionary of Christ, as he explains in Rom. 15:21. He sets forth what might be called his "missionary policy." Whenever he set out to labor intensively at another field, he first determined

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<sup>12</sup>Paul defended himself in 2 Cor. 11:7 ff. by appealing to his humility.



whether or not someone else had organized a Christian group there. If so, he would move on to a territory where the Gospel had never been preached before. Paul here states that he practiced this policy since "he did not wish to lay or build upon, another's foundation." This constitutes an ethical appeal, in which he declares that he was not deceitful. The purpose of Paul was to show that he did not wish to rest on another's laurels and give the impression that his preaching alone had achieved these results.<sup>13</sup> Although Paul does not say it in so many words, we feel that he intends to stress that he is a true apostle of Christ, and that this practice of his proves his integrity.

Likewise, in 2 Cor. 4:1, the apostle Paul appeals to his record in order to vindicate his authority as a messenger of Christ. It supplies the ground on which the argument of Paul in behalf of his doctrine rests.

Furthermore, against the charge of madness, Paul (although this may not be specifically an ethical argument), asserts that, even if the accusation is true, his preaching is for God. The stigma attached to this charge would be, as it seems, that Paul was fanatical and that he had driven himself to insanity in his insistence on the Gospel. He never-

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<sup>13</sup>This cautious procedure seems to have been exercised by the Savior, too, Who labored in a territory remote from John the Baptist, so as not to interfere with the latter's designated area and sphere.



theless defends himself and states that what he taught was for God, and implies that it was a message from God. This defense occurs in 2 Cor. 5:13.

Another moral characteristic which Paul stresses as belonging to a teacher sent from God is truthfulness, and this he affirms in Gal. 1:20. This amounts to an oath that his written defense of the Gospel is true: *ἰδοὺ ἐνάπιον τοῦ θεοῦ ὅτι οὐ ψεύδομαι . . .* The purpose of these personal references is to defend himself against his detractors who misrepresent him as being inferior to the Twelve. It also deepens the conviction of his readers that his admonition is actually the authoritative Word of God. Similarly, in 2 Cor. 1:17, he declares that he has not used light-mindedness in teaching the Word to them (his constituents at Corinth).

In other words, as Paul appealed to his apostolic record, he maintained that he was not merely defending himself. Rather, he was taking the offensive in the arguments for his doctrine and for his apostleship. Here, in 2 Cor. 11:10, it is evident that he is taking the initiative from his opponents and is anticipating their future course of action: "As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia." (AV) It is another appeal to the apostolic record. It means that "this glorying shall not be stopped, that is, no one shall get



from my conduct an argument to prove that it is empty."<sup>14</sup>

This willingness of the apostle to have the critics test the veracity of his motives and of his doctrines constitutes an argument in Paul's favor, for an impostor would fear a test of this nature. This was, then, the appeal to his record which Paul held before his readers to convince them that he spoke the words of God. In general, we might say, this appeal resembles the frankest challenges of Jesus' polemics, as in John 8:46: "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" In the previous verse, Jesus had affirmed that He was teaching the truth. His appeal to His record was an argument to substantiate that claim. Like the Master, the apostle Paul employed this appeal to advantage.<sup>15</sup>

#### The Special Autobiographical Appeal

As the writers of the New Testament call attention to some of their personal experience, they also mention outstanding events and circumstances of their early training together with the crises which affected their spiritual out-

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<sup>14</sup> Joseph Henry Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm's Wilke's Clavis Novi Testamenti Revised and Enlarged (New York: American Book Company, 1889), p. 657.

<sup>15</sup> The various charges against which Paul directed this ethical appeal to his record were: the charge of exploiting his people, 2 Cor. 11:7-10; 2 Thess. 3:8; 2 Cor. 7:2; and others. There was the charge of cowardice: 2 Cor. 10:1-6. Then, too, he answered the charge of weakness: 2 Cor. 10:7-11.



look. It is an appeal used chiefly by the apostle Paul. He seems to depict his early religious background with an intentional effort to establish before Jewish Christians and also other Jews that he is conservative. He wishes to show that he represents the original faith of the fathers, without, to be sure, the ecclesiastical traditions of the elders, cfr. Acts 24:14. This is his defense before Felix and Tertullus (his accuser). Paul denies that the authorities have established his guilt of being a heretic, verse 13. He reminds the governor that he had worshiped at the temple in Jerusalem but twelve days before. The tenor of the apostle's appeal is that he is following his childhood religion conservatively.

Again in Gal. 1:14, this apostle mentions his background as a Pharisee. He also shows that he was far more zealous in that movement than any of the young men of his age. He had advanced very far in the Jewish faith, possessing a thorough knowledge of the traditions of the fathers. This appeal would have a bearing on the present controversy in which the apostle found himself. If anyone would be qualified to judge between the Judaizer's doctrines and the Gospel of Christ, it would be Paul, who himself had been indoctrinated in the Rabbinical teachings. He confesses that his zeal was so intense for the Judaistic system that he persecuted the Christians, Gal. 1:13.23. His appeal also indicates that he must have derived his doctrine in a miraculous



manner from God Himself, for his entire training was hostile to the Christian message.

These connections which Paul had had with the Pharisee tradition proved valuable for his argumentation on a number of occasions. When he stands before Agrippa, he appeals to his previous training as a Pharisee, Acts 26:4 ff. He testifies that he is accused and judged for the hope of Israel and the promise made to the fathers by God Himself. Paul, to be sure, is defending his message that Christ rose from the dead. But he makes it clear that, in doing so, he is in full agreement with the faith of the Jews, the spiritual hope of the Messiah. This appeal to his early training and to his present fidelity to the Jewish hope (not the materialistic one, but of the remnant), he brought forward to prove that he was not guilty of the charges raised against him.

A similar appeal is made to his affiliation with the sect of the Pharisees in Acts 23:6 ff. It is one of the most skillful steps in the proceedings of Paul's case. He realized, as one trained in the Pharisee tradition, that a certain rivalry existed between the Pharisees and the Sadducees. While the latter denied the resurrection of the body, the former championed the doctrine. Noting this main difference between his accusers in the Sanhedrin, he professed that he was a Pharisee, defending the resurrection. (Paul regarded himself a Pharisee, to be sure, only in the relative sense, namely, inasmuch as he also confessed the doctrine of the



resurrection. He does not imply complete agreement with their tenets.) By this argument, appealing to a cardinal doctrine of the Pharisees, Paul divided the Sanhedrin according to their basic prejudices in such a way that the hearing did not accomplish its purpose of removing Paul from his activity. The bloc which held for the Pharisee doctrine could not help supporting what Paul had said. Thus the apostle, using this autobiographical appeal, won his point.

We are reminded here, too, that Paul proved that God had not rejected His people, Israel, for Paul himself was an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, and of the tribe of Benjamin, Rom. 11:1 f. The apostle points to his own case as evidence that God had shown His mercy to Israel.

This particular appeal is prominent also in the address of Paul on the castle stairs, in which he speaks to the people in Hebrew, Acts 22:2 ff. He wishes to establish the fact that he is not acting contrary to the religion of his fathers. His aim is to make them realize that the present disturbance is pointless, for he is loyal to the faith of Israel. In his reminiscences, he states that he is a Jew, born at Tarsus in Cilicia, but trained in Jerusalem under Gamaliel (grandson of Hillel, the mild-mannered rabbi of the liberal school). As he recalls these details, he mentions how he had been instructed in the truth of the Law of the fathers. He also mentions his former zeal for the same.



What the apostle appeals to here is really known to them.

Furthermore, he was meeting his opponents on their own ground. He could vouch for the faith of the fathers, in distinction from the later accretions and misconceptions of the elders. In this way, the apostle could demonstrate that his theology was both true to the old hope of the fathers as well as to the word of Christ.

The particular purpose which the apostle had in mind as he recalled these personal experiences was to explain why he taught as he did and to prove that he taught a message which came from God's revelation. This objective of Paul in employing this autobiographical appeal is discussed in the following:

The biographical data in Galatians were not written by Paul for the purpose of narrating facts about himself but as a means of accounting for the stand which he took on the relation of the law and the gospel. He wanted to show to the Galatians that his message was not a pose which he had adopted for the sake of expediency or from a desire for notoriety, but that it sprang from a divine intervention in his own life. His jealousy for his message was not bigotry, for in his anathema against those who perverted the gospel he included himself or the very angels from heaven if he or they should depart from the revealed truth (Gal. 1:8). He was utterly convinced of the final truth of the gospel of Christ, and was ready to defend its verity and purity at all costs. First of all, the autobiographical narrative indicates that he had not espoused the cause of the gospel because of any natural inclination toward it. All of his training and interest had been centered in the law, and there was no logical reason why he should abandon it. All of his family were under the law, his instructors had biased him in favor of the law, and he was advancing in its teachings with such rapidity that any sudden change of faith would be harmful to his scholastic prestige and to his social prominence in Jewry. He had absolutely nothing to gain,



and much to lose by becoming a Christian.<sup>16</sup>

We encounter an appeal which resembles the latter in Gal. 2:19. He says that he could not return to the doctrine of justification on the basis of works and of the Law, for this procedure would be building up what he had torn down. The latter paradox he now proves by appealing to one spiritual experience: "For through the Law, I died to the Law, in order that I might live to God." The advantage which this would bring would be nothing for Paul, for, he adds: "I establish myself as a sinner." This is a kind of argumentum e contrario. If he returns to a righteousness that is based on the Law, he would be going back to his condemned state, into which the Law had placed him. To show the absurdity of reverting to legalism, he recalls his experience of having died to the Law, that is, to Law as a way of attaining righteousness acceptable to God.

Furthermore, when Paul's apostolic standing and perhaps also his doctrines were questioned by some critics at Corinth, he defended his position in 2 Cor. 10:14. He adhered to his former claim that also at Corinth he was the minister of God and the apostle of Jesus Christ. He held to his point that what he taught them was the truth of God. This he proves by reminding the Corinthians that he founded the con-

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<sup>16</sup>Merrill C. Tenney, Galatians: The Charter of Christian Liberty (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), pp. 84 f.



gregation there. "St. Paul did not determine his own province any more than his own standard of excellence. God did that."<sup>17</sup>

Finally, we might also include the statements of the same apostle in 2 Cor. 13:1 ff., in this category. He appeals to his past visits at Corinth and to his planned visit with them and asserts that he will give them sufficient evidence for the fact that God is speaking through him. This is another significant reference to facts from his own life and career, demonstrating that he is a messenger of divine truth. He also reminds them of the effectiveness of previous visitations.

Thus, the interest of the apostles in rehearsing some of their personal experiences was to lend weight to their arguments in behalf of the Gospel. Indeed, they were hesitant to refer to their own careers and to their past training, lest they give the impression that they recommended themselves with their own credentials. Nevertheless, as they called to mind the varied experiences of the past, they saw in these facts appropriate for arguments. These biographical details furnished data in order to refute the opponents of the apostles. They could show that the change

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<sup>17</sup>Alfred Plummer, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians," The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1915), p. 288.



which the Gospel effected in them was not merely part of their life's story, but a proof for the same Gospel which they proclaimed.

Another method which the apostolic writers employed in order to furnish proof for their message was the appeal to the practical consequences of their preaching. The results of their preaching, in the lives of the adherents of Christianity constituted the strongest proof of the apostolic doctrine. While the term "pragmatic" has a connotation which signifies that something is foreign to the idea of an unchanging body of truth, the apostolic writers employed a special mode in which the apostles proved their doctrine. The term "pragmatic" in one of its senses denotes the quality of having a practical bearing. And that bearing is it as they are. While the writers of the New Testament were not using the pragmatic method in the sense that they questioned their own message until they observed the results, they nevertheless employed it inasmuch as they, for the purpose of presenting evidence, pointed to the practical results which their preaching had accomplished.

It appears that the apostolic writers found justification for using this method in the fact that Jesus used this manner. He employed the pragmatic method especially in such passages as John 8:12-17, in reply to the queries that were put to him by the Jews. He indicated that



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE PRAGMATIC METHOD

Another method which the apostolic writers employed in order to furnish proof for their message was the appeal to the practical consequences of their preaching. The results of their *κηρυγμα* in the lives of the adherents of Christianity constituted the pragmatic proof of the apostolic doctrine. While the term "pragmatic" has a connotation which signifies that something is foreign to the idea of an unchanging body of truth, its usual meaning well describes a special mode in which the apostles proved their doctrine true. The term "pragmatic" in one of its senses denotes the quality of having a practical bearing: and that meaning of it we have in mind. While the writers of the New Testament were not using the pragmatic method in the sense that they questioned their own message until they observed the results, they nevertheless employed it inasmuch as they, for the purpose of presenting evidence, pointed to the practical results which their preaching had accomplished.

It appears that the apostolic writers found justification for using this method in the fact that Jesus argued in this manner. He employed the pragmatic method especially in such passages as John 7:17 f., in reply to the scribes who threw doubt on the origin of His teaching. He indicated that



the source of His doctrine was the Father in heaven. He appealed effectively to what the follower of His teaching would experience:

ἐὰν τις θέλῃ τὸ δέλημα αὐτοῦ ποιεῖν, γνω-  
σέτω περὶ τῆς διδασκαλίας, πότερον ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ  
ἔστιν

Moreover, there is also basis for the pragmatic method of argumentation in Jesus' remarks concerning the false prophets, Matthew 7:15 ff.<sup>1</sup> Here He argues that, if you observe the fruits of the teachers, you will know them. In other words, if you examine how these false teachers live as well as how their disciples conduct themselves, you will be able to pass a verdict on their teachings. Jesus reports this appeal once more in verse 20.

Then the Savior illustrates His argument as follows:

Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?  
Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but  
a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree  
cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt  
tree bring forth good fruit (Matt. 7:16-18). (AV)<sup>2</sup>

In a similar way the apostles, too, appealed to the ac-

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<sup>1</sup>Inasmuch as John 7:17 f. seems to include a promise to those who follow Jesus, it does not constitute the clearest example of the pragmatic method, which really had to do with past results of the Gospel, rather than with the anticipated fruits of the message.

<sup>2</sup>We have something similar to this in James 2:17 ff., in which the writer demonstrates that the absence of the fruits renders faith lifeless. Cfr. Joseph B. Mayor, The Epistle of St. James (London: Macmillan and Company, Limited, 1897), pp. 95 f. In Rom. 6:21, Paul asks his readers as to what fruit they had in their previous state, of which they are now ashamed. He seems to imply that now, having been regenerated by the Gospel, they have fruits to show.



complishments of their preaching. For instance, we notice that Paul mentions the fruits of the Gospel: the Word of truth has been bearing fruit in the hearts of the readers from the very day on which they had heard and learned it from Epaphras, Col. 1:6. This appeal was essential for Paul's stand against the errorists who were at work among the Colossians, turning the Gospel into a legalistic and neo-Judaistic system. The apostle, therefore, in keeping with his theme of the sufficiency of Christ and of the Christian Gospel, exalts that proclamation by pointing to what it had achieved in a practical way. These favorable results of apostolic preaching constitute for him a strong claim that his message came from God.

The fruit, which the Gospel bears without fail in all soils and under every climate, is its credential, its verification, as against the pretensions of spurious counterfeits.<sup>3</sup>

He also used this appeal against his critics at Corinth. It was very relevant that Paul should present these credentials of apostleship to his opponents there. By exhibiting how his message had altered the lives of people, he could demonstrate that his doctrine was a divine dynamic, regenerating men and renewing their hearts from day to day. His preaching had proved to be effective, and this he emphasized as a con-

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<sup>3</sup>J. B. Lightfoot, "St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon," The Epistles of St. Paul (London: Macmillan and Company, 1875), III, 201.



vincing sign that he was teaching the truth. Furthermore, what he declares in 2 Cor. 3:2; 1 Cor. 2:4; and in 9:2, approximates his argument which is found in Col. 1:6. What the converts do and say in the presence of the heathen serves as a visible testimonial to the divine authority of his Gospel, Paul continually affirms.

As the same apostle found himself in the midst of controversy, he could draw on this argument with considerable animation. When he was concerned with the Judaizers in the churches of Galatia, he made a special effort to show how his Gospel of liberty had achieved results, Gal. 3:2-5. The point at issue in this controversy, in Paul's mind at least, involved a denial of the doctrine of justification by faith without the works of the Law. He drew on many arguments to show the folly of turning from the doctrine of justification through faith to the doctrine of justification on the basis of works. He recognized this trend in the willingness of the readers to submit to circumcision as a prerequisite for salvation. The apostle meets this gradual or threatened disavowal of justification by faith with an appeal to the results of his Gospel preaching. He asks the Galatians whether they received the Holy Spirit through the Law or through the Gospel. In this connection, he reminds them of three facts which they have experienced. First of all, they have received the Holy Spirit. Second, they have experienced the many signs and wonders which were performed among them



after they had heard the Gospel.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, for the sake of the message which they had embraced, God had worked certain miracles among them, as they well realize. Again Paul asks: Were these done on the basis of works performed in conformity with a law, or, on the basis of the preaching of faith (the Gospel)? His question needs no reply, for his readers recalled that miracles followed upon the preaching of the Crucified. These results would show that Paul's previous preaching and teaching among them was grounded in the Word of God and had divine approval. He implies here that, should they now consistently continue their enthusiasm for the legalistic system under ceremonies and rituals, they would be destroying the progress which they had made under the Gospel. In addition to recalling what they have experienced through the Holy Spirit, he tells them that their past sufferings for the Gospel would then be in vain. To what purpose, then, were all the persecutions which they had endured nobly, if they reject the Gospel? Thus Paul outlines what the message of free grace has actually achieved in and through them. It is proof that his preaching was divine and that they were to continue to look upon it as authoritative for their faith and for their life.

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<sup>4</sup>The force of Paul's argument becomes even more evident if we take the position that these miracles were phenomena not merely witnessed by the Galatians, but performed by the readers themselves.



Inasmuch as the apostle Paul was presented as a "lesser light" by individuals both at Corinth and to some extent also in the churches of Galatia, he took pains to show that his message was equally as authoritative as that of the other apostles. This he did by enumerating the accomplishments of his preaching. In Gal. 2:6 ff., Paul argues that, even as God had operated effectively through the ministry of Peter among the Jews, thus also He had supported the activity of him who had been sent to the Gentiles. This proved that Paul's doctrine, no less than Peter's, had come from God, for God had shown His approval by granting him success.

We also notice how the apostles defend their policy of receiving Gentiles into the Christian Church without insistence on circumcision. They also appeal to the results that have followed upon this method. In Acts 11:17 f., Peter argues for this policy and for his apostolic message by pointing out how the Holy Spirit had been given also to the Gentile household which he had evangelized. He argued: If God bestowed the same gift on them (the Gentiles) as on us, who was I to forbid God to grant this? This bestowal of the Spirit on the Gentiles constituted for Peter the divine sanction on the apostolic message. Likewise, in Acts 10:46, when Peter's companions, Jews by birth, manifested surprise, he used the pragmatic method of argumentation in deciding the question whether Cornelius and those gathered around him should be baptized. He says that no one could



interfere because these people had received the Holy Spirit even as the others. These Gentiles, in fact, were speaking in tongues. This charism demonstrated that Peter's preaching and the particular policy of receiving the Gentiles freely met with divine approval.

Again the apostles, in this fashion, appealed to the results of their message at the Council at Jerusalem, Acts 15:8. Peter there outlined how God had given testimony to their preaching by granting the Holy Spirit also to the Gentiles. He recalled how God had seen fit to have the Gentiles hear the Word through the preaching of the Gospel and to bring faith to their hearts through the same.<sup>5</sup>

We should like to point out once more how the apostle Paul endeavored to certify that he was an apostle of Christ. If this claim were to rest on purely human assertions, it would fail. He wished to prove this claim to the Corinthians in a demonstrative manner (1 Cor. 9:1 f.):

And the blessing of God which rested on the ministry of Paul is pointed to as a second proof for his claim to be an apostle. In 1 Cor. 9:1-2 Paul writes: . . . "Are ye not my work in the Lord? If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord." . . . the reference to the blessing of God on his work as the seal of God on his claim to be an apostle. The Corinthians,

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<sup>5</sup>In 1 Cor. 15:32b f., Paul argues that the fruits of the denial of the resurrection would be immorality and evil. We mention this by way of contrast to the results actually achieved by his preaching of the resurrection. This passage, indeed, approaches the argumentum e contrario, demonstrating how the opposite course (a denial of his position) leads to disaster.



he reminds, could hardly deny this claim because he began the work in Corinth, and it was as God honored his preaching that the Corinthian church was called into being.<sup>6</sup>

in 1 Thess. 1:12-14, furthermore, we locate another reference to what the message of Paul had achieved. The results were of such a nature in the lives of the hearers that they verified the apostolic message.

We might be its bearers, but God was its author. And in welcoming it as you did, it proved itself no mere human message, but a Divine power in all believing hearts. How true this is your own lives testified in that, after the example of the Christian Churches of Judaea, you underwent the same sufferings at the hands of your fellow countrymen that they did at the hands of the unbelieving Jews. . . . The Thessalonians in their turn . . . had shown themselves not idle hearers, but active "imitators" of the Churches of God in Judaea, which are apparently specifically mentioned here simply because they were the earliest Christian communities, and had throughout their history been exposed to severe hostility.<sup>7</sup>

The apostle also employed this appeal in the practical situation of encouraging greater generosity in giving. In 2 Cor. 9:10, Paul testifies that generosity is not something which leads one to ruin, but which has God's blessing. While basing his argument here on passages from the Old Testament

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<sup>6</sup>Holmes Rolston, Consider Paul: Apostle of Jesus Christ (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1951), p. 64.

<sup>7</sup>George Milligan, St. Paul's Epistles To The Thessalonians: The Greek Text With Introduction And Notes (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1953), pp. 28 f. There seems to be a pragmatic appeal in 2 Cor. 1:20, for the Corinthians had, by their liturgical response, "Amen," given assent to Paul's doctrine. Thus they gave evidence that Paul's teaching was true. Their present criticism was, therefore, contradictory to their previous affirmations.



Scriptures, the writer points to the way in which God not only gives this desire to be generous, but also supplies the means to the giver to bestow something on others. In reality, then, the giver is enriched.

Finally, in James 2:24, the inspired author repeats in a different manner what he had stated in 1:17 f. Emphasizing as he does the results of the Word in the lives of the hearers, James gives the evidence that a genuine faith will produce fruits.

As he puts it, what a man does verifies and completes, as nothing else can do, what he believes; his obedience to God is not the discharge of some additional obligation by means of which he makes up for something that mere faith in God has left undone, but the natural issue of what faith involved.<sup>8</sup>

While the pragmatic argument occurs less frequently in the New Testament than one would expect, it has a prominent place in the presentation of apostolic doctrine. The pragmatic argument, as it was used by Jesus and the apostles, had certain advantages. Although it did not immediately convince people, one can readily see that here the opponent faces evidence which he can scarcely deny. The conduct of the Christians was familiar to the pagan neighbors. Thus the pragmatic argument, employed with forthright clarity, called attention to evidence that was close at hand, visible to both friend

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<sup>8</sup>James Moffatt, "The General Epistles: James, Peter, and Judas," The Moffatt New Testament Commentary (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, n.d.), p. 44.



and foe of the Christian religion.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Both Peter and Jesus stress the good works of a believer as evidence that the Gospel is a power of God and that it bears practical fruits, 1 Peter 3:1 and 2:12; Matthew 5:16.

of His unbelief... they would accept Him... the value of the evidence of His miracles for establishing certain parts of His teaching... Jesus states that, if He is doing the works of the Father, the leaders of Israel should believe His words, although they do not believe Him. His works would be evidence for the fact that the Father was in Him and He is the Father. The healing of the blind man had produced this conviction. He doubt Jesus now also appeals to that miracle as proof that His claim that the Father was operative in His ministry was true.

The Father not only looked upon His son directed as a

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However, in John 11:1, Jesus replies to the demand for a sign with an appeal to His Father's resurrection. He tells, no doubt, that He would give an answer how to defeat His divine authority. On the other hand, in Matthew 21:27, He refuses to reveal by what authority He did certain powerful actions. He might suggest that such, in recording the answer of Peter, appealing as appeal to the miracle of Jesus to prove that He is the Son of God. Everything related concerning the work of Jesus and to the whole effect of "this Father of divine conviction with the message of salvation." Surely, the intent that that Jesus is the Son of God (John 1:1, 1:14, 1:18, 1:29, 1:34, 1:36, 1:49, 1:51, 1:53, 1:54, 1:56, 1:57, 1:58, 1:59, 1:60, 1:61, 1:62, 1:63, 1:64, 1:65, 1:66, 1:67, 1:68, 1:69, 1:70, 1:71, 1:72, 1:73, 1:74, 1:75, 1:76, 1:77, 1:78, 1:79, 1:80, 1:81, 1:82, 1:83, 1:84, 1:85, 1:86, 1:87, 1:88, 1:89, 1:90, 1:91, 1:92, 1:93, 1:94, 1:95, 1:96, 1:97, 1:98, 1:99, 1:100, 1:101, 1:102, 1:103, 1:104, 1:105, 1:106, 1:107, 1:108, 1:109, 1:110, 1:111, 1:112, 1:113, 1:114, 1:115, 1:116, 1:117, 1:118, 1:119, 1:120, 1:121, 1:122, 1:123, 1:124, 1:125, 1:126, 1:127, 1:128, 1:129, 1:130, 1:131, 1:132, 1:133, 1:134, 1:135, 1:136, 1:137, 1:138, 1:139, 1:140, 1:141, 1:142, 1:143, 1:144, 1:145, 1:146, 1:147, 1:148, 1:149, 1:150, 1:151, 1:152, 1:153, 1:154, 1:155, 1:156, 1:157, 1:158, 1:159, 1:160, 1:161, 1:162, 1:163, 1:164, 1:165, 1:166, 1:167, 1:168, 1:169, 1:170, 1:171, 1:172, 1:173, 1:174, 1:175, 1:176, 1:177, 1:178, 1:179, 1:180, 1:181, 1:182, 1:183, 1:184, 1:185, 1:186, 1:187, 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## CHAPTER IX

### THE APPEAL TO MIRACLES

While Jesus objected to the skeptical attitude of many of His contemporaries who demanded signs and wonders before they would accept Him,<sup>1</sup> He nevertheless insisted upon the value of the evidence of His miracles for establishing certain parts of His doctrine. For example, in John 10:37 f., Jesus states that, if He is doing the works of His Father, the leaders of Israel should believe His works, although they do not believe Him. His works would be evidence for the fact that the Father was in Him and He in the Father. The healing of the blind young man had provoked this discussion. No doubt Jesus here also appeals to that miracle as proof that His claim that the Father was operative in His ministry was true.

The Savior not only looked upon His own miracles as a

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<sup>1</sup>However, in John 2:19, Jesus replies to the demand for a sign with an appeal to His future resurrection. He felt, no doubt, that He must give an answer here to defend His divine authority. On the other hand, in Matthew 21:27, He refuses to reveal by what authority He did certain forceful actions. We might suggest that Mark, in recording the message of Peter, implies an appeal to the miracles of Jesus to prove that He is the Son of God. Everything related concerning the acts of Jesus adds to the whole effect of "this Summary of events connected with the 'Message of Salvation,' namely, the proof that that Jesus is the Son of God (1:1)." James A. Kleist, The Gospel of Saint Mark: Presented In Greek Thought-Units And Sense-Lines With A Commentary (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1936), p. 112.



testimony to His doctrine, but He also gave a significant promise to the apostles in connection with Mark 16:17.

Jesus gave these men the command to preach the Gospel in all the world and also to baptize. The promise which Jesus attached to this command was that signs and wonders would follow the apostles as they were engaged in this preaching. We feel that Jesus here guaranteed that the apostles would be accompanied by signs as they were performing the main task of preaching the Gospel. God does not send them out into their fields of labor unarmed; they will do miracles. This was chiefly a reassuring and comforting promise that Jesus gave in these words, but indirectly He tells the disciples that their message would be proved true by divine signs.<sup>2</sup> Jesus did not mean to suggest that their miracles would convert people, but implied that they were to serve as corroborating evidence for the apostolic message.

Mark then also records the fulfillment<sup>3</sup> of this promise in Mark 16:20: *ἐκεῖνοι δὲ ἐξελθόντες ἐκήρυξαν πανταχοῦ, τοῦ κυρίου συνερχομένου . . . τὸν λόγον βεβ. διὰ τ. ἐπ. ἡμερῶν*. As Luke refers to the matter in Acts 14:3, he uses the term *μαρτυρέω*, while Mark employs the word,

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<sup>2</sup>Jesus Himself realized, as we see from John 12:37 f., and 11:47, that His enemies rejected Him in spite of the evidence of miracles. One can understand, too, the reasons for the attacks which Jesus made on His opponents for their demand that He furnish signs, John 4:48; 10:26; Mark 8:11 f.

<sup>3</sup>We might add also that Jesus stated that He was the Son of God, the Coming One, by indicating the proof in His miracles, Matt. 11:2-4.



βεβαιῶσα, "confirm, prove its truth or divinity."<sup>4</sup>

Another scholar has commented briefly on this particular verse:

The signs which the Apostles work follow them: παρακολουθεῖς; they are also witnesses to the truth of their preaching: hence, επακολουθούντων, in its technical sense. See M. Vocabulary: "ratify:" Bauer, etc.<sup>5</sup>

From the examples supplied by Kleist from profane literature, the force of ἐπὶ in επακολουθούντων would indicate divine approval.

Furthermore, in Acts 14:3, too, we read that the Lord Himself expressed His approval of the apostolic message and doctrine by granting Paul and Barnabas power to perform signs and wonders at this time. Thus Luke here emphasized the fact that it was God Who corroborated the preaching of the apostles by permitting them to perform miracles. Luke referred particularly to the preaching activity of Paul and Barnabas in the synagogue at Iconium, where they experienced success in their contact with both the Jews and the Greeks.<sup>6</sup> As an example of one of these miracles, Luke records the miracle of the healing of the crippled man at Lystra, Acts

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<sup>4</sup>Joseph Henry Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm's Wilke's Clavis Novi Testamenti Translated and Revised and Enlarged (New York: American Book Company, 1889), p. 99.

<sup>5</sup>Kleist, op. cit., p. 232.

<sup>6</sup>William M. Ramsay, St. Paul The Traveller and the Roman Citizen (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1949), p. 115.



14:8. While considerable disorder followed this incident, the value of the miracle as a proof for the Pauline message was evident. One who has investigated both the narrative as well as the region in which the miracle was performed, has commented favorably on this matter:

The case could not be explained away; it was an incontestable proof of the direct Divine power working through Paul and guaranteeing his message to the Galatic province as of Divine origin. The sign has extreme importance in the author's eyes as a proof that Paul carried the Divine approval in his new departure in Galatia, and we can better understand its importance in his eyes if it were the first which he had to record on distinct evidence (p. 108); but he attributes it to no influence in turning the people to Christianity.<sup>7</sup>

Although the miracles of the apostles did not always persuade their hearers, these signs helped to confirm for themselves the facts which they proclaimed.

It is of interest to note that the apostle Paul also performed, at least in one instance, a rare miracle of judgment and discipline. As Paul meets the sorcerer Elymas, who tried to turn Sergius Paulus from the Gospel, he suddenly strikes the opponent with blindness, Acts 13:8-12. While the apostle does not seem to use this incident to prove a particular doctrine, it seems that Luke records the miracle for the purpose of emphasizing the divine approval behind the message of Paul. Significantly, then, Luke adds that the deputy, beholding the miracle, believed, for he was aston-

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid.



ished at the doctrine of the Lord.

In another situation, Paul actually appeals to a miracle of judgment, 2 Cor. 13:3-5. He hints that he could use the power of miracles to inflict something so that they could actually feel the divine power that is working in him. He does not say that he will do it, but he states that he has the power to do so, which would be a proof that he is an apostle of Christ and that his doctrine is divine. While the other appeals to miracles concern the signs and wonders performed in the past, this reference is to a potential miracle in the future:

They demanded that the Apostle should give some convincing sign that Christ was working in him. Christ ought to manifest His power in him. That made it necessary for St. Paul to show how severely Christ condemned such sins as theirs, when there was no repentance. This seems to point to the supernatural infliction of suffering. There is perhaps something of irony in this. "You want a proof that the power of Christ is in me. You shall have it, - in a form that will not please you." . . . Scepticism in the case of men who had these experiences was wilful scepticism; they did not wish to be convinced.<sup>8</sup>

We must bear in mind, however, that in all these appeals to miracles, the apostles emphasize God as the agent in them. This is clear from 2 Cor. 12:12, as Paul speaks of the apostolic signs having been worked out among the readers.

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<sup>8</sup> Alfred Plummer, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary On The Second Epistle Of St. Paul To The Corinthians," The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1915), p. 374.



The change to the passive is to be noted. He does not say that he wrought them, for he was only God's instrument. . . . He appeals to them as well-known facts. He assumes that Galatians, Corinthians, and Romans know quite well that miracles do happen, and that he has worked many in their presence.<sup>9</sup>

Rolston also reminds us of the fact that this appeal to miracles occurs in an undisputed epistle:

We have in an indisputed Epistle the claim of Paul to have wrought miracles. The power to work miracles was not necessarily a sign of an apostle. But it is put forward here as one of the signs to distinguish the true apostle from the false. The claim to be an apostle was confirmed by the power of God in working miracles through Paul. Those miracles were signs to the Corinthians. They were God's witness to the truth of God's claims.<sup>10</sup>

We also notice another incident, but in the ministry of Peter, in which the importance of a miracle is evident, in Acts 3:12. Preaching on Solomon's Porch, the apostle Peter denied that it was by their native power that he and John had healed the same beggar. On the contrary, he indicated that this was done through the name of Christ, that the man had been made well. This miracle, then, was of greatest significance here, for the apostles claimed to be the messengers of God and witnesses of the resurrection. Peter referred, therefore, to the present miracle as evidence that they were not laboring arbitrarily, but as the instruments

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 358 ff.

<sup>10</sup>Holmes Rolston, Consider Paul: Apostle of Jesus Christ (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1951), pp. 65 ff.



of God. It was this miracle which established this fact. To perform it, one had to possess a charismatic gift.

Although the apostle Paul understood the value of the miracles and the charisms for proving his Gospel message, he made a rather cautious, and, we might say, a qualified appeal to a phenomenon in 1 Cor. 14:21 f. Paul establishes his teaching by appealing to a divine sign. He mentions, too, the purpose which some phenomena have: to serve as a judgment on unbelief. Quoting from Is. 28:11 f., Paul states: "With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord. Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe not, but to them that believe."

(AV) Here the apostle reveals that the phenomenon of speaking in tongues, in which the Corinthians had prided themselves, is really to be a sign to the unbelievers. Paul offers this argument because the Corinthians were beginning to regard this gift of speaking in tongues more highly than the gift of prophecy. They valued the gift of speaking in tongues as a means of displaying themselves rather than of fostering edification.

It is not only when the apostles defend their doctrine that they appeal to miracles, but also when they argue for the propriety of their policies. Barnabas and Paul probably realized that they had convinced the brethren that their practice of accepting the Gentiles into the Church without



insisting upon circumcision and other conditions was right. They reminded the people that God had done wonders and miracles among these Gentiles, Acts 15:12. This, in addition to their previous testimony, would establish the fact that the policy followed by Paul and Barnabas was in accordance with the will of God.

Not only did the apostles point to their own miracles as evidence for their teachings, but they also appealed to the miracles of Jesus, Acts 2:22. This text contains the statement of Peter's sermon in which he proves that Jesus was the Messiah by reminding his hearers of the Savior's miracles: "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know." (AV) This appeal to the works of Jesus had an added force in this connection because these individuals themselves had witnessed the miracles of the Savior. This reference to the wonders performed by Jesus serve a twofold purpose here: it serves to verify the past teachings of Jesus and also furnishes the evidence for the message of Peter.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>For the sake of completeness, we might mention also an understatement by Paul in Rom. 15:18,19. He says that he will not dare to mention the miracles which God did not perform through him. He has preached the Gospel fully from Jerusalem to Illyricum, but he will not appeal to miracles beyond what God has done through him. This litotes suggests that Paul will, however, appeal to what God has wrought by means of his ministry in a miraculous way. This seems to imply that Paul employs this appeal hesitantly, only under



There is another appeal to miracles in Hebrews 2:4, in which the author reminds the Jewish Christians that the Christian religion is superior to any legalistic system, and that God has confirmed the message of Christ by numerous wonders and signs, works of power and the bestowal of the Holy Spirit according to His will. God, the inspired writer reminds them, has continually corroborated the message of salvation, confirmed to us by those who heard God. Thus the teachers of the divine message were supported by signs, wonders, and miracles. The importance of the miracles for the proof of the apostolic message is evident:

God authenticates His messenger by working through him works of power which are signs to those who hear him that his claims to be an apostle are true. . . . In 1 Cor. 12:28, the power to work miracles is listed as fourth among the gifts of the Spirit.<sup>12</sup>

Yet, as Rolston intimates, we cannot say that Paul builds his case for the Gospel on miracles alone. Nevertheless, it constitutes an essential part of his evidence that his doctrine is from God.<sup>13</sup>

In conclusion, we assert once more that an appeal to miracles does not constitute the chief argument of the apos-

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pressure of controversy and criticism. The humility of Paul almost moves him to pass over these miracles in silence.

<sup>12</sup>Rolston, op. cit., p. 68.

<sup>13</sup>We recall again how Jesus appealed to His own miracles and enumerated them for the benefit of John the Baptist and his disciples, Matt. 11:2 ff.



tolic writers. Nor is it the only argument which they offer. While the apostles used this special appeal for its apologetic and polemic value, they were aware of the fact that false prophets also rely on miracles, for their own purposes. In fact, St. Paul cautions against the appeal to lying signs and wonders which the Antichrist will make, 2 Thess. 2:9. No doubt, the apostles recalled also the warning of the Savior regarding the signs of the false Christs as we observe it in Matt. 24:24 and also in Mark 13:22. Moreover, they must have borne in mind also the remark about the futility of the appeal to miracles by the wicked on the last day, Matt. 7:22. As readers of the Old Testament Scriptures, too, the apostles had become aware of the appeal to false miracles through the warning of Moses, Deut. 13:5. The distinction, then, between true miracles and the lying signs was necessary for the apostles in establishing their doctrinal position.

Finally, we remember the significant fact that John the Baptist, although a messenger of God, did not appeal to any miracles, for he did not perform any. In fact, according to John 10:41, John performed no sign, but whatever he said was true. While it was the Baptist's role to serve and to preach without miracles, the apostolic writers mentioned these special signs as evidence that they were teaching the Word of truth. For the world of that day, these signs arrested attention in a manner that would facilitate the spread of



the Christian message. These miracles actually served to assist the apostles in making an impact upon a society characterized, on the one hand, by a sterile religious formalism, and a pagan religious vacuum on the other.

The Christian message, as presented by the writers of the New Testament, rests on the victory of Jesus over death. They could meet all opposition to the Gospel with the triumphant declaration: "Nevertheless, Jesus rose from the dead, and His teaching is true." This appeal to the resurrection of Christ was, therefore, a powerful weapon in the hands of the apostles. It was in fact more effective than any of the considerations that logic, reason, scientific facts, or philosophical axioms present.

The resurrection of Jesus, to be sure, stands in the foreground of apostolic preaching as one of the significant acts of God. Together with the establishment of our Lord, it proved to be the foundation of the Christian message. This is evident from the remarks of both Peter and Paul as preachers.

It was on the resurrection fact that the Church was built. It was the resurrection Gospel that the apostles preached. It was the experience of union with the risen Christ that made clear the mighty work of God that was done.<sup>1</sup>

We might also notice that, whenever the apostles refer

<sup>1</sup>James A. Stewart, *A Man Is Healed: The Little Example of St. Paul's Healing* (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, N.Y.), p. 210.



## CHAPTER X

### THE APPEAL TO THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

The Christian message, as presented by the writers of the New Testament, rests on the victory of Jesus over death. They could meet all opposition to the Gospel with the triumphant assertion: "Nevertheless, Jesus rose from the dead, and His doctrine is true." This appeal to the resurrection of Christ was, therefore, a powerful weapon in the hands of the apostles. It was in fact more effective than any of the considerations that logic, reason, common-sense, or metaphysics could present.

The resurrection of Jesus, to be sure, stands in the foreground of apostolic preaching as one of the significant acts of God. Together with the crucifixion of our Lord, it proved to be the foundation of the Christian message. This is evident from the remarks of both Peter and Paul in particular.

It was on the resurrection fact that the Church was built. It was the resurrection Gospel that the apostles preached. It was the experience of union with the risen Christ that made them the mighty men of God they were.<sup>1</sup>

We might also notice that, whenever the apostles refer

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<sup>1</sup>James S. Stewart, A Man In Christ: The Vital Elements of St. Paul's Religion (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, n.d.), p. 136.



to the resurrection of Christ as an argument for the Gospel of forgiveness, they usually trace the event of the resurrection to the direct act of God, as in 1 Cor. 6:14; 15:15; Gal. 1:1; and others.<sup>2</sup>

We also find that the appeal to the resurrection of Christ is one of the most conclusive and decisive arguments in the writings of the apostles. For example, in Rom. 1:4, the writer is not particularly refuting any opponent, but is suggesting an argument nevertheless, in somewhat of a condensed form. He says that Jesus was declared to be the Son of God in the act of being raised from the dead: "And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." (AV)<sup>3</sup> For this reason, scholars have called this appeal to the resurrection "the argumentum palmarium for the Divine Sonship of Christ."<sup>4</sup>

The emphasis which the apostles gave to the resurrection of Christ is evident in the Pentecost sermon of Peter, Acts 2:24-32. He points out first how the foreknowledge and coun-

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<sup>2</sup>George Milligan, St. Paul's Epistles To The Thessalonians: The Greek Text With Introduction And Notes (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1952), p. 15.

<sup>3</sup>Whether the writer says that Jesus rose, or that He raised Himself from the dead, or that God raised Him, does not alter the facts, for the Persons in the Godhead share in these works.

<sup>4</sup>Milligan, op. cit., p. 15.



sel of God planned the death of Jesus and the redemption of man. However, he also stressed the responsibility of the people for the slaying of the Savior. The apostle here neither attempted to rationalize after the event had passed, nor did he try to mitigate the evil so as to justify the action of the Jewish leaders. His concern was rather to establish the doctrine that Jesus was the Christ, the promised Messiah. In the middle portion of his address (verses 22 to 24), he says that God performed many acts in and through Jesus, for God set Jesus before men as the Christ. He did so by working miracles, wonders, and signs through the Savior. Moreover, the apostle explains, the one act by which God demonstrated that Jesus was the Christ was to raise Him from the dead. Thus Peter leads his hearers back to the prophecy of David, who foretold this act of God (verses 29-31), namely, that God would preserve the body of Jesus from decay and restore Him to life. Then, as the spokesman for the other apostles, Peter testifies that God actually did raise up Jesus, for they themselves were witnesses to this fact. The occasion for this appeal to the resurrection of Christ was the sudden phenomena of speaking in tongues. The present appeal to the resurrection of Jesus was to satisfy the bewildered as well as to silence the scoffers who were questioning the genuineness of these phenomena. Peter thus explained that the unusual incidents of the moment were the results of the exaltation of Christ, Who had given the dis-



ciples the promise of the outpouring of the Spirit. Then, in verse 36, the apostle sums up his arguments by stating that God had made this crucified Jesus both Lord and Christ. But the chief argument for the Messiahship of Jesus is that God raised Him up from the dead. This attention which Peter gave to the resurrection of Christ as the proof for his doctrine agrees with what Luke tells us of the early preaching in the Church, Acts 4:33. In view of this, the resurrection of Jesus has been called "the interpreting focus of the triumphant Lordship of God."<sup>5</sup>

Not only did the resurrection of Jesus prove that the apostolic message came from God, but it also established the teaching of Jesus Himself (which was the same as theirs), as we note from the following comments:

The fourth note in the Gospel music is repeated again and again in the preaching of the early church, never forgotten, never left out, always recognized, always emphasized, never taken for granted, always proclaimed. It is the fact of the rising again from the dead of our Lord Jesus. There is no preaching that does not include the announcement of this tremendous fact. The resurrection is the corroboration of all that Jesus had claimed in His life and teaching. . . . It became the trumpet note of apostolic preaching.<sup>6</sup>

As we survey the activity of the apostles, one is impressed again and again with the importance which they gave

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<sup>5</sup>Floyd F. Filson, "The New Testament Against Its Environment," Studies In Biblical Theology (Gateshead on Tyne, England: Northumberland Press, Limited, 1950), p. 23.

<sup>6</sup>Hugh Thomson Kerr, Preaching In The Early Church (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1942), pp. 37 f.



to the event of the resurrection of Christ. It was of such a nature that it changed their entire outlook, and, together with their experience on Pentecost, constituted the main cause of their new boldness and courage in their testimony. Another incident in which the resurrection of Christ figures rather prominently as an act of God is the healing of the lame beggar at the Gate Beautiful, Acts 3:6 ff. This miracle gave Peter an opportunity once more to appeal to the Lord's resurrection, as we see from verse 12. Denying that he and John had healed the man by their own native or personal ability, he interpreted the miracle as an act of God, for the name of Jesus, Whom God had raised up (verse 15), had restored the man to sound health. This emphasis which the apostles gave to the resurrection of Jesus reminds one of the statement of Athanasius concerning the name of Jesus as a proof for His resurrection. This apologist wrote in a similar appeal to the Easter Gospel as follows:

If He did not rise, but is still dead, how is it that He routs and persecutes and overthrows the false gods, whom unbelievers think to be alive, and the evil spirits whom they worship? For where Christ is named, idolatry is destroyed and the fraud of evil spirits exposed; indeed, no such spirit can endure that Name, but takes flight on sound of it. This is the work of One Who lives, not of one dead, more than that, it is the work of God.<sup>7</sup>

After the apostle has briefly explained the crucifixion as a

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<sup>7</sup> Athanasius, The Incarnation of the Word of God, translated from the Greek by a Religious of C. S. M. V. (New York: Macmillan and Company, 1946), pp. 60 f.



fulfillment of prophecy, he shows that God raised up Jesus first of all for the benefit of the Israelites, having sent Him to bless them with the remission of sins. This appeal to the act of God raising up Jesus was designed to convince the Jews that the apostolic Gospel was true.

In Acts 5:30 ff., moreover, Peter certifies, on the basis of the resurrection of Jesus, that the activity of the apostles was one from which they could not desist. It was a matter of obeying God rather than men, for their message rested on two verifying acts of God: the raising of Jesus from the dead and the exalting of Jesus by God to be Prince and Savior so that He might grant Israel repentance and remission of sins. Of these divine acts, he says, the apostles are witnesses. They are the events which prove that Jesus is both Savior and Lord.

Another address of Peter, in which he mentions the resurrection of Jesus again, probably does not constitute a fully developed argument, but merely approximates one, Acts 10:26 ff. It is not clear whether he is trying to establish his doctrine or whether he is merely explaining it. Here, indeed, the audience was receptive to the message, and, consequently, proof was not demanded. As a second point in this sermon, he recalls that God raised up Jesus on the third day. He asserts that the apostles were divinely appointed witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus. This appeal leads up to the doctrine that God also ordained Jesus to be



Judge of both living and dead. This reminds us of the way in which Paul offers proof in Acts 17:31, in his address on Mars' Hill, for the claim that Christ will judge the world. (Paul, it is true, does not identify the Savior in so many words, but refers to Him as "that man.") He appeals there also to that significant act of God: He raised Christ from the dead.

The meaning which the Easter Gospel had for Peter in his preaching was evident also in the sermons and addresses of Paul. For the man of Tarsus, however, there was a special interest in the appeal to the resurrection. It was a reflection of his encounter with the risen Savior on the Damascus Road. It was his meeting with the risen Savior and hearing His divine words that changed Paul's heart and mind.

All this points back to the startling truth which broke upon Paul in the hour of his conversion, that the new religion stood, not on any human credulity or invention, but on the very word and guarantee of God. . . . Jesus, he now knew, was alive, by the power of God. From this point right on to the end of his life, the resurrection was central in the apostle's thinking. . . . To Paul, the resurrection was a historic event of the past, but it was also much more: it was a present reality. . . . Not only has Jesus risen, Paul meant to say: He is alive - now! For I have seen Him, and I know.<sup>8</sup>

Thus Paul, too, became one of the bearers of the proclamation of the risen Lord.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Stewart, op. cit., pp. 135 ff.

<sup>9</sup>Friedrich Buechsel, Theologie des Neuen Testaments: Geschichte des Wortes Gottes im Neuen Testament (Gütersloh: Verlag G. Bertelsmann, 1935), p. 93.



The apostle expresses his zeal and faith especially in 1 Cor. 15, as he defends the resurrection of Jesus as an indisputable fact. He also considers the general resurrection and bases the certainty of the believer's resurrection on that of Jesus. In verses 12-19, he demonstrates that the two events cannot be separated. If one denies the resurrection of Christ, Paul says, one eliminates one's own resurrection. He heaps up one argument after the other to answer the objections of the errorists in Corinth, but his main appeal in establishing the future resurrection of the body, is to the resurrection of the Lord. The eschatology of Paul has its main basis in the story of Christ's victory over death.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, in Rom. 4:25, when Paul shows that Christ was raised for our justification, he proves that salvation is attained for the sinner. He does so by appealing again to the resurrection of Jesus.<sup>11</sup>

We cannot escape the observation that, in addition to these significant appeals to the resurrection of Christ for the purpose of establishing doctrines, the apostles appeal to that event in order to substantiate their teaching regard-

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<sup>10</sup>George Barker Stevens, The Pauline Theology: A Study Of The Origin And Correlation Of The Doctrinal Teachings Of Apostle Paul (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), p. 348.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 254 ff.



ing the sanctified life of the believer. While we cannot say that Paul draws up any special arguments in Romans 6, we can recognize there the consistent emphasis on the Easter Gospel. The new life of the Christian is possible since in baptism he has experienced in a spiritual way what Christ had experienced in a physical manner in His death, burial, and resurrection. In baptism, the Christian draws on the benefits of those events of Jesus' redemptive work. He dies with Christ to sin and rises up to live to Christ in righteousness. Paul is here not merely drawing an analogy between Christ and the Christian, but actually teaches what the power of the Lord's resurrection accomplishes.<sup>12</sup>

The apostle, in a similar way, calls attention to the fact that Jesus rose from the dead, when he instructs the Christians regarding their conduct in sexual matters in 1 Cor. 6:14. Here he argues against the sin of fornication by indicating that the believer's body is for the Lord. This he proves by reminding his readers that, as God raised up Jesus from the dead, thus He will also raise up the believers

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<sup>12</sup>Recently, scholars have commented on the fact that the apostle James, strangely enough, never makes an appeal to the resurrection of Christ. Cfr. Arthur Temple Cadoux, The Thought Of St. James (London: James Clarks and Company, 1944), p. 91. The reason for this may not be difficult to find, however. It is apparent that James probably did not have occasion for it. The fact that he does not appeal to it in no way implies that he was trying to make the Christian Gospel palatable to Jews or that he was a liberal-minded Christian. Probably no serious attacks had been made as yet on the resurrection of Christ from within the Church, which Gnostics later brought about.



by His almighty power. Since, then, both the resurrection of Christ and of the believers prove that they are members of His body, Christians cannot be given to fornication and become members of a harlot.

Far from being an incidental matter, the resurrection of Christ, then, was central in the apostolic theology. It was essential to their Christology as well as to their eschatology, and for their teaching on sanctification.



## CHAPTER XI

### THE APPEAL TO SIMPLE HISTORICAL FACTS

As we observe the various ways in which the writers of the New Testament present their material, it is interesting to note how they make use of even the simplest historical facts to lend support to their teachings. We here think of certain details which were common knowledge to the addressees of the Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament. The apostles select some of these known facts and use them as a basis for their specific doctrinal or practical emphasis. In this procedure, the writers assume that their readers are acquainted with these simple facts to which they appeal, even when the persons addressed may hesitate to apply these facts to present circumstances.

The apostle Paul points, for example, to a simple fact when he attacks the practice of Christians bringing their complaints against one another in the form of law suits into a heathen court, 1 Cor. 6:1 ff. He condemns these litigations as acts that go contrary to the Christian faith. To impress the Corinthians with the absurdity of these litigations, the apostle appeals to simple facts: Do ye not realize that the saints shall judge the world? If ye continue to do so, Paul says, as ye have done, suing one another, ye are going contrary to your status as the children of God. Argu-



ing here from the less to the greater, he appeals to a similar fact: Do you realize that we shall judge angels? How much more, then, Paul asserts, shall we be in a position to judge the affairs that pertain to this life.

In arguing that the body of the believer is sanctified and is not to be used for fornication, in 1 Cor. 6:14-20, the same apostle appeals to three fundamental facts which prove that the body of the Christian is holy. First of all, he calls attention to the fact that their bodies are members of Christ: "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid." (AV) Second, the apostle appeals to something which even the heathen recognize and know: "Know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body?" (AV) Third, he argues from the fact which is commonly established among Christians: "What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (AV) To these appeals there could be no objection, and their applicability in the present instance could not be questioned by the readers.<sup>1</sup>

Another significant example of this simpler type of ar-

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<sup>1</sup>Here we consider only those facts which were known to the readers. We omit those references to facts which were known only to the apostles themselves, as in 1 Cor. 16:8 f. and Acts 20:29.



gumentation is to be seen in the phrase, "as it is this day," in Matt. 28:15. The Gospel writer here explains that common argument against the resurrection of Jesus, namely, the saying which the elders urged the guards to disseminate: "His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept," Matt. 28:13. (AV) Matthew then relates how the guards were bribed and complied with the request to spread the reports. He adds: "And this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day." (AV) No doubt, the evangelist's purpose in calling attention to this misrepresentation as a current saying was to assure his readers that what he himself had stated regarding the resurrection of Jesus was nevertheless true. On the one hand, if we assume that the addressees were Jewish Christians, then the appeal of Matthew must have taken on added significance. If these readers were in any way tempted to lapse into Judaism, this appeal to the current saying, known to them, would be a powerful deterrent. On the other hand, it may also be Matthew's intention to show that his remarks about the Jewish saying regarding Jesus are not prejudiced, but are corroborated by that report about the body of Jesus. The characteristic mark of this saying revealed the attitude of the leaders who denied the reality of the resurrection:

Malice is always stupid - so in this instance also. The watch is directed to assert that they knew what was taking place during a profound slumber. But the leaders of the Jewish people are hardened in their hearts, and with this characteristic stroke, the evangelist bids



them adieu. Through their falsehoods, they have succeeded in depriving the people of the blessing in the resurrection of Jesus; for they have in advance branded the apostolic testimony bearing on this fundamental Christian truth as an invention.<sup>2</sup>

The same writer identifies for his readers also the current name: "the potter's field," which is mentioned in Matt. 27:8. He reminds them of the custom of calling it "the field of blood." He states: "Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day." (AV) While an appeal to a current name may have little bearing on proving a doctrine and may rather be more valuable for New Testament chronology,<sup>3</sup> it does aid one in finding proof in Matthew's account about Judas that the story of the traitor is true. The current practice of calling this place "field of blood" is evidence that Matthew has accurately reported what was done regarding the problem of the money (occasioned by the betrayal).<sup>4</sup>

Another important appeal by which the apostle seeks to win acceptance for an apostolic teaching (for the principle of Christian liberty for the Gentile converts to the Chris-

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<sup>2</sup>Joh. Ylvisaker, The Gospels (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1932), pp. 746 f.

<sup>3</sup>For instance, to establish the approximate date of the Gospel according to St. Matthew as being prior to the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem, for these sites could still be located and identified.

<sup>4</sup>John 21:23 contains a reference to a current saying as a misunderstanding of Jesus' prophecy. John usually corrects these misconceptions.



tian religion), is expressed in Acts 15:10. The occasion for this statement is the Council at Jerusalem, which deliberated over the dispute regarding the compulsory circumcision of Gentile Christians. Peter there offered the suggestion that the Gentile converts be relieved of the requirements of the ceremonial law. He reminded the brethren that the Holy Spirit had brought many Gentiles to faith by means of the Gospel. Inasmuch as God had sent the Spirit on the Gentiles as well as on them, the Jewish Christians, there was no difference between these two Christian groups, Peter declared. But the notion that no Gentile could be considered a child of God without becoming a Jewish proselyte first of all was a deep-seated conviction among the Christians at Jerusalem. The apostle, therefore, had recourse to an argument which appealed to a familiar fact: the fathers had been unable to comply with the ordinances of the ceremonial law. This was a fact which their knowledge of the history of Israel easily corroborated, as well as the complaints of the prophets, Mal. 3:7; 1:13; and others. What is interesting about Peter's argument is that this is the same point which Paul used to make him refrain from his inconsistent practice of shunning the Gentile converts only when the Judaizers were present. The form of Peter's argument emphasizes the difficulty of these ordinances:

νῦν οὖν τί περιτέτετε . . . ἐπι-  
 δεῖναι ζυγὸν ἐπὶ τὸν τραχήλον τῶν μαθητῶν, ὃν οὔτε  
 οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν οὔτε ἡμεῖς ἐσχίσκαμεν βαρύνουσαι.



11. 7. 2. .<sup>5</sup> This argument was accepted in both instances. It was undeniable, for it appealed to a familiar fact of their national history.<sup>6</sup>

When Paul, furthermore, states that he has brought the Corinthians a genuine Gospel, he appeals to the historical fact of the resurrection of Christ. He reminds them that this Gospel has saved them and by it they now stand. If they continue in it, they will attain eternal life. Paul then points out that, first of all, he had demonstrated to them how the Savior had died, and that He had risen on the third day. This Gospel by which the readers have been converted, Paul asserts, is true because the established fact of the Savior's resurrection indicates this.<sup>7</sup> For this the apostle gathers all possible witnesses of the resurrection. He enumerates the resurrection appearances of Jesus, emphasizes again and again that Christ is risen. This appeal to the fact of the resurrection, supported by the incidents of which

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<sup>5</sup>W. M. Ramsay, St. Paul The Traveller And The Roman Citizen (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1896), p. 162.

<sup>6</sup>As the Council's resolution indicates, the people concurred in the suggestion.

<sup>7</sup>Paul emphasizes the present reality rather than the mere past event of the resurrection: Christ lives. This is "the extensive present perfect of a completed state." Cfr. A. T. Robertson, A Grammar Of The Greek New Testament In The Light Of Recent Research (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, George H. Doran Company, 1923), p. 896.



James, Peter, the eleven, the five hundred, and Paul himself were witnesses, was intended to strengthen the Corinthians in their faith in the Gospel of Paul. They had been distracted by Gnostics and others who denied the resurrection of the body. The apostle, therefore, wishes to fortify them by reminding them of the fact of Christ's own resurrection. As he develops the theme further, we see that the apostle uses this event of Christ's resurrection as the proof for the doctrine of the believer's resurrection. The resurrection of Christ was a historical fact which was commemorated in the Church, accepted as true, and, therefore, Paul could use it to advantage in establishing the claim that his preaching was divine.

Furthermore, when Paul in Rom. 5:14 appeals to the known fact that people died between the time of Adam and Moses, even before the Mosaic legislation had been given. This is his proof that there was a fall into sin, even without the Law of Moses, which involved all men. This also supported Paul's thesis that the Law was added because of transgressions, not for justification.

Another significant appeal to a well known fact is to be found in Hebrews 10:2, as the author proves that the legalistic system had failed and that the Levitical sacrifices in particular had been ineffective. Their weakness was that they were unable to remove sin. This the author proves by pointing to the known practice of repeating the sacrifices



year after year.<sup>8</sup>

Although this type of argument was employed to a lesser extent than others, the apostolic writers referred to these simple historical and religious facts, thereby convincing others that their message presented everything with trustworthiness and accuracy.

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<sup>8</sup>Brooke Foss Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), p. 305.



## CHAPTER XII

### THE IMPLIED APPEAL TO RESEARCH

Let us suppose that we had read all the books of the Bible with the exception of the Gospel according to St. Luke. As we examine this Gospel, we soon detect that he argues in a manner unlike the prophets who would substantiate their proclamation with an appeal to "the word of the Lord" or to "the word that came from the Lord."<sup>1</sup> There is no Lucan utterance which states expressis verbis that, since he is inspired by God, his message is to be accepted, nor would this be always necessary. But, of course, this does not mean that we doubt that he was inspired. His whole outlook is one of reverence for the truths of God.<sup>2</sup> Luke, in other words, never denies the fact that he is writing under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Our point here is that he never appeals to this in order to prove his account true. The very confident manner in which he goes about telling the story of Jesus agrees with the fact that he was divinely inspired, even when it is not specifically stated.<sup>3</sup> This con-

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<sup>1</sup>Cfr. Jer. 7:1; 11:1.

<sup>2</sup>We cannot imagine that Luke, who in 24:32.45 recorded statements about the reliability and power of Scripture in its fulfillment, did not assume that he himself was inspired.

<sup>3</sup>Cfr. Gal. 2:2; 2 Cor. 12:1 ff.; Acts 22:6 ff.; 26:19.



confidence of the author remains undiminished to the very end of the narratives of the life and ministry of Jesus.

In his preface Luke expressly declares that he himself guarantees the truth of the Gospel narrative. It is, indeed, the unique characteristic of the Christian religion that it is based on definite historical facts and not on speculations or theories. . . . It is important to note that, although Luke is an inspired Biblical writer, he makes it quite clear in his preface that he had made use of all available human means and methods so as to present an exact and well-arranged account of the occurrences. The men called by the Lord to write the Bible were not used by Him as mere automatons. He selected persons who, through their natural, God-given gifts and training, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, were suited to their special task.<sup>4</sup>

Neither do we find any Lucan argument that approaches the type which is characteristic of Paul, who appealed to divine visions and revelations. Furthermore, Luke never refers to himself as the other writers of the New Testament did, employing the special terms, "servant of Christ," or, "apostle of Christ."<sup>5</sup>

Instead of stating his case in an obvious manner, St. Luke points to some of his previous activities and implies that he has been engaged in research. By stating that he has carried on investigations about the Gospel story, he is giving a self-testimony of an unusual type. Although his manner is indirect, he reveals sufficient evidence to show

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<sup>4</sup>Norval Geldenhuys, "Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke," The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), pp. 17 ff.

<sup>5</sup>Rom. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Tit. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:1; 2 Tim. 1:1.



that he has had a personal interest in gathering these materials to tell the story of Christ in a convincing way. It is to this thorough inquiry that he appeals in order to demonstrate to Theophilus and other readers that his teaching is true. He urges the acceptance of his message on the basis of his own investigations and findings.

Before we enter upon a discussion of Luke's method of appeal, we ought to state that it is unparalleled in the New Testament. Moreover, it is only once that Luke himself makes use of this argument in Luke 1:1-4. We cite the words of the Prologue:

Many writers have undertaken to compose accounts of the movement which has developed among us, just as the original eyewitnesses who became teachers of the message have handed it down to us. For that reason, Theophilus, and because I have investigated it all carefully from the beginning, I have determined to write a connected account of it for Your Excellency, so that you may be reliably informed about the things you have been taught.<sup>6</sup> (American Translation)

Here we have a kind of appeal that comes only in a preliminary way before his treatment of the life and ministry of Jesus. Perhaps the "we" sections in Acts (16:10-40; 20:6-28:31), likewise could be put into this category. Indirectly they constitute an appeal to what Luke experienced and observed.

If we inquire into the personal qualifications of Luke

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<sup>6</sup>Edgar J. Goodspeed, The Goodspeed Parallel New Testament (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1943), pp. 128 r.



for this task, we are impressed with his prestige and ability. He was known as a physician who enjoyed the warm friendship of the apostle Paul. He knew how to proceed with researches of a scholarly nature. As a physician, Luke could proceed with the investigation of the facts of the life and ministry of Jesus, for he had been trained in the art of diagnosis and analysis.

A civilization that could produce an Aristotle and a Hippocrates was not without a very real tradition of patient investigation, collection and co-ordination of facts, keen and practised habit of observation, capability of weighing evidence, and that power of intuition which is, after all, one of the scientist's most valuable assets in all ages.<sup>7</sup>

It is evident that he had a background and a discipline which qualified him for this undertaking.

He has the physician's skill that will stand him in good stead as he dissects the data before him. He has traced the story of Jesus from its origin with historical insight and balanced judgment.<sup>8</sup>

Some scholars feel that Luke means to say that the efforts of his predecessors have actually proved to be a stimulus that moved him to write the story of Jesus.<sup>9</sup> We may grant this, without excluding the fact that the Holy Spirit gave him the impulse to write.

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<sup>7</sup>Lonsdale Ragg, "St. Luke," Westminster Commentaries (London: Methuen and Company, Limited, 1922), p. xxxiv.

<sup>8</sup>A. T. Robertson, Luke the Historian In the Light of Research (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1920), pp. 52 f.

<sup>9</sup>The term *ἐπιχειρησιν* implies neither success nor failure.



To what particular sources of information might Luke appeal here? He must have examined both oral and written sources before writing the Gospel narrative. We admit, of course, that he does not specify whether these were oral or written sources.<sup>10</sup> It is possible that he had access to at least two authoritative documents, the Gospel of Matthew and that of Mark, for he mentions what others have done. No doubt, these written Gospels were being circulated at this time, in addition to the current oral tradition.<sup>11</sup> There must have been many minor writings which now have disappeared.

There was another way in which Luke received information for his Gospel, and this he includes in his appeal to personal research and proceeds to use it for his convincing testimony to Jesus. In addition to his possession of various documents, Luke, through his professional contacts, moved in a circle of prominent Christians who could furnish valuable information. In this way, he could compensate for the fact that he was a Greek, that is, a non-Jew, and that he was not one of the Twelve. Because of the persecution of the Chris-

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<sup>10</sup>Some suggest that Luke relied on the readers' memories, cfr. G. Mackinlay, Recent Discoveries in St. Luke's Writings (London: Marshall Brothers, Limited, 1921), pp. 49 ff.; also Robertson, op. cit., pp. 44 f.

<sup>11</sup>The liberal point of view is seen in E. W. Lummis, How Luke Was Written (Cambridge: University Press, 1915), p. vii.



tians by Herod, there may have been many refugees from Judea who found shelter at Antioch in Syria.<sup>12</sup> We can visualize how Luke interviewed some of the Christians there and perhaps also in Caesarea. It is possible that many of the original five hundred brethren were still living there, in exile.<sup>13</sup> Since Luke at the conclusion of Paul's third missionary expedition went with the apostle to Jerusalem, he must have had contacts with the original group of Christians there, too. Thus he could gather the reminiscences which "those of the Way" had of Jesus. He could make his account stand on sound proof and easily substantiate his Gospel story.<sup>14</sup> It is not amiss that some scholars point to the possibility that, as a resident of Syria, he also was a refugee in Antioch.<sup>15</sup>

But it is evident also that Luke presents the case for

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<sup>12</sup>We think here of the five hundred witnesses of Christ's resurrection mentioned in 1 Cor. 15:6.

<sup>13</sup>If Luke was a native of Antioch, as Harnack suggests, he could have gained a detailed body of information about Jesus. Cfr. Adolf Harnack, Luke the Physician, translated from the German by J. R. Wilkinson (London: William and Norgate, 1907), pp. 20 ff.

<sup>14</sup>Others suggest that Luke came from Cyrene. He may, in fact, have been one of the Christians who fled from Jerusalem during the persecution that followed Stephen's death, and who took the Gospel to Antioch.

<sup>15</sup>That Paul and Luke shared many experiences is seen, as we have noted, from the "we" sections in Acts. We can, moreover, surmise that Luke also questioned Peter, whom he must have met in Syrian Antioch.



the Christian faith as an associate and companion of the apostle Paul. He could easily vouch for his message as an associate of the apostle on those famous missionary journeys. As he traveled on the ships across the Mediterranean, or sat with Paul in prison or sought his counsel, he gained much insight into the facts of the Christian religion. He could, therefore, claim to be an authority on the doctrine of Christ. He could tell Theophilus that he had investigated this movement sufficiently to give him a reliable account of the life of Jesus and prove that his Gospel came from God.<sup>16</sup> The persons whom Luke consulted and must have interviewed in order to gain this information he describes by the terms, *αὐτόπται* and *ὑπηρέται*. Since Luke connects these two nouns with *καί*, he evidently conceives of these individuals as comprising one class. Chief of them were the apostles who had been eyewitnesses and servants of the Word from the beginning.<sup>17</sup> Among the people whom Luke consulted in order to make the basis of his argument all the more sound, there must have been James of Jerusalem, the brother of our Lord.<sup>18</sup> Probably also Mary, the mother of Jesus, was still living and supplied Luke with facts from the things which she had kept

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<sup>16</sup>N. B. Stonehouse, The Witness of Luke to Christ (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), p. 29.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Acts 21:28.



in mind.<sup>19</sup> All this agrees with the statements of Luke regarding his careful procedure in gathering the necessary data for his narrative. Later, then, he argued for the genuineness of his Gospel on the basis of the thoroughness of his researches.

It is also very probable that Luke acquainted himself with the Gospel story in the process of his active missionary work. He was not merely a traveling companion of Paul and his personal physician, but his co-worker as well.<sup>20</sup> Of these witnesses we may say:

They not only had personal experience, but they had also practical experience of the power of the preached Word on human lives. Many of them had followed Christ from the start and were thus able to speak with authority.<sup>21</sup>

What Luke proceeded to prove by appealing to his own investigations of the Gospel story was that Jesus is the Savior of the world. As a Gentile Christian writing to another Gentile Christian, Luke sets out to prove the universality of this Gospel and of the salvation prepared by Jesus Christ:

St. Luke writes absolutely without bias; or, rather, he is biased in one direction only - his one object is to prove that our Lord is the Divine Savior, and to show

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<sup>19</sup>Cfr. Luke 2:19.51; also 2:34.

<sup>20</sup>Acts 16:10.13. Cfr. Harnack, op. cit., pp. 20 ff., who includes the possible suggestion that Luke also did missionary work as a lay worker.

<sup>21</sup>Robertson, op. cit., p. 48.



forth His saving power in His history and in the working of His Spirit (in the mission of the apostles among the Gentiles, in contrast to the stubborn Jews).<sup>22</sup>

We have been assuming that Luke implies that he appeals to researches he has made concerning the main facts of the life and ministry of Jesus. While the majority of scholars until recent times have held that Luke does refer to researches in arguing for the Christian Gospel, a few object to this interpretation of Luke's method. Cadbury, for example, urges against modernizing the labors of St. Luke to such an extent as to regard them as real research. He analyzes the preface to Luke's Gospel and says:

Its mere presence in this work is significant, while its contents come as near as we get to an expression of the author's own self-consciousness. As a recent writer says, it shows "that personal note, which indicates a certain freedom and plasticity of thought on the part of the individual writer in relation to the traditional material, which achieves its finest result in the Fourth Gospel." It is important, therefore, to know just how much that preface claims. Many too modern and definite claims have been read into it.<sup>23</sup>

While no cautious scholar would say that Luke's method was modern, there is every evidence that there was actual research. Surely, Luke speaks of the eyewitnesses whom he consulted. Furthermore, we rather doubt that Luke was altogether independent, as the passages containing materials com-

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<sup>22</sup>Harnack, op. cit., p. 165.

<sup>23</sup>Henry J. Cadbury, The Making of Luke-Acts (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927), p. 345; quotation is from R. H. Strachan, The Fourth Evangelist: Dramatist or Historian? (N.p., 1925), p. 68.



mon to all three Synoptic writers indicate. We grant, on the other hand, that, in some passages, Luke does manifest a degree of independence.<sup>24</sup> Yet, it is more his interest to align himself with the other witnesses rather than to proceed altogether on his own course.<sup>25</sup> The problem, however, also concerns the proper interpretation and rendering of the term, *παρηκολούθηκε*, namely, as "having traced the course." On this matter Cadbury says:

The real meaning of this clause seems to me quite different. What the author wishes to say is that he personally for the later part of his narrative has been in intimate touch with or even an eyewitness of all things. Thus *παρηκολούθηκε* claims something better than research, namely, first-hand or contemporary knowledge, and *ἀναδεν* carries back not from the ministry of John to Luke's birth stories, but from the time of writing back over a considerable period of the author's own association with the movement that he is describing. The sequel rather than the prelude to the gospel constitutes Luke's own special contribution. It distinguishes his work from the earlier records based on the tradition of "those who had been from the first eyewitnesses and ministers of the word." As already suggested, Luke like other writers of his time is the continuator of older evangelists, adding to his revision of their records later chapters out of his own more recent experience. It is to this phase of his work that I believe the general preface refers, as we should expect it to do.<sup>26</sup>

In differing with Cadbury, on the other hand, Stonehouse comments:

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<sup>24</sup>For instance, in his account of the Emmaus disciples, 24:13 ff.

<sup>25</sup>Luke implies that he wishes to conform to the facts shared by "the many."

<sup>26</sup>Cadbury, op. cit., p. 347.



Though Cadbury has a point in protesting against certain modernizing interpretations which apparently conceive of Luke engaging in research after a modern manner, we cannot agree that he does justice to what Luke actually says.<sup>27</sup>

We would, too, agree with Stonehouse, but also add that Cadbury seemingly overlooks the fact that Luke differentiates between the eyewitnesses and himself.<sup>28</sup> This is evident in his contrast between the *πολλοι* and *καμολ*.

Moreover, as Cadbury reconstructs the Prologue to agree with his point of view, he has to prove that *ἐκ πρώτης* should not be taken in the sense of "from the beginning." Stonehouse indicates that Cadbury's rendering weakens the term to mean: "a long time back."<sup>29</sup> The latter had taken the sentence in this sense: "Since I had been now for a long time back in immediate touch with everything circumstantially."<sup>30</sup> Stonehouse offers the second suggestion that Cadbury's interpretation is not acceptable:

Cadbury seeks to meet this difficulty by translating the verb "circumstantially." However, such an adverb would not so much qualify his association with the course of events as his qualification to write because of his contacts. Cadbury, in commenting on the meaning of the adverb, insists that it refers to "explicitness of information." He fails, however, to observe that explicitness of information could be only the result of participation in certain events, and that it

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>30</sup> Cadbury, op. cit., p. 347.



could hardly characterize participation in them. In other words, if due weight is given to this adverb, it transports us from the sphere of mere association in certain events to that of evaluation and critical judgment with regard to them.<sup>31</sup>

Likewise, too, we reject what Cadbury offers as an argument for his view in connection with the term "us." It has to do with the phrase, "fulfilled among us." Here the term "us" is by no means identical with the term "we" in the Book of Acts. Stonehouse equates "us" with the Christian community,<sup>32</sup> but Cadbury has the burden of proof to show that "us" cannot refer to the body of Christians. Neither has Cadbury proved the supposition that Luke used the rhetorical device of regarding himself, imaginatively, as an eyewitness. This theory that the device had become common in Luke's day is not in the least established, as Stonehouse reminds us.<sup>33</sup> Cadbury, to be sure, seems to look at the Prologue as introductory to both Luke's Gospel and to the Book of Acts, and, as a consequence, would then regard the expression, "things commonly reported among us," as also including the history of the early Church. This is a conjecture which assumes too much. With these considerations alone, it should become evident that Luke did make an appeal to research. However, to make the view more secure that Luke did refer to some personal

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<sup>31</sup>Stonehouse, op. cit., p. 37.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., pp. 38 f.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 39.



investigations, we now turn to a discussion of the meaning of the term, παρακολουθεῖν.

The only lexicon which seems to favor the view of Cadbury is that of Moulton and Milligan. Regarding the term, παρακολουθεῖν, it lists the following information:

This important verb is used with various nuances of meaning which are closely related, and raise some interesting points of N. T. interpretation.

1) "accompany," "follow closely," or: "result," as may be illustrated by PSI, III, 168:24, where it is stated that, owing to the breaking down of a dyke: οὐ κατὰ μικρὸν ἐλάττανεν παρακολουθεῖν τοὺς βασιλικούς

2) In Lk 1, 3 the word is often understood as pointing to the evangelist's careful research into the facts he describes. And for this meaning we thought that we had found a good ex. in P Par 46, 19 (UPZ i. p. 338) (B. C. 192) where Apollonius appeals to his brother Ptolemaeus to examine personally into the grievance against a third party, νομίζω γὰρ μάλιστα τῶν ἄλλων παρακολουθεῖν γὰρ ἐπεὶ τῇ ἐλπίδι πικρότερον προέβηκεν ἡ ἐξουσία αὐτῶν.

"for I think that you have above all others when you have investigated the truth will deal more severely with him." But Cadbury in an elaborate article (Exp VIII, xxiv, p. 406), to which we are very much indebted, points out that "Apollonius is not appealing for investigation, but is asking Ptolemaeus to summon the offending person to trial," adding that he will summon no other than Ptolemaeus as witness, seeing that of all concerned he is most "cognizant of the truth of the case." The verb, that is, "refers not to future inquiry but to first-hand knowledge," a sense which, as Cadbury points out, may be further illustrated by such passages as ὅπως οὖν παρακολουθῶν καὶ ἐν πρὸς ταῦτα ἐξαγαγῶς τοὺς λόγους γέγραφα σοι . . . Cfr. M. Anton, iii. 1., where we

are exhorted to "press forward," διὰ τὴν ἐννόησιν τῶν πραγμάτων καὶ τὴν παρακολουθεῖν προ-ὁπολιγῶν. "because our insight into facts and our close touch of them is gradually ceasing even before we die." (Haines) . . . In view then of these passages we seem to be justified in understanding that Luke comes before us in his Preface not as "one having investigated" all his facts afresh, but as one "having familiarity" with them, that his witness is practically



contemporary witness.<sup>34</sup>

Our problem, then, is to determine whether we are to construe the appeal of Luke in his Prologue, 1:3, as the report of an eyewitness (Luke himself), or as the result of his activity as an investigator of the events of Jesus' ministry. As we have seen, it has been claimed that here we have no basis for assuming that *παρὰκολουθεῖν* implies that Luke appeals to researches made regarding the life and the ministry of our Lord. First of all, we determine, with the aid of lexicons, whether or not we can allow for a derived meaning of the term, *παρὰκολουθεῖν*, in the sense of "investigate, to carry on research." In a German lexicon, though not of recent date, we find the derived meaning given as the second definition of the word, rendered, "begleiten," which means "to accompany." This is said to have come from the Stoic usage, too, and from Theophrastus, "mit den Gedanken folgen" . . . .<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, another lexicon traces the history of the term showing that the word had a derived meaning quite early in literature, suggesting the connotation of "investigate." We cite the following:

- I. "Follow beside, to follow or attend closely, dog one's steps." II. In various relations, partly physical,

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<sup>34</sup>James H. Moulton and George Milligan, The Vocabulary Of The New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949), pp. 485 f.

<sup>35</sup>Frank Passow, Handwoerterbuch der Griechischen Sprache (Leipzig: F. C. W. Vogel, 1852), p. 87.



partly mental: "follow closely, attend minutely to, of a physician," π. νογήμεκεν, Plato, Rep. 406 B. Also: π. ἀπικε [τοὺς πονηρεύμας]; "trace accurately all his knaveries," Demosthenes, 423. 24; so, π. τοὺς πρόγμασιν ἐξ ἑσθλῆς . . . Id. 285. 21; π. χρόνους: to follow all the times and dates, Nicom. Εὐθείδ. . . . I. 20, cfr. Ev. Luc. I, 3; Demad. 178. 32. Then, too, the term is applied to an audience: προέχειν νοῦν καὶ παρ. εὐμαρῶς . . . Aeschines, 16. 9; generally: "to follow with the mind, understand." 36

Another, but more prominent lexicon, not only lists the primary and the derived meanings, but also includes the quotation from Cadbury's dissenting opinion regarding the term:

H. J. Cadbury zieht unter Berufung auf P. Par. 46, 19 u. a. Stellen die Bedeutung "genau vertraut sein" vor: Exp. 8. Ser. 24, 406. Vgl. Comm. on the Preface of Luke, Appendix C: The Beginnings of Christianity, ed. Jackson and Lake, II, 1922, 489 ff., J. Ropes, J Th St. XXV, 1923, 67-71. G. H. Whitaker, Exp. 8, Ser. 11 8 (1920). F. H. Colson: J Th St, XXIV, Nr. 95, 1923.37

Thus, according to the history of the term itself, it would appear that the derived meaning of "investigate," is not altogether unusual. The lexicons, with the exception of Moulton and Milligan, seem to support the view that Luke carried on a type of research. Thus also Thayer:

To follow up so as to attain the knowledge of it, i. e., to understand (Cfr. our "follow a matter up," trace its course, investigate, πρὸς . . . πρόγμασιν, Lk. 1:3. Very often so in Greek authors, as Demosthenes,

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<sup>36</sup>George Liddel and Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon (Eighth edition; New York: American Book Company, 1897), p. 1132.

<sup>37</sup>Walter Bauer and Erwin Preuschen, Griechisch-Deutsches Woerterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der uebrigen urchristlichen Literatur (Gieszen: Verlag von Alfred Toepelman, 1928), p. 988.



pro. cor. c. 53.38

Perhaps judging from the recent studies of lexicographers like Moulton and Milligan, who settle many an issue about philology on the basis of findings in the papyri, it would seem as if the case for our view becomes rather weak. Aside from the fact that not all questions regarding the meaning of this word can be settled by the papyri alone, but must also be viewed from the usage in the classics, we have additional means of solution in the context. Here the history of interpretation agrees that the connection in which Luke uttered this appeal calls for the view that he had made researches into the matter, and that this is suggested by the term, *παρὰκολουθήσας* :

This is his second reason for writing, making the argument a fortiori. He has had special advantages and qualifications; and therefore what was allowed to others may be still more allowed to him. These qualifications are fourfold, and are told off with precision. In the literal sense of "following a person closely so as to be always beside him," *παρὰκολουθεῖν* does not occur in the N. T. Here it does not mean that Luke was contemporaneous with events, but that he had brought himself abreast of them by careful investigation. Comp. the famous passage in Dem. de Cor. cap. liii. p. 285 (344), *παρὰκολουθήσας τοῖς πράγμασι ἐξ ἀρχῆς* .39

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<sup>38</sup> Joseph Henry Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon Of The New Testament: Being Grimm's Wilke's Clavis Novi Testamenti: Translated and Revised and Enlarged (New York: American Book Company, 1889), p. 484.

<sup>39</sup> Alfred Plummer, "The Gospel According to St. Luke," The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), p. 4.



Another scholar takes a similar view of the term, in a manner that supports the contention that Luke actually did carry on research:

The verb παρακολουθεῖν, to follow step by step, is not used here in the literal sense; this sense would require παρῶν to be taken as a masculine: all the apostles, and thus would lead to an egregiously false idea; the author could not have accompanied all the apostles! The verb, therefore, is to be taken in the figurative sense which it frequently has in the classics: to study point by point; thus, Demosth. de corona, 53: παρακολουθεῖν καὶ τοῖς πράγμασιν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς. Comp. 2 Tim. 3:10, where we see the transition from the purely literal to the figurative meaning.<sup>40</sup>

A very recent work also takes this view: Luke has "traced the course of everything accurately from the first."<sup>41</sup> Then, too, an older, but prominent commentary interprets the term in the same way:

Bezeichnet nicht die Anwesenheit des Luk. auf dem Schauplatze der Geschichte (Hug), sondern steht vom geistigen Nachgehen, nachforschen, wodurch man zur Erkenntnis der Sache gelangt.<sup>42</sup>

While this lengthy exploration of the term, παρακολουθεῖν, reveals more evidence for Cadbury's view, at least

<sup>40</sup>F. Godet, A Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1880), p. 37.

<sup>41</sup>F. F. Bruce, The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary (London: Tyndale Press, 1951), p. 15.

<sup>42</sup>Bernhard Weiss and Johannes Weiss, "Kritisch-Exegetisches Handbuch ueber die Evangelien des Markus und Lukas," Kritisch-Exegetischer Kommentar ueber das Neue Testament, edited by Heinrich A. W. Meyer (Seventh edition; Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht's Verlag, 1885), I, Part II, 265.



as far as the lexicographers are concerned, we bear in mind that the apostolic writers often use terms in profane literature (hapaxlegomena). It would, moreover, be placing a strange stricture on the sacred writers to insist that they cannot employ a word in an altogether new way. Even if there were no parallels in profane literature for the derived meaning of παρακολουθεῖν, that is, "investigate," at least two considerations in the text itself support our point of view that Luke did carry on research. First, in reply to Cadbury, the adverb ἀκριβῶς would be rather pointless if Luke were an eyewitness. Second, if πάλιν is to be taken as a masculine, it cannot be established that Luke accompanied all eyewitnesses, or that he was present at these events. It is not clear that πάλιν refers to events in the history of the Church alone, that is, to the incidents after Christ's ascension in which Luke was a participant.

While not particularly pertinent to our present purpose, we may state that Luke also makes good his claim that he has investigated the Gospel story thoroughly. He manifests a capability of giving a trustworthy account of the incidents of the Savior's ministry. The purpose of Luke, as we notice, was to write an orderly account of these events, καθεξῆς. If doubts have been raised about Luke as an historian, it nevertheless is clear that his appeal to past researches rests on firm ground. We must also bear in mind that Luke never intended to keep the chronological order, and, in fact,



the closer investigation of the term, *κατάξῆς*, seems to give a different view of this matter:

What kind of "order" is it? He does not say it is chronological order, though one naturally thinks of that. Papias states that Mark's Gospel was not "in order," but he employs a different word, which suggests military order, *κατάξῆς*. Luke's word occurs in Acts 11:4 concerning Peter's discourse in Jerusalem about the events in Caesarea which Blass interprets to be a full recital without important omissions, a complete series rather than chronological sequence.<sup>43</sup>

If the term, *κατάξῆς*, is regarded as "orderly procedure," then there is not much difficulty in realizing that the appeal of Luke is sound, and that he is setting out to prove his Gospel by directing attention to his investigations.

The accuracy of this writer is taken into account by modern scholars:

Enough has been discovered to test Luke's accuracy in crucial and important points, in the very points where he has been attacked. Meanwhile, we shall assume that Luke has made a careful use of his material and is entitled to make his confident claim to Theophilus. He aims to give a record of the truth in both Gospel and Acts.<sup>44</sup>

In the initial appeal of Luke to his investigations, therefore, by which he endeavored to impress Theophilus with the authoritativeness of his Gospel, we feel there is a claim which even further research long after Luke will corrobo-

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<sup>43</sup>Robertson, op. cit., p. 53.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 56.



rate.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>45</sup>We may cite problems here which have been solved in a manner that does credit to Luke's historical accuracy. We mention this because we wish to establish the fact that Luke's appeal was not a weak, but a convincing argument. Among the problems of chronology which have been settled so that Luke has been vindicated, are: the chronology of Quirinius, the proconsulship of Gallio in Acts, and the chronology of John the Baptist. We maintain, therefore, that Luke's implied appeal to personal researches in the life of our Lord was not a bluff, but can stand under attack without serious injury.



## CHAPTER XIII

### THE APPEAL TO AN EXISTING CUSTOM

One of the most unusual arguments which we find in the New Testament is that which makes an appeal to a current custom. In 1 Cor. 11:16, the apostle deals with a practical matter, in which he once mentions a prevailing habit in the churches. It was the question as to whether women were permitted to come unveiled into divine worship that Paul wishes to settle here. In addition to arguing from nature and also from Scripture itself regarding the superiority of the husband to the wife, the apostle offers a practical argument, in conclusion, saying: "But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God." (AV) He asserts that, even if some may wish to permit women to come unveiled into the sacred meetings, it would not agree with the general church practice, that is, the existing custom. Instead of relying on his own apostolic authority here, Paul supports his position by appealing that the churches have no custom which would allow women to appear unveiled.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Probably this involves an Oriental, rather than a strictly religious custom. Paul does not make the rule binding on future generations. He is simply applying the usual rule of church decorum or custom to this specific case. We note that, in Acts 21:20 ff., he observes a Jewish custom in an effort to satisfy the Jews, although he failed to convince them. It was a kind of symbolical action, by which he was endeavoring to prove that he was conservative.



We also find frequent references to Jewish customs in the Johannine Gospel, but it is rather doubtful that the writer meant to prove any particular teaching thereby. For instance, as John relates the story of the entombment of Jesus, he mentions how they took the body of Jesus and wound it in the embalming linen together with spices, adding: "as the manner of the Jews is to bury." (AV) It is possible that, as John's readers were continually disturbed by teachers who denied the reality of the incarnation, he emphasizes these details about the body of Jesus all the more. While this conjecture may rest on a rather remote possibility, we can see that steady polemical slant in John's expressions and that he perhaps appeals to this burial custom of the Jews to demonstrate that an actual body was laid to rest. On the other hand, it is also possible that John mentions this detail in order to indicate that he records the fact accurately, namely, that Christ was entombed.<sup>2</sup>

Other interesting references to Jewish customs in the Passion account concern the Sabbath observances, in John 19:31.42. Although our evidence is not very great for the supposition that John is endeavoring to prove a doctrine with these references, the fact remains that he mentions the

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<sup>2</sup>We notice that John probably explains Jewish customs because his readers were not well acquainted with them. Other passages in which he calls attention to a special custom refer to the custom of purifying, John 2:16, and to the amnesty, 18:39.



"preparation" twice, and this alone helps to recommend him as a reliable historian. These allusions to Jewish customs might rather be considered as indirect and implied proofs for his Gospel story. Here John not merely explains the haste of the persons who laid the body of Jesus into the tomb, saying that it was "because of the preparation," but he is actually convincing the reader that his account is accurate in every detail. These references to the Jewish customs give us this impression. What John records agrees with what the prevailing custom was among the Jews: not to allow corpses on the cross on the Sabbath (verse 31), and not to complete the task of preparing a corpse in order to keep the Sabbath commandment of refraining from labor (verse 42).<sup>3</sup>

In spite of the fact that an appeal to a prevailing national or ecclesiastical custom does not occur very frequently in the writings of the New Testament, it is effective and tends to place the apostles into an advantageous position. It is a kind of argument which is not easily overthrown, and elicits favorable comment or assent on the part of those acquainted with these customs. While we must admit that this appeal is one of the minor arguments, it serves the purpose of underscoring the genuineness of apostolic teaching.

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<sup>3</sup>This obedience is emphasized in Luke 23:56b.



## CHAPTER XIV

### THE ARGUMENT OF ABSURDITY

One logical device which is used repeatedly in the New Testament is that which is known as the reductio ad absurdum. While this is admittedly an indirect form of argument, it is employed to the distinct advantage of the apostolic writers in setting forth their doctrinal position. It is described as follows:

A method found useful on certain occasions is the reduction of an opponent's argument to an absurdity by applying it to an extreme case. This is something more than mere refutation. It strengthens one's own side at the same time that it weakens the opposition.<sup>1</sup>

How this argument is used in order to establish a certain fact is seen in the following explanation:

The indirect proof or reductio ad absurdum (reduction to an absurdity) establishes a proposition by showing that its contradictory (denial) stands in opposition to a recognized truth or that it leads to an absurdity. This form of proof is most frequently employed in geometry, but it is not seldom the only method of vindicating the truth in other fields of argumentation.<sup>2</sup>

While perhaps this type of argument may often appear less forceful and even humorous to some, it is to be noted that no less a writer than Euclid used this method in demon-

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<sup>1</sup>Joseph V. Denney, Carson S. Duncan, and Frank McKinney, Argumentation And Debate (New York: The American Book Company, 1910), p. 91.

<sup>2</sup>Sylvester J. Hartman, A Textbook in Logic (New York: The American Book Company, 1936), pp. 285 f.



strating certain geometrical theorems.<sup>3</sup>

An outstanding example of this indirect method in the New Testament we have in the attempt of the Sadducees to show that the doctrine of the resurrection could not be true. We recall that this was one of the chief principles of this group in their opposition to the Pharisees. In their endeavor to demonstrate that this teaching would not be tenable, they pointed to the case of a woman who, according to the exceptional Levirate law, had successively married seven brothers. This discussion we find in Matt. 22:23 ff. It was a case which, whether it actually occurred or not, was at least conceivable. Now, then, they argued, if there were such a thing as the resurrection of the dead, it would mean that this woman would find herself the wife of seven husbands. To the Sadducees, this would seem to prove that such a situation would be so ridiculous as to need no further investigation of the doctrine. Hence, since the teaching of the resurrection would involve the arising of absurd situations, it could not be true. To be sure, the method which the Sadducees employed in an attempt to undermine the resurrection teaching of Christ (and of their chief opponents, the Pharisees, too), was clever and contained an appeal that could easily influence public opinion. The argument, however,

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<sup>3</sup>James A. Winans and William E. Utterback, Argumentation (New York: The Century Company, 1930), p. 219.



was not sound, inasmuch as it rested on a premise which was wrong. It assumed that in the world to come and in heaven after the resurrection the affairs of men would be like the life here on earth, and the present marital relations would also continue. This point of view they had not even proved. By demonstrating how false their premise really was, Jesus refuted the whole argument of the Sadducees.

Although it seems that the Savior, as well as the apostles, more frequently cite the reductio ad absurdum of the opponent than their own, we observe that Christ Himself relied upon this type of arguing. For instance, in the Sermon on the Mount, He presents His case in this fashion, as we notice in Luke 6:39. According to the context, we note that Jesus taught that we must be careful and charitable when we judge a brother. The present verse brings home the truth that, before one passes judgment on another person, one must be certain that one is not himself guilty of the same failing which is being condemned. Jesus says: "Can a blind person lead a blind one? Will they not both fall into a ditch?" In other words, Jesus asks: Why can a blind person not serve as a guide to one suffering as he is? The matter is simple. If he were to attempt to lead the other blind person on his way, the result would be tragic. Both of them would fall into a ditch. Now, Jesus concludes, or at least implies, what is true in a physical realm, is also true in the moral and spiritual sphere. The conclusion, therefore,



is: Do not judge or condemn the failings of your neighbor when you are guilty of the same wrongs. This example, given by the Savior, clearly illustrates what is known as a reductio ad absurdum. It is like a thief trying to judge another thief in a self-righteous manner. If he would set out on such a course, the result would be ridiculous indeed.<sup>4</sup>

In His controversies with certain groups, Jesus would use this argument to disprove the contentions of persons who refused to recognize His claims, although they admitted the evidence of His miracles. He does this in the episode which is recorded in Mark 3:23 ff., and also in Luke 11:18. We note, first of all, that the Jewish leaders did not deny the fact that a miracle had been performed. But it was their interpretation of it that Jesus refuted. They had constructed the theory that these evil spirits had been cast out through the instigation of Satan himself. According to their view, the Savior achieved this exorcism with the power and aid of Satan. But Jesus replies aptly that, if this were true, then Satan would be casting out Satan. He would then be destroying his own kingdom. Here again we have an instance of the Savior arguing against someone by reducing the opposite view to an absurdity. That this is the type of argument employed

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<sup>4</sup>We have an approach to an argument of absurdity in the irony of the writer in James 2:19: "You believe that God is one? You are doing well - the demons also believe and tremble."



here is reflected by the term *πῶς* : "*πῶς* : expressing impossibility, or absurdity, in the lively form of a rhetorical question."<sup>5</sup>

The apostle Paul also relied on this type of argument in Gal. 2:17. Here he takes issue with the notion that justification by faith without works will breed a corrupt life. He demonstrates that this view would lead to the absurdity of regarding Christ as the minister of sin, for it is through Christ that we have been justified before God.

In another connection, in 1 Cor. 10:21 f., Paul argues against the readers' continuing in their former ways. He indicates that it is not right to partake of the cup of the Lord and of the cup of the devil. Then he sets up his argument in the form of a rhetorical question: Do we arouse the Lord to jealousy? Are we more mighty than He? This question reduces the matter to an absurdity. He is warning the readers to be cautious in partaking of meat offered to idols. Especially if they offend a weak brother, they are to abstain from these meats. If they do not have a good conscience, they are to abstain also. By tactless action they were in danger of arousing God to anger and jealousy. They were not to think themselves to be stronger than God.

The apostle also considers an absurd statement in the

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<sup>5</sup>James A. Kleist, The Gospel of Saint Mark: Presented In Greek Thought-Units and Sense Lines With a Commentary (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1936), p. 194.



defense of his doctrine of justification by faith in Rom. 6:1 ff. He asks: What then shall we say? Shall we remain in sin in order that grace might be abundant? By no means. We who are of such a type that have died to sin, how shall we still live in sin? He takes up the claim (which seems to be justified, but is not) that, if one teaches justification by faith, it leads to immorality. Paul shows the absurdity of such a view by indicating that through justification by faith, we have become dead to sin. If his doctrine of grace were to encourage lawlessness, this would mean that the believers would commit sin in order to have more grace. This, Paul says, is absurd, inasmuch as they have been freed from sin and have become dead to it through Christ. Similarly, he condemns those who misrepresent his teaching of justification by faith by suggesting: "Let us do evil that good might come." He considers the condemnation of these individuals just. Their interpretation of Paul's teaching is absurd.<sup>6</sup>

In spite of the fact that this type of argument is indirect, it nevertheless brings the contrary doctrines into sharper focus. In other words, the consequences of adhering to a certain false principle may not appear serious at first,

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<sup>6</sup>Other parallels to this argument are to be found in Gal. 2:12; 5:12; Acts 23:5. Note also Jesus' satire on the casuistry of the Pharisees, Matt. 5:21-26; Mark 9:43 ff., Luke 11:17 ff.



but are brought to the surface by applying the opponent's view to an extreme case. By reducing the other position to a plain absurdity, the issue is clarified and the wrong view overthrown.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Cfr. R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1935), p. 423.



## CHAPTER XV

### THE A POSTERIORI ARGUMENT

In addition to logical arguments which were directed to reason, the apostolic writers made use of an appeal which belongs to the category of "common sense" arguments. Here one has to do with propositions based purely on observations from experience. Conclusions, then, are drawn from the data of experience of people who usually give their assent to these arguments. In general, we refer here to a posteriori reasoning, which is defined as follows:

Characterizing the kind of reasoning deriving propositions from observation of facts or arriving at principles by generalization from facts; hence, designating what can be known only through experience.<sup>1</sup>

This type of reasoning is further explained:

The regressive proof moves either from an effect to its efficient cause, or from the properties to the specific nature from which they result. . . . This argument proceeds either from effect to efficient cause, or from properties to nature. In the former, we note an example in the science of diagnosis. From evident symptoms, the physician concludes that there must be this or that disease. In the latter, we form a concept of many a class of objects that comprises at least a generic representation of the underlying nature, which may be termed A, and of some specific properties, a, b, and c.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>J. B. Bethel, et al., Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (Fifth edition; Springfield, Mass.: G. and C. Merriam Company, Publishers, 1936), p. 53.

<sup>2</sup>Sylvester J. Hartman, A Textbook in Logic (New York: The American Book Company, 1936), p. 283.



This type of appeal, as it is employed to prove certain assumptions, facts, or principles, is also characterized:

Irrational proof (evidence) is the means of persuasion that appeals to the credulous mind, to prejudice, and to the emotions and passions of humanity. It is the implied opposite of the appeal to reason to the argumentum ad iudicium.<sup>3</sup>

However, as we observe how the apostolic writers appealed to general experience, there was neither in their arguments nor in the teaching of Jesus Himself any indication of an accommodation to superstitions and folk belief.<sup>4</sup> On the contrary, Jesus and the writers of the New Testament selected those principles and items of human experience which were not illusory, but genuine and true. Cfr. Matt. 12:25.

#### The Appeal to Common Sense

First of all, we might examine these passages which, for want of a more accurate terminology, we might call "appeals to common sense." In 1 Cor. 11:13, for example, we have this type of argument, in which Paul gives certain instructions regarding proper decorum in public worship and also regarding the Sacrament. Here the discussion revolves about the question of women appearing unveiled in divine

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 405.

<sup>4</sup>As, for instance, the theory of John S. Semler, who long ago interpreted Scripture and the teaching of Jesus in this manner: Milton S. Terry, Biblical Hermeneutics (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, n.d.), pp. 166, 170.



services. Perhaps to us, who are not aware of the rigidity of some of the Oriental customs, the matter of wearing veils or not wearing them would not seem important. Indeed, while Paul is not arguing about a doctrinal issue, church decorum was really connected with the principles which he was emphasizing regarding reverence for the Word. Involved in this, to be sure, was also the acceptance of the preaching as divine. Now, then, if the message of the apostles was to be regarded as God's Word, it would follow, then, that their conduct at worship would be in accordance with this fact. However, the apostle does not argue in this manner directly, nor does he appeal to his pastoral authority. Instead, he appeals to what was commonly held and supposed to be proper for women, namely, to be veiled in public. Therefore, he asks: "Judge among yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God while she is unveiled?" While the question seems to be a rhetorical one, it indicates what Paul means to say. He maintains that a woman should come veiled to public worship.

#### The Appeal to Nature

In a similar manner, the apostle argues from nature. In this passage, in verses 14 f., (the same subject which we discussed in the foregoing paragraph) Paul adds another remark: "Does not nature itself teach you that for a man to wear his hair long is degrading, but a woman's long hair is



her pride? For her hair is given her as a covering."<sup>5</sup> Here Paul makes the point that even nature recognizes and supports the custom that women appear veiled in public worship. In fact, nature furnishes women with a covering: long hair. This shows that there is a difference between men and women as far as their appearance at public worship is concerned. Inasmuch as nature gives women long hair for a covering, Paul deduces, it is evident that they must come to divine services veiled.

We encounter another argument from nature in 2 Cor. 12: 14. The apostle had been speaking of the fact that he did not wish to become burdensome to them by accepting financial support from the Corinthians. If they should suppose that this might seem strange or throw doubt on the divine nature of his office or teaching, he reminds them of this truth that parents ought to lay up supplies for their children, and not children for their parents. Regarding the readers as his spiritual children, Paul properly appeals to this principle from common sense or from nature.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Edgar J. Goodspeed, The Goodspeed Parallel New Testament (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1943), p. 398.

<sup>6</sup>Alfred Plummer, "A Critical And Exegetical Commentary On The Second Epistle Of St. Paul To The Corinthians," The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1915), p. 362.



### The Argument Ad Hominem

Were we to examine the arguments of the apostolic writers from the purely human point of view, we would probably favor certain arguments rather than others. Judging only by logical standards, we would then distinguish between the more convincing and the less convincing arguments. In the introductory paragraph in the present chapter, we have shown that we are now considering what might be called an "irrational argument," the a posteriori argument, taken from experience. Our present purpose, however, is not to grade the arguments according to this logical scale, but merely to describe how the apostolic writers reasoned as they presented their doctrines.

It is the supernatural feature of the apostolic teaching, namely, divine inspiration, that makes us accept the writings of the New Testament even when they include the present argument, ad hominem. This means that, no matter how weak this argument would be in profane literature, we do not question the teaching it expresses when employed by the divinely guided authors of the New Testament.

As we now examine how the writers of the New Testament operated with the argument ad hominem, we note how even this argument successfully refuted the opponents to the truth. Although some perhaps would reject this argument because it seems to yield too much ground to the opponent, it served a



good purpose in our Savior's discourses. For example, in Luke 5:31, Jesus counters with an argument of this kind, as His enemies criticize Him for associating with people of ill repute. He says: "They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I come not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (AV) The point which He emphasizes is that associating with the outcasts is necessary if they are to be helped. The notorious publicans and the immoral individuals were the very ones who needed His mercy and grace.

Christ's reply is an argumentum ad hominem, partly ironical. On their own showing the Pharisees had no need of a teacher, while these outcasts were in the greatest need of one.<sup>7</sup>

We note that Jesus does not appeal to a law of God here, but to a fact which men everywhere would grant.<sup>8</sup> We note that Jesus thereby achieves His purpose.

In a similar situation, as Jesus is censured for eating with publicans and outcasts, the Savior also uses this kind of argument. In Luke 15:3 f., He replies with an illustration of the person who lost one of his hundred sheep. Undoubtedly, Jesus maintains, such a person would leave the

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<sup>7</sup>Alfred Plummer, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke," The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (Seventh edition; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), p. 161.

<sup>8</sup>Cfr. Matt. 9:12; Mark 2:17.



ninety-nine sheep and seek the one which is lost. He says: "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?" (AV)

While this statement of Jesus' activity as the Seeker of the lost is chiefly illustrative, it is also argumentative. If His opponents would advocate, yes, would even go out themselves to rescue a straying animal, then they could scarcely condemn His efforts in rescuing lost souls.<sup>9</sup> In a different setting, in Matt. 9:15-17, the Savior answers the disciples of John who inquire about the Twelve who have not been fasting. Here Jesus lists three pictures involving questions to which the inquirers would answer in the affirmative. He mentions three pertinent examples: the children of the bridegroom will not mourn and fast while the bridegroom is still with them; no one puts a piece of new cloth on an old garment; no one places new wine into old wineskins. Jesus, as we notice, emphasizes that things must not be joined that do not fit together. The argument, then, is again based on common sense and experience.

Another interesting incident in which Jesus employs this argument is recorded in Mark 9:43-48, in the discussion about eliminating offenses. Everyone would agree that it would be better, according to Jesus' argument, to go into

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<sup>9</sup>Gfr. The passage is also reminiscent of Ex. 23:4.



life eternal without one eye, without one foot, or without one hand, than to enter hell with the whole body. The point which Jesus makes here is that we must give up whatever leads us into sin even if the sacrifice is as painful as the loss of an eye or something similar. The argument once more is ad hominem, and agrees with common sense.

Moreover, in His Sermon on the Mount, the Savior condemns all pagan worry and care in the children of God. To emphasize the futility of being preoccupied with one's physical needs, Jesus offers a rhetorical question as an argument against this needless anxiety: "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?" (AV) The obvious answer would be: no one is able to do so. Inasmuch as the listener would reply in the affirmative, this argument would also belong here, as it is found in Matthew 6:27.

We also observe this type of argument in the controversy which Jesus had with the leaders of Israel concerning His deity. They charged that Jesus was guilty of blasphemy since He had made Himself God. As we recall, they had picked up stones to put Him to death. When they were confronted by Jesus, they replied that they were ready to stone Him, not because of His miracle, but because He claimed to be God. The Savior then reminded them that their own law had said: "Ye are gods." This statement occurs in Psalm 82:6, which was part of the "law" in the broader sense, the Old Testament Scriptures. In this passage, no doubt, the judges of Israel



were regarded as "gods" in a special sense, for they deal with divine ordinances as the representatives of God.<sup>10</sup> Jesus claims that, if the word of Him Who called them (the Judges) "gods," cannot be broken, how can the leaders of Israel say that the One Whom the Father has sanctified had blasphemed when He claimed to be God? There seems to be a difference of opinion among scholars as to how to construe or classify this argument. On the one hand, some look at this rebuttal of Jesus as an argument ad hominem, inasmuch as the leaders would have to admit that it is true that their "law" ascribes this to the Judges.

In Jo. 10:36 Jesus uses argumentum ad hominem and only claims to *υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ*. Cfr. the sneer of the passers-by in Mt. 27:40 (W. H.), *υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ*, and the demand of Caiaphas in 26:63, *ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ*. In John 5:27 *υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου* may be either "the son of man" or "a son of man." Cfr. a similar ambiguity in the Aramaic barnasha.<sup>11</sup>

On the other hand, there is the view that we cannot speak here of an argument ad hominem, but rather of a syllogism, in which Jesus proceeds from the less to the greater.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>This passage reminds one of Ex. 4:16, in which Moses is to be *נִסְיָאֵן* instead of God, as he appears with Aaron before Pharaoh. Cfr. Gal. 3:15, as an example of an appeal to common knowledge or experience.

<sup>11</sup>A. T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research (Fourth edition; New York: Hodder and Stoughton, George H. Doran Company, 1923), p. 781.

<sup>12</sup>R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1931), pp. 745 ff.



The Savior also saw fit to use this kind of argument as He met the attacks of the leaders of Israel who criticized His activity on the Sabbath, as we read of it in Luke 14:1 ff. As Jesus noted a man there who was afflicted with dropsy, He asked the Pharisees whether it were right to heal on the Sabbath. This, however, they did not answer. Jesus then healed the man and released him. Then He turned to the Pharisees with an argument which became a rhetorical question, for they were unable to answer Him. Jesus said: "Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?" (AV) This might well be regarded as another argument ad hominem, provided, of course, that the listener accepts the implications of the second Table of the Law. To be sure, we can conceive of it that this might not have constituted an ad hominem argument for those who had fallen below even this standard. Nevertheless, this appeal was an argument ad hominem for Israelites, as Ex. 23:4 and 21:33 imply, for the Mosaic laws provided for the humane treatment of animals, and, even on the Sabbath. What Jesus teaches in this reference is that the law of love is even above the law regarding the Sabbath. Incidentally, some scholars regard this passage as an example of the tu quoque argument:

The tu quoque argument used against the reformer who denounces moral and social evils consists in the objection, "You are doing it yourself!" "Your actions belie your words!" If the arguments for or against some line of human conduct are sound, it is illogical



to impugn them on the ground of inconsistency between the words and the conduct of their proponent. . . . "Your conduct contradicts your arguments" . . . Our Lord used the tu quoque rebuttal against the accusation of the pharisees that He was breaking the Sabbath by reminding them that they, too, on the Sabbath Day, pulled out the ox or the ass that had fallen into a pit.<sup>13</sup>

This reply of Jesus could only elicit silence, but actually it was a rejoinder that their own experience would have to corroborate.

We might add here that the apostle approaches this kind of reasoning in his remarks about the propriety of ministers of the Gospel accepting remuneration for spiritual services rendered, as we read in 1 Cor. 9:7 ff. One of the first arguments which the apostle offers is one that every one of his readers would accept, for it agrees with human experience. Paul presents three pictures: the soldier, the owner of the vineyard, and the shepherd of the flock. He asks: "Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man?" (AV) Although these are illustrations, they are also arguments which help to persuade the readers to accept the apostle's principle that the ministers of the Word are to be given wages for their labors.

To each of the latter questions, the readers would give a negative answer. It would then be rather simple for Paul

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<sup>13</sup>Hartman, op. cit., pp. 405 f.



to take the next step in his reasoning: "Why, then, should the apostles pay for their own expenses?" Although these analogies do not prove the principle directly, they form a part of Paul's argument. These illustrations furnish evidence from human experience which goes to prove that there is a thing like receiving profit from one's honest labor. They are examples which every man will accept as agreeing with his experience. Therefore, one feels that the apostle Paul, like Jesus, relied very much on the argument ad hominem.<sup>14</sup>

This argument is taken up also in the interest of proving that the Levitical sacrifices were ineffective and that the sacrifice of Christ alone takes away sin, in Hebrews 10:4. The author there shows that the sacrifices under the old covenant could not remove guilt because they were merely the sacrifices of the blood of bulls and of goats. This remark suggests a truth to which the readers would subscribe.

The same author in Hebrews 12:7 ff., proves that the sufferings which Christians must endure for their faith are only God's chastisement for their profit. He appeals to the truth that there is no true father who does not chasten his son. This apt illustration seems to be also an argument ad

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<sup>14</sup>Cfr. similar appeals to general experience, Rom. 5:7; Gal. 6:5; and others. In Phil. 3:15, for example, Paul seems to argue in this manner: "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." (AV)



hominem.<sup>15</sup>

### The Use of Proverbial Sayings

While it may appear strange to place the proverbs into the present category, it may well be included here under the a posteriori argument, inasmuch as it agrees with common sense and human experience. The proverb, we know, often states a profound truth in concrete language. The origin of the particular statement may not be known, and yet, find acceptance among people generally without much debate. It proved rather valuable to the Savior, as well as to the writers of the New Testament to cite various proverbs which were known and also accepted by their hearers and readers. The advantage of a proverb is that the listener will usually give his assent to it. This immediately places the speaker into a favorable position. It is clear that, while one cannot always trace the proverbs to their ultimate source or determine whether Jesus coined His own proverbs, the appeal which is contained in them is an effective one.

For instance, in Matthew 9:12, we meet a situation in

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<sup>15</sup>It has been suggested by some authors that we have an implied or condensed argument in certain vocatives, as, for example, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, in 1 Cor. 10:14; 15:58; 2 Cor. 7:1; 12:19; 1 John 2:7. Chief exponent of this view is Brooke Foss Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text With Notes and Essays (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), p. 154. Probably this is an appeal to the new man, rather than an appeal to common sense.



which Jesus has the advantage over the enemies who fault Him for being intimate with outcasts. Overhearing their remarks, Jesus declares: "They that are well do not have need of a physician."

His reply is an argumentum ad hominem, answering them from their own premises. They imagined that they were *οἱ ἰσχυροὶ*, "those that are strong," sound, and healthy; and certainly they looked upon the publicans and sinners as "those that are ill," *οἱ κακῶς ἔχοντες*, the verb *ἔχω* with an adverb always meaning "to be." On their own finding Jesus' course is justified. A physician is for the sick, not for the healthy. It would be ridiculous and wrong for a doctor to remain away from his patients. His very business is to deal with the sick, in order to cure them, though without contaminating himself.<sup>16</sup>

While it cannot be established whether Jesus is referring to a common proverb of the Jews, at least we do have an example here of an argument that resembles the argumentum ad hominem. This reminds us of Luke 19:40, which records the proverbial saying of Jesus: "The stones will cry out." Enemies will try to stifle His witnesses, but the facts will speak for themselves that He is teaching the truth.

In Luke 4:23 f., on the other hand, we find that Jesus states more explicitly that He is quoting a proverb that was current in His day: "Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself." (AV) This is a portion of His homily in the synagogue at Nazareth on a certain Sabbath day.

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<sup>16</sup>R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1932), pp. 354 f.



As He indicated that the prophecy regarding the "acceptable year" was not fulfilled in Him, He commented on the clamor for a miracle. He said, therefore: "Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country." (AV) To the demand for signs, Jesus gave this reply: "Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country." (AV) Jesus intimated that in His native territory (some take this to mean Nazareth, others take it to refer to Judea) He would not do many miracles, for a prophet is not highly regarded where He is known best. Here Jesus replied to the challenge of one proverb with another proverb, showing that the fact that He performs few miracles in Nazareth is no argument against His divine claims. Perhaps they may think that, simply because He does not perform many wonders at Nazareth, He is not living up to the reputation which He has acquired. Jesus has an answer for His opponents and for the unbelieving acquaintances: "No prophet is received in his own country."<sup>17</sup> Here we have a proverb which seems to have a wide acceptance. It is claimed that the equivalent to it is found in the writings of Plutarch, Pliny, and Seneca.<sup>18</sup> Jesus' purpose, no

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<sup>17</sup>This proverbial saying is found also in Mark 6:4 and in Matt. 13:57. Mark expands "country" to include also relatives and one's own house.

<sup>18</sup>J. H. Bernard, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John," The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), I, 163 ff.



doubt, was to explain to them the reason for His present refusal to do many works among them. The explanation lay in their unbelief. To establish that He was justified in refraining from doing the things which He had done in Capernaum, He cites this proverb.<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, we note the remark of the apostle in Rom. 9:21, in which he offers a reply to the third objection to the doctrine of the election of grace in Christ. He says that it is absurd to pass judgment on God's counsels, for, this would be like the thing (which was formed) objecting to its fashioner: "Why did you make me thus?" To this Paul adds: "Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" (AV) The latter statement seems to be a proverbial saying. The answer would be in the affirmative. Therefore, man, fashioned by God, cannot fault God for His actions.

Here we might also include the axiom uttered by Jesus, as He predicted the future lot of His disciples in Matt. 10:24 f. He supports these assertions about their approaching suffering and persecution with the remark: "A disciple is not above his teacher nor is a slave above his master." This would agree with public opinion, for, every one would reason likewise: he who follows a leader's teaching, must be willing, if he is sincere, to suffer the consequences of that

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<sup>19</sup>This type of saying was the mashal of the Jews.



belief.

It is very possible that Jesus and also the apostles alluded to many picturesque proverbs current among the Jews, but also coined sayings which later became proverbial among the Christians. (While the parallel is not altogether equal, we might think here of the Shakespearean passages which have been gradually incorporated into the idioms of the people.)

There is also another proverbial saying contained in 1 Cor. 5:6: "Do you not realize that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?" This, to be sure, has all the appearances of an illustration, but is also mentioned to prove that any evil which is tolerated without interference will soon reach tremendous proportions. The incest, tolerated by the congregation in Corinth, made the entire congregation guilty. The apostle is trying to furnish an argument to support his counsel that the members excommunicate the offender from the church. He appeals, therefore, to a saying which has all the marks of a proverb.

Interestingly enough, we meet this very same proverb in Gal. 5:9. In this instance, it is more of a doctrinal than a moral issue. It is part of Paul's argument for the doctrinal declaration that man is justified by faith and not by the deeds of the Law. This is his argument against the endeavors of the Judaizers. In verse 9, he appeals to a proverb to show that readers have allowed themselves to become fully enslaved to the whole legalistic system by yielding to



the strict observance of days and to the regulations about food and drink.<sup>20</sup>

We meet another appeal to a proverb in 2 Pet. 2:22, although it does not directly prove a doctrinal statement. Perhaps it is mainly cited to illustrate the condition of those who return to error even after they have learned the truth of the Gospel of Christ. Here at least, Peter applies, if he does not prove a doctrine in so many words, the proverb: A dog returned to its own vomit, a sow washing itself in the wallowing of mire. The apostle's reason for using this proverb is perhaps difficult to determine. At least, he argues indirectly for his admonitions that his readers avoid false teachers. Perhaps he meant to say: "If anyone imagines that he will reap advantage by embracing these new errors, let him think of the proverb. He is only making a step backward to ruin." This proverb was to act as a kind of deterrent to the present readers, tempted as they are to leave the doctrines which Paul and Peter have taught them. In a remote way, this negative picture of the unfaithful is to show the wisdom behind the apostle's teaching and coun-

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<sup>20</sup> Some interpret this proverb rather to mean that the infection spreads not so much through the doctrinal system, but from person to person in the congregation. Cfr. J. B. Lightfoot, The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, n.d.), p. 206.



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Scholars have pointed out that here Peter quotes two proverbs. Moreover, they have established to a degree of certainty that the source of these sayings can be found, or, at least, parallels to them:

Alford quotes Lucian dial. mort. viii. 1, τοῦτο ἐκείνο τὸ τῆς ποιμῆκος, ὃ νεβρὸς τ. λέοντα. The first of the two may be found in Prov. 26:11, ὥς περ κυῶν ὅταν ἐπέλθῃ ἐπὶ τ. ἐαυτοῦ ἐμετόν. The second is not biblical, and can hardly be derived from a Hebrew source. . . . The sense is, not that the creature has not washed itself clean in water (so apparently the R. V.), still less that it has been washed clean (as A. V.), and then returns to the mud; but that having once bathed in filth it never ceases to delight in it. This habit of swine was used as a moral emblem both in Greek . . . and in Latin . . . the proverbs as given by St. Peter run very easily into iambs. . . . Probably he took them both from some collection of proverbs. But, as the first is certainly scriptural, we may guess that this collection of proverbs was the work of a Jew, most likely an Alexandrine Jew, who to the Solomonic proverbs added others derived from Gentile sources.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, we observe how these proverbial sayings were employed in the New Testament to support the doctrinal statements or warnings of the Savior and of the apostles. Since these maxims were accepted by the readers, they constitute a type of a posteriori argument.

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<sup>21</sup>In this proverb, we have probably an appeal that approaches the argument e contrario, namely, that the opposite course leads to a disaster.

<sup>22</sup>Charles Bigg, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude," The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909), pp. 287 f.



### The Rhetorical Question

While ordinarily, perhaps, the rhetorical question is regarded chiefly as a device to bring about a certain literary effect, it is probable that in the New Testament it implies something far more than this. It appears to be an argument that is the "concealed weapon" of a speaker. It meets one in a fragmentary form, suggesting a thought-provoking challenge. It is, as we might say, a kind of "telescoped" argument. It implies that the persons addressed have no recourse but to accept the claims of the speaker as being correct and true. It is a compelling argument, therefore, in spite of the suppressed or unexpressed premises.

This argument occurs in Gal. 5:11: "And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution?" Paul puts the question in order to defend himself against the accusation that his present doctrine was only "a front" and that, in reality, he was inconsistent in his teaching and insisted on circumcision otherwise. On the one hand, people said, he spoke against circumcision; on the other hand, some claimed, by having Timothy to submit to the rite, he was actually supporting it. But Paul does not allow the accusation to stand. He has asked this rhetorical question and leaves the readers to judge the matter for themselves, adding: "Then is the offense of the cross ceased (if I preach circumcision)." A rhetorical question, we might



suggest, asserts something to which the reader voluntarily or involuntarily gives his assent.<sup>23</sup>

This type of question is also used by Paul in 1 Cor. 1:13: "Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" The expected answer is: "No." Here the apostle endeavors to break the dissension at Corinth which involved four factions in the congregation. He shows that the present state of affairs is wrong, and, therefore, he puts these argumentative questions. With these rhetorical questions he hopes to prove that their stand is against the truth and that his teaching is from God.<sup>24</sup>

In Col. 2:20, moreover, we have a refutation of the claim of the Judaizers to superior wisdom. To demonstrate that this idea has no sound basis, Paul places this question before his readers: "Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?" He then shows, by additional questions, that these decrees concern only transitory matters, while Christ's death had delivered the

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<sup>23</sup>Lightfoot, op. cit., p. 207, examines Gal. 5:11, and calls attention to the argumentative etc. . Since this occurs in the question, it is not amiss to regard the sentence as an argument.

<sup>24</sup>Cfr. similar questions in 2 Cor. 11:11; Gal. 1:1-4; and others. The questions in Rom. 2:3.4.21.22.23.26.27, in the opinion of some, resemble the diatribes of Epictetus and suggest argumentation. Cfr. Gal. 1:10.



Colossians from these ordinances. Cfr. Gal. 3:1 ff.

The rhetorical question seems to have been a favorite of the apostle Paul, for in 1 Cor. 9:1-13, for example, there are sixteen questions of this type. Then, too, in 2 Cor. 6:14 ff., he employs these questions to lead to practical conclusions regarding his teaching against fellowship with pagans. To fortify his position on the matter of fellowship, the apostle asks: "What partnership has righteousness with lawlessness, or what association is there between light and darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What share has a believer with a non-believer? What agreement has the temple of God with idols?"

The absolute incongruity between Christians and pagans is emphasized by quickly delivered argumentative questions, as in xii. 17. 18. They are illustrations of the Apostle's rhetorical power. The first four questions are in pairs; the last being a conclusion to the series and a premise for what follows. . . . The *Scó* introduces the practical conclusion to be drawn from verses 14-16, and to make it as impressive as possible it is expressed in language taken from the utterances in the Old Testament.<sup>25</sup>

In defending his ministry and his apostolic doctrine further, in 2 Cor. 11:22 f., Paul appeals to his national background: "Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool.) I am more." (AV)

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<sup>25</sup>Plummer, op. cit., pp. 206 ff.



As in 6:14-16, the Apostle rapidly asks a number of argumentative questions, all directed to the same point; and here, as there, he keeps them from becoming monotonous by the use of synonyms. In neither passage are the questions answered, for the answer in each case is obvious; but here he makes a rejoinder to each of the obvious answers.<sup>26</sup>

Again in 2 Cor. 12:17 f., the same apostle defends his apostolic record and uses what otherwise might be called an "ethical" argument, employing a number of rhetorical questions: "Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you? I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? Walked we not in the same spirit? Walked we not in the same steps?" (AV) He establishes the fact that he is a true teacher sent from God, for he has not exploited his office or his constituents for personal advantage.

Since, however, it has been doubted at times that the rhetorical question actually constitutes an argument, we wish to cite a number of authorities to justify the inclusion of the rhetorical question as a species of the a posteriori argument.

Tritt eine Andeutung darüber hinzu, welche Beantwortung der Tragende erwartet, so haben wir die Art, welche man gewöhnlich mit dem unbestimmten Namen rhetorische Fragen bezeichnet. Man nötigt dadurch den Angeredten eine Wahrheit aus eigener Ueberlegung heraus anzuerkennen, wodurch sie ihm energischer zu Gemüte geführt wird, als

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 319.



wenn sie ihm von auszen her mitgeteilt würde.<sup>27</sup>

A mere question of this type, we believe, would actually form an argument in the New Testament, too, for the relationship between speaker and hearers was rather intimate. Because of previous personal contacts, the listeners or readers could grasp the implied arguments in the rhetorical questions. Rapport had been established between the apostle and his people. Therefore, they could complete, in their own minds, the fragmentary argument suggested to them in his rhetorical questions. It was an effective means to bring the point of doctrine into proper focus and prove it forcefully. The rhetorical question, as used by Paul, did compel the persons addressed to acknowledge that his statements were true, but on the basis of their own deliberations. Thus he impressed the truths on them more vigorously than if he had said all and given them all the facts from the outside. The subject which the apostle was treating implies that he was engaged in a "life and death" struggle for the truth. He was, therefore, not interested in literary embellishments. Yet, he used every possible method to argue for the Gospel. That is why he employed the rhetorical question, too.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Hermann Paul, Prinzipien der Sprachgeschichte (Fifth edition; Halle a. S.: Verlag von Max Niemeyer, 1920), pp. 137 f.

<sup>28</sup>Merrill C. Tenney, Galatians: The Charter of Christian Liberty (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), pp. 137 ff.



Such questions jolt the thinking of the reader by making him formulate a reply in his own mind. Paul knew perfectly well the answer to these inquiries and asked them for effect rather than for information.<sup>29</sup>

A recent work on homiletics, written by an unidentified scholar who employed the name "Colonat," also emphasizes the value and point in the rhetorical question:

Doch gibt es auch eine gute rhetorische Frage; es ist jene, die bezweckt, einen in der Seele der Hoerer ruhenden Gedanken wachzurufen, ihn fuer das heutige Predigtziel ins Bewusstsein zu fuehren und fuer einen guten Entschluss taetig zu machen. Es sind Fragen, auf die der Prediger die Antwort nicht zu geben braucht, weil die Hoerer die Antwort wissen oder sich selbst geben koennen. Jesus hat solche Fragen oeffter gestellt: "Was nuetze es dem Menschen, wenn er die ganze Welt gewaenne, aber Schaden litte an seiner Seele (Mt. 16:26; Mt. 23:17; Lk. 6:32; 16:12)?"<sup>30</sup>

Thus, both Jesus and the apostles, used the device of the rhetorical question in order to negate false conclusions, as well as to establish the genuineness of their own message.<sup>31</sup>

### The Analogy

While it seems to be a truism to say that analogies do not prove anything, they nevertheless express a universal truth. The average person will agree with what an analogy

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>30</sup>Colonat, Die Kanzelsprache-Homiletische Plaudereien (Wuerzburg: Echter Verlag, 1949), p. 32.

<sup>31</sup>Alfred Plummer, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary On The Epistle To The Galatians," The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1921), pp. 126, 211.



states. An analogy, we note, is defined as "arguing that, since a certain assertion is true in one case, a similar assertion is true in another case."<sup>32</sup> There are two interesting analogies in Paul's letters, the first of which we find in Rom. 7:1-6. Here Paul draws on the analogy of the marriage bond. The wife must be faithful to her husband until he dies. Through his death, however, she is free to marry another. Therefore, the apostle says, by dying to the Law through the death of Christ in their rebirth, the Christians become free from the dominion of the Law. The apostle wishes that his readers might continue to be free from the Law in order to serve God in newness of life, according to the spirit, and not according to the letter.

Another analogy occurs in 1 Cor. 15:33, reminiscent of John 12:24, as the argument of Paul for the resurrection of the body. Although his reference to the seed resembles a simple illustration, it actually assumes the importance of a real argument. He is challenging the people to say that the resurrection of the dead is impossible. Paul then reminds his readers of the lesson or analogy of the dead seed in the soil. Unless it is placed into the ground, allowed to germinate, it will not live. The apostle here rests his case on an analogy which his readers know and accept, for it

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<sup>32</sup>Joseph V. Denney, Carson S. Duncan, Frank G. McKinney, Argumentation and Debate (New York: The American Book Company, 1910), p. 80.



agrees with their experience: the seed, though apparently dead, will live, after it has been put into the ground.

What is true in the realm of nature, is also true in the realm of the spirit: the bodies of the dead, like the seed, will live.

Thus, in various ways, the apostles appealed to general experience, convincing people that their teachings were from God. Jesus, to be sure, singled out many a fact which the average man accepted, and from that point He proceeded to the spiritual plane, as He did in His many parables.

To encounter, therefore, a number of different types of syllogisms in the New Testament. The apostle Paul, for instance, in 1 Cor. 5:13-15, employs a simple syllogism of the regular type. Here, to prove his point, he has well have appealed to the Decalogue to advantage. On the contrary, he builds up his argument by forming a syllogism as follows:

James A. Vicars and William A. Utterback, *Argumentation* (New York: The Century Company, 1930), p. 54.



## CHAPTER XVI

### THE USE OF DEDUCTIVE REASONING

Among the many logical forms of argument is that which is commonly known as deductive reasoning. It is defined as "that process of reasoning which from two statements assumed to be true infers the truth of a third statement."<sup>1</sup> When the writers of the New Testament present evidence for their doctrinal statements, they frequently discuss the subject in this manner. They construct, therefore, what the logician calls a "syllogism," which consists of a major premise, a minor premise, and a conclusion. Inasmuch as the apostles, however, wrote with animation and varied emotions, they did not always present this kind of proof in the same pattern as we have outlined. Nevertheless, it is fitting to classify several passages under this type, even when they do not conform to the arrangements usually conceived of in logic.

We encounter, therefore, a number of different types of syllogisms in the New Testament. The apostle Paul, for instance, in 1 Cor. 6:18-20, employs a simple syllogism of the regular type. Here, to prove his point, he may well have appealed to the Decalogue to advantage. On the contrary, he builds up his argument by forming a syllogism as follows:

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<sup>1</sup>James A. Winans and William E. Utterback, Argumentation (New York: The Century Company, 1930), p. 64.



his major premise: fornication corrupts the body; his minor premise: our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. From these statements he concludes: let us not only flee fornication, but let us glorify God in our body. Here, to be sure, one detects the evangelical method in Paul's ministry. He appeals to the highest motives to teach sanctification. To convince his readers of this, the consecration of their lives to God, he sets up a carefully constructed syllogism.

Moreover, in 2 Cor. 3:16 f., too, there is a syllogism of a very effective kind which characterizes Paul's manner of presentation. He proves that the veil of the old legal covenant is removed. First, he asserts that the Lord is a spirit. Furthermore, the apostle states that, where the Spirit is, there is freedom. From these truths, then, he concludes: where the Lord is, the slavery of the letter is removed.

In addition to the more usual type of syllogism, the apostles, particularly Paul, make use of the inverted syllogism, as one observes it in Gal. 3:11. Here he begins with the conclusion: No one is justified on the basis of the Law. Then follows the major premise: the righteous person shall live by faith alone. This remark he draws directly from Hab. 2:4. To it he adds the minor premise: the Law does not belong to faith. Here the apostle explains that the Law is foreign to the essence of faith: it does not give life, but it prescribes. It does not grant spiritual life to



men, but demands certain things of them and promises that thereby they will receive life. Thus Paul demonstrates that justification cannot be through the works of the Law, but is accomplished through faith in Christ.

There are also syllogisms which lack one or the other member of the argument, as we observe in the remarks of Jesus in John 8:39. His major premise consists of this conditional sentence: If ye are the children of Abraham, do the works of Abraham. Then in verse 40, we notice the minor premise: Ye seek to kill Me because I tell you the truth. This, Jesus suggested, Abraham did not do. Jesus leaves the conclusion to be inferred by the hearers: Ye are not the spiritual sons of Abraham. (This is also called the negative syllogism.) This proved the contention of Jesus that they could not claim to be the children of Abraham. No doubt, because the conclusion was self-evident, Jesus did not disclose it in so many words. This is an example of a fragmentary syllogism. Moreover, in the Pauline writings we expect this type of syllogism, for his style includes many anacolutha and frequent ellipses. Writing as he did under the strain of controversy and with the emotion of enthusiasm for the truths involved, Paul did not always assume the manner, for instance, of the author of the Hebrews. It is, therefore, not unusual to discover argumentation which leaves the reader to supply the conclusion or one of the premises. In Gal. 3:20 f., for example, there is another fragmentary syllogism, for the



words: "The Law could not be kept" must be supplied to complete the argument. Some believe that the minor premise has been omitted here, while others feel that the conclusion has been left unstated. In John 8:47, too, there is another fragmentary syllogism proposed by the Savior.

Another type of argument is the condensed syllogism, as we find it in Acts 15:10. The apostle emphasizes that the Christians were not presently dealing with Gentiles alone, but with God. He asks them if they wish to tempt God by imposing a burden on the Gentiles which even the Israelites of the past could not bear. The Gentiles, then, according to the resolution of the Council at Jerusalem, were not to be held responsible for keeping the ceremonial law. While it may not appear that we have an argument here, some have taken this passage as an instance of constructing a brief syllogism: "Metaphors are often the strongest arguments, being condensed syllogism."<sup>2</sup>

Another unusual variety of syllogisms is that which contains a double conclusion, a minor and a major one. The argument presented in Hebrews 4:3-9, contains the major premise: God wishes to have people enter His rest (that is one of the reasons why God made the original day of rest, namely, as a sign of the eternal rest). Then he offers his minor

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<sup>2</sup>R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles (Columbus, Ohio: The Lutheran Book Concern, 1934), p. 597.



premise: Since those who formerly were given the notice of joy did not enter rest because of their disobedience, it follows, then (as a minor conclusion), that God fixes a day of grace, which leads to the main conclusion: there remains a rest for the people of God. This emphasis on the rest for the believers was important for the facts which the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews was endeavoring to establish, namely, the superiority of Christ and His testament to the old legal covenant. By faith in Christ and in His atonement, the readers could obtain what was impossible to gain for themselves under the old covenant: the eternal rest.<sup>3</sup>

Not only did the apostolic writers themselves set up several syllogisms to prove their teachings, but they also defended their position against whatever misrepresentations might be expressed about them. In other words, they also refute false deductions and point out fallacies in the argumentation of their opponents. In Rom. 6:2, as we note, he treats the false deduction which some perhaps would suggest who oppose the justification by faith. Their false conclusion would be: We shall continue in sin that grace might abound. Paul's reply is that this is absurd, for we have died to sin through Christ and are now under grace.

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<sup>3</sup>We also think here of the "moral" propositions, with the term "moral" properly understood. These occur as follows: Rom. 3:4 (Ps. 116:11); Rom. 9:20.21 (Is. 45:9; 29:16). One might also include: Rom. 12:16 f. (Prov. 3:7.4); 1 Cor. 5:13 (Deut. 17:7; 13:6); Eph. 4:25 (Zech. 8:16); Col. 2:22 (Is. 29:13).



When Paul takes issue with those who deny the resurrection of the body, furthermore, he examines critically the premises listed in behalf of this negative view, in 1 Cor. 15:13 ff. The writer offers two series of deductions to overthrow the denials of the doctrine of the resurrection. In the first series, he begins with the most forceful argument: If there be no resurrection, not even Christ is risen. This is followed by the next deduction: But if Christ be not risen, then your message is empty, and your faith is empty as well. Then, even as the second deduction was linked with the first, the third is connected with the second: But we are found false witnesses of God, for we have given testimony against God that He raised up Christ, Whom He in fact did not raise up, if the dead do not rise. In the second series of deductions, the apostle offers the clue which assures the refutation of the negative proposition: There is no resurrection of the dead. In his first deduction in the second series, he expresses the doctrine that is relevant to this matter: For, if the dead do not rise, not even Christ is risen. Paul applies a logical law here: the universal negative disappears, if one example to the contrary can be furnished.<sup>4</sup> His deduction, therefore, is valid: if the Corinthian errorists reject the resurrection

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<sup>4</sup>R. H. C. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians (Columbus, Ohio: The Lutheran Book Concern, 1935), pp. 662 ff.



of the believers, to be consistent, they must also deny the resurrection of the Savior. Evidently, the false teachers at Corinth were not ready to apply their theory to that extent, for, if they had also denied the resurrection of Christ, Paul would have attacked the problem differently. He has laid the groundwork for these deductions in the very first part of the chapter by asserting that Christ arose from the dead. In the next deduction, moreover, he repeats what he has stated in the first series: If we grant that there is no resurrection of the dead, your faith is to no purpose. This deduction is not a mere repetition, but is a more detailed version of the second deduction in the first series. Paul develops further the consequences which will result from a denial of the resurrection of Christ in a practical way: it will affect their outlook on the present life itself: they are then yet in their sins. He demonstrates that the negative proposition involves the disaster of losing the assurance of justification (which they had in the resurrection of Christ). From this remark, then, the apostle passes on to the third deduction: Then even those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. Paul contemplates here also how it would affect their present Lebensanschauung. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, then we are of all people the most miserable. He thus overthrows the negative proposition (that there is no resurrection) by demonstrating the one outstanding example which renders the uni-



versal negative void and untenable: Christ is risen from the dead and is become the first-fruits of them that slept.

Another significant syllogism is found in Hebrews 2:15, and supplies proof for the completed redemption through Christ Jesus. The author discusses the fact that people are still under the control and power of death because they reject Christ's victory. The author pictures the life of the creatures subject to the fear of death: it is an existence of slavery. He then develops the argument that, if all are in bondage, and all are delivered by Christ's redemption, then all mankind is delivered.

Another example of a clear syllogism is to be found in Hebrews 10:18, with the conclusion stated in the latter verse. The writer appeals to the fact that the Spirit testifies that God sends away sins. He goes on to mention the act of Christ fully atoning for our sins. From these premises, then, he concludes: all further sacrifices for man's sins are unnecessary.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, as we have observed, the writers of the New Testament build up their arguments in this logical pattern of syllogisms. They make use of every possible weapon to make the Gospel message clear to their readers and to persuade

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<sup>5</sup>At times, the writers of the New Testament also interchange the terms of a proposition and offer a converse argument, that is, placing the predicate instead of the subject, or vice-versa. Cfr. Hebrews 7:20 ff. and 8:6.



them to believe it. It is evident from this, too, that, while the nature of their subject was beyond and above reason, it was not against reason. Undoubtedly trained in these methods of constructing syllogisms, the apostle Paul in particular must have been especially equipped to meet audiences on their own intellectual ground. For this task, he had been endowed with a mind that operated with precision and with accuracy. Add to this the factor of inspiration, and one meets an authority who can take up a complicated issue and arrive quickly at the heart of the matter. Here is Paul at his best as he works out, under divine guidance, one syllogism after the other, to make his message secure against attack. While in previous years he had employed his intellect in a polemic against Christ, now he was using the best of logic in behalf of Him.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Other syllogisms occur in Col. 1:15; 3:1; Rom. 5:15; and others.



## CHAPTER XVII

### THE EMPLOYMENT OF THE DILEMMA

In order to place one's opponent into an unfavorable position, a speaker at times proposes two alternatives, both of which the other individual will recognize as fatal to his basic premises, unless he can offer a third argument in reply to save his case. If the person can suggest a third possibility (usually termed tertium datur), he has "escaped between the horns of a dilemma."<sup>1</sup> He has demonstrated that the alternatives did not exhaust all the possibilities. One usually assumes that, in the employment of the dilemma, the persons addressed are obligated to reply, if they do not prefer to forfeit the victory of the debate. Other methods of answering a dilemma are suggested by the following:

To take a dilemma by the horns is to accept one of the proffered alternatives and show that the undesirable consequence does not necessarily follow. . . . To reply to the argument one might construct a counter dilemma employing the consequences unfavorable to the conclusion of the argument attacked. . . . This method of attack is called turning the dilemma.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, the dilemma has been defined chiefly as a rhetorical argument rather than a logical one:

The dilemma is a type of argument, which is made up of

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<sup>1</sup>James A. Winans and William E. Utterback, Argumentation (New York: The Century Company, 1930), pp. 91 f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 91-3.



both implicative and disjunctive propositions. It is not of great logical importance because it exhibits no logical principles not already dealt with. It is an argument in which the alternatives offered are at once unwelcome and apparently unavoidable. The value of the dilemma is primarily rhetorical and it is an effective disputative device. It consists of a premise in which two implicative propositions are stated in conjunction. The other premise is alternative in form and affirms or denies the antecedents or consequents of the original. There are four types of the dilemma: simple constructive, simple destructive, complex constructive, and complex destructive.<sup>3</sup>

While it is often a matter of debate whether the dilemma is the most effective type of argument, the fact remains that it serves to bring controversial issues into clearer focus. The writers of the New Testament, too, employ the dilemma to establish their teachings as true.

It is interesting to note the manner in which the dilemma is frequently introduced, for example, in the Savior's arguments. He usually introduces His answer to a false argument with the words: *περὶ δε*, as we encounter dilemmas or related replies in Mark 12:26; 13:32; John 16:11; and others.<sup>4</sup> In the incident of the conversation which Jesus had with the palsied man in Matthew 9:5; Mark 2:9, and Luke 5:23, the Savior uses a dilemma in order to elicit a reply from the scribes, His enemies. It was His rebuttal of their

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<sup>3</sup>Frank Miller Chapman and Paul Henle, The Fundamentals of Logic (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933), pp. 111 f.

<sup>4</sup>Charles E. Faw, "On the Writing of First Thessalonians," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXXI (December, 1952), 220 f.



challenge and denial of His deity. The story shows how Jesus offered two propositions: "Is it simpler to say: 'Your sins be forgiven you,' or to say: 'Rise up and walk!'" He set up this dilemma in order to answer their charge that He was blaspheming, inasmuch as He claimed a divine prerogative, namely, forgiving an individual's sins. Here He does not pause for a reply from the opponents. At least, He does not answer the dilemma directly, but proceeds to assert at once that He has power on earth to forgive sins, as the Son of Man. Since we do not read of any reply from the scribes, we conclude that Jesus proved by this dilemma that His claim to the authority of forgiving sin was true. While the proof furnished here is somewhat indirect, submitting these alternatives to the enemies of His cause actually won the argument for Jesus. To be sure, the force of Jesus' argument is felt most of all in the miraculous action of Jesus, because of which the eyewitnesses marvelled greatly. In this act, Jesus proved that He could forgive sin and also heal the body. It is interesting, too, that, the second time Jesus speaks to the sick man, He cites the second alternative: "Rise up, take thy mat, and return to your house."

This antipathy which the scribes and the other dignitaries showed for the teaching of Jesus received more impetus in the incident recorded in Mark 3:1 ff. On this occasion, Jesus healed the man with the withered hand, who had come into the synagogue on the Sabbath. Before Jesus performed



this miracle, the Jewish leaders observed Him, watching whether He would heal on the Sabbath. If He would do so, they would then have a pretext for accusing Him and putting Him to death. Jesus, facing the afflicted man, requested him to step before Him. However, before healing him, He proposed a dilemma to the leaders of the synagogue, since He knew what purposes they had in mind. His dilemma concerned the advocacy of healing on the Sabbath. He said: "Is it right to do good or to do evil on the Sabbath, to save life, or to kill?" As experts in the Law, they would have to reply: "It is right to do good on the Sabbath." To choose this alternative, however, would only substantiate Jesus' miracle, which, to be sure, they were not ready to do. On the other hand, they could not accept the second alternative, for no teacher of the Law would countenance slaying even if done by neglect. Finding themselves at this impasse, they remained silent. It was a tacit admission that the Savior had refuted their objections to His doctrines. By this dilemma, unresolved by the opponents, He proved the Sabbath doctrine, as well as His claims to divine Sonship. After the dilemma had successfully established His affirmation that the Sabbath does not eliminate responsibility to do good to a sufferer, Jesus reinforced this argument by performing the miracle. He healed the withered hand.

Another significant episode in Jesus' ministry, during which He again offered two propositions in the form of a



striking dilemma, is recorded in Luke 20:3 ff. He did so in order to withstand the attacks of His enemies and also prove His own doctrines. In this incident, Jesus is the speaker in the temple, preaching the Gospel to the people. The emphasis which Jesus places on the destruction of Jerusalem in these prophetic discourses aroused the animosity of the chief priests and the scribes. They demanded that Jesus justify His activity on the temple grounds and present His credentials: "Tell us by what authority you are doing these things, or who it is who gives you this power." (In John 2:18, a similar demand is made, but with the insistence that He perform a miracle to prove that He had divine authority to cleanse the temple.) Luke tells us that the Savior met this challenge with the counter-question: "I shall ask you a word and you tell Me: Is the baptism of John from heaven or is it from men?" In other words, He poses this dilemma: Is the baptism of John a divine institution or is it purely a human rite? Here we encounter an exceptional interest on the part of the opponents. In the case of other dilemmas, there is no discussion about the questions proposed by Jesus. Here, however, the leaders labor over the difficulties of each alternative. If they would claim that the baptism of John were of divine origin, they were open to His criticism: "Why do ye not believe in Me?" On the other hand, if they regard the baptism of John merely something human, they would fall into disfavor with the people, who



accepted John as a prophet. Instead of meeting the problem which Jesus gave them, they refused to solve it, and professed ignorance. Inasmuch as they evaded the dilemma, Jesus also refused to answer: "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things." This remark of Jesus, too, is different from previous discussions, in which He at least revealed the answer privately to His disciples. Nevertheless, the dilemma here lends support to what Jesus taught. The value of these propositions was indirect, for the matter concerned John rather than Jesus. Yet, it established the impotence of the Pharisees before the argumentation of Jesus. The dilemma, at least, forced the admission that their theology was of such a nature that they did not act on their own convictions.

There is another approach to this type of argument in the rhetorical question of Jesus in Matthew 12:27: "If I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out?" (AV) If they claimed that Jesus delivered people from the power of evil spirits by means of the power of Satan himself, a view which would be rather self-contradictory, how shall they regard the exorcisms of their own sons? Either they would have to agree that their sons and Jesus remove devils by divine power, or they would have to conclude that their sons act through the agency of Satan, too. The Savior here establishes the fact that He is performing this miracle by divine direction and authority. The question He proposed



about their sons' activity serves to prove that His claims and teachings were true. (Cfr. Matthew 23:19 f.)

While we do have several arguments in the epistles of Paul that resemble a dilemma, it appears that the dilemma is not used as extensively by the apostle as it was by Jesus. In Gal. 3:2, for example, Paul simply asks whether the readers received the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Law or through the Gospel. This argumentative question points to the fact that the doctrine of justification by faith is true. Paul, in fact, seems to avoid a dilemma in Gal. 3:21. He does not wish to say that the Law is evil, or that it is against the promises of God. The apostle rather demonstrates then that the Law and the Gospel operate on two different levels, like parallel lines which never meet. While the Law prescribes, or commands righteous deeds, it reveals sin, but has no power to give life. This function the Gospel must perform.

While the dilemma is rare in Pauline argumentation, it seems to be implied in the episode recorded in Acts 26:27, as Paul assumes that Agrippa accepts the prophets of the Old Testament. The king evidently realizes the dilemma, for Paul claims to preach the crucified and risen Christ in harmony with the prophetic writings of Israel. If Agrippa believes the prophets, Paul implies, then, that he should believe the Gospel. Inasmuch as Agrippa is an Israelite, he would not openly disavow prophetic teachings before Paul, and yet, he



would not consistently accept the Messianic interpretation of them and become a Christian.

Finally, we note that the opponents of Jesus also employed this device known as the dilemma. It was, therefore, also the task of Jesus to resolve those dilemmas which the Pharisees and the Herodians set up in order to involve Him in an impossible predicament. This is seen from the question proposed by them in Matthew 22:15 ff., in their search for evidence that they would convict Jesus either of disobedience to the Law of Moses or of disobedience to imperial laws. They inquired whether it were right to give tax money to Caesar or not. Jesus breaks the dilemma by pointing to the inscription and image on the coin. The latter belong to Caesar, and, therefore, the tribute is his. But lest they conclude that He rejects the duty of paying money to the temple treasury, He adds: "Render to God the things that are God's." If Jesus would have replied in the negative, they would have reported Him to the military officials. If He would answer in the affirmative, they, in their nationalistic enthusiasm, would have fomented another riot. Yet, Jesus takes care of this dilemma by a two-fold answer: the two spheres, political and religious, are supported by the people of God. Here, incidentally, we have an example of what is termed "taking a dilemma by the horns," that is to say, to accept one of the suggested alternatives and show that it does not lead to an undesir-



able result. There is a similar discussion about payment of temple tax in the episode recorded in Matthew 17:25 ff.

Here the Savior asks Peter: "What thinkest thou, Simon? Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? Of their own children, or of strangers?" (AV) When Peter replied: "Of strangers," then Jesus drew the conclusion: "Then the children are free."

Although the dilemma does not occur very frequently in the New Testament, it supplies an effective way of refuting ideas foreign to the Gospel and of proving the proclamation of Jesus and of the apostles true. It revealed, with telling effect, that the objections raised against the Christian message were unfounded and essentially illogical, as well.

The first premise of this argument takes a superficial view of the two statements, the second of which is even weaker, or stronger, than the first. The second premise then affirms the first of the statements. Hence the argument is fallacious, or argumentum ad hominem, or argumentum ad populum. Many of the other arguments in the Bible are in the same fallacious form, as the following: "For if God hath so chosen the grace in the field, which today is, and tomorrow is past into the street; how much more shall he clothe you, a ye of little faith?" This method is to be observed, first of all, in the discourses and conversations of Jesus in the presence of his disciples. In Matthew 22, for example, there is an argument.

James A. Wilson and William E. Butterback, *Argumentum ad hominem* (New York: The Century Company, 1934), p. 25.



## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE A FORTIORI ARGUMENT

Another method of argumentation common among both ancient and modern writers is that which is known as the a fortiori. This is employed when one presents, first of all, how a certain principle is a less important incident. After demonstrating that what applied to a minor case also governs a major incident or practice, one asserts, therefore, that the principle is valid and acceptable. This is arguing, as we may say, from the less to the greater. In this manner, too, the apostles argued in defense of their doctrinal position in the New Testament. This type of argument has been analyzed in the following way:

The first premise of this argument makes a comparison between the two statements, the second of which is even truer, or stronger, than the first. The second premise then affirms the first of the statements. Hence the name argument a fortiori, or argument from the stronger (reason). Many of the brief arguments in the Bible are in the a fortiori form, as the following: "But if God doth so clothe the grass in the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more shall He clothe you, o ye of little faith?"<sup>1</sup>

This method is to be observed, first of all, in the discourses and conversations of Jesus in the presence of His disciples. In Matthew 7:11, for example, there is an a

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<sup>1</sup>James A. Winans and William E. Utterback, Argumentation (New York: The Century Company, 1930), p. 76.



fortiori argument, "expressed in the form of a conditional enthymeme."<sup>2</sup> Here Jesus asserts that, if men who are evil can give good gifts to their children, how much more should the heavenly Father give good things to those who ask Him for them. This is a clear case of arguing from a lesser truth, from the human sphere, to the greater, to the spiritual realm.<sup>3</sup>

In another situation, in John 7:23, for example, the Savior defends His position about the Sabbath and the propriety of His having healed some one on that day. He mentions the rather common incident of a circumcision on the Sabbath. This example would compel his opponents to grant this first promise: If a man is circumcised on the Sabbath (although the Law prohibited physical exertion on that day), the law of Moses is not broken thereby. Then, to be consistent, His critics cannot fault Him for healing the man entirely on the Sabbath. It is evident that He justifies His stand on the Sabbath and His activity there by arguing from the less to the greater, for, He shows that, if it be right to do something to one part of the body on the Sab-

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<sup>2</sup>Sylvester J. Hartman, A Textbook of Logic (New York: The American Book Company, 1936), p. 242.

<sup>3</sup>A parallel conditional argument is found in 1 Peter 4:18.



bath, it must be proper to heal the whole body, too.<sup>4</sup>

Another incident in the Savior's ministry which illustrates an argument of this kind is a similar defense of His Sabbath healings, as it is depicted in Matthew 12:12. Some of His contemporaries had asked Him whether it were right to heal on the Sabbath, seeing that He had healed the man with the withered hand. He replied by relating the parable of the one sheep falling into the pit on the Sabbath. Jesus maintained that, if it were lawful for the owner to rescue his sheep on the Sabbath, surely, then, it must be proper to perform a good deed for the benefit of a human being on the Sabbath, too. While the previous argument proceeded from the part to the whole, this one takes up the question as it has to do with a lesser creature and then indicates how the question is answered similarly in the case of a greater creature, man himself. Although this parable appears to be merely illustrative, it is also argumentative. As we see from verse 12b, the Savior argues that a human being must be of far greater value than the sheep. He draws the evident conclusion, then, that it must be permissible to do good for man also on the Sabbath.

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<sup>4</sup>In this instance, Jesus shows that the Jews actually gave preference to the law of circumcision even on the Sabbath. His alleged violation of the Sabbath had not, therefore, been established. Cfr. Jules Lebreton, "La Vie et l'Enseignement de Jesus Christ, Notre Seigneur," Verbum Salutis (Nineteenth edition, revised and corrected; Paris: Beauchesne et Fils, 1951), II, 13.



A parallel to this incident is the occasion recorded in Luke 14:1-6, in which the identical question about healing on the Sabbath occurs. Here, however, it is Jesus Himself who poses the question. Another difference is that here the question is asked before the miracle is performed. What is significant about the discussion is Jesus' argument from the case of relieving an animal to the matter of curing a human being on the Sabbath. If the action is right in the case of the former, it must be equally justified in the latter.<sup>5</sup> The opponents did not offer any rebuttal here. Therefore, the argument of Jesus not only established the correctness of His activity, but it also proved His teaching regarding the Sabbath to be true.<sup>6</sup>

The advisability of healing on the Sabbath is again discussed in the episode mentioned in Luke 13:15 ff. After Jesus had healed a crippled woman, He met severe criticism on the part of the ruler of the synagogue, who charged that the Savior was working on the Sabbath. Again, Jesus argues from the analogous case of the predicament of the animal lodged in the pit on the Sabbath. Certainly, Jesus argues, it is generally understood that even a strict Israelite will

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<sup>5</sup> Similar argumentation occurs in Matt. 5:33 ff. and in 23:16 ff.

<sup>6</sup> This is also regarded as an appeal to the better judgment of the opponents of Christ, or like the argumentum ad hominem. Cfr. Lebreton, op. cit., I, 147.



loose his ass or his ox on the Sabbath in order to lead the beast to water. How, then, can it be considered wrong, He concludes, to release this woman from suffering under the control of Satan (even on the Sabbath), after this affliction has existed for over eighteen years?

Perhaps no single book in the New Testament so forcefully presents the a minore argument as the Epistle to the Hebrews. The author uses it in the interest of demonstrating the superiority of the Christian religion and of the new covenant to the old covenant of the Law. His purpose is a practical one, namely, to discourage his readers from lapsing from the Gospel into a system of Judaistic legalism. As he endeavors to show wherein this superiority of the Christian religion consists, the author emphasizes that Christ excels all other leaders and beings. In fact, he enumerates five different kinds of mediators to which Christ was superior, as the atoning High-Priest of the new covenant. In 1:1 f., it is shown that Jesus is greater than the prophets in unfolding the will and ways of God to men; in 1:4 ff., it is emphasized how Jesus is superior to the angels; in 3:1-6, Christ is described as being greater than Moses, for Moses was a faithful servant in the "house," while Christ was the house; in 3:7-4:13, Jesus is pictured as surpassing Joshua, who led Israel into the promised land, for Jesus leads the believers into the eternal rest; in 4:14-10:18, the superiority of Jesus as eternal High-Priest is pictured in con-



trast to the inferior Levitical priesthood, the former being a priesthood like that of Melchizedek.

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews follows the theme repeatedly and demonstrates that the sacrifice and the office of Christ, the High-Priest, are superior to the old covenant with its offerings and sacrifices of animals. Arguing in somewhat the same fashion as he did in previous chapters, namely, from the less to the greater, in Hebrews 9:1 ff., the author demonstrates in what respects the Savior excels the Levitical priesthood. He enumerates about five points in which Christ is superior: first, His goal was superior; the Holy of Holies which He entered was God's presence; second, the means by which He came into God's presence was superior, namely, His flesh; third, the ransom-price which He paid was superior, namely, His blood; fourth, the frequency of the sacrifice was superior; not repeated annually, but offered "only once;" fifth, superior as far as the duration of His redemption is concerned: forever valid, no need of repetition. Thus the argument is summed up together with the fruits of redemption: it satisfies both God and also the needs of man's conscience.

There are also certain arguments of this kind which express a warning, as we notice in Hebrews 10:28 f. To prove that disobedience to the Gospel will result in divine judgments, the author refers to what punishments the Law threatened against those who violated the commandments of God. If



penalties were included for those who disobeyed the old covenant, the author argues, how much more will they be punished who do not obey the Gospel of Christ?

Arguing again for the superiority of Christ, the same writer appeals to the fact that the Levitical priests were mortal, while Christ was the everlasting and eternal High-Priest. Inasmuch as no successor was provided for Christ, as was done in the case of the Aaronic priests, He is superior. (This was another reason why the author referred to Melchizedek, for no successor was named for him.) This argument is developed in Hebrews 7:23 f.

This recurring theme, the superiority of Christ to the old covenant of Levitical sacrifices, is reflected also in Hebrews 13:10-12, as the author stresses the difference between the Levitical sacrifices and the sacrifices of Christ. The superiority of Christ's sacrifice lies in the fact that He brought Himself, and also that He came with His own blood to sanctify the people.

Like Jesus, this author argues "from the part to the whole" (a species of an a minore argument), in Hebrews 7:12. He says that where the priesthood is changed, there the entire legal covenant is taken away.

The apostle Paul also made use of the argument which we have been discussing, and, we might add, he did so as a result of his earlier Rabbinical training. Interestingly enough, the a fortiori argument is to be found no less than



nine hundred times in Tannaitic literature.<sup>7</sup>

La formule hébraïque de cette règle est qal wahômèr, expression grammaticalement anormale qui joint un adjectif et un substantif. Qal dans l'hébreu récent signifie: léger; appliqué aux lois, aux obligations, il désigne un commandement moins grave, ou plus facile à garder. Hômèr, en hébreu récent, signifie: matière, chose lourde; et, dans l'ordre juridique: commandement lourd, grave, difficile. La conjonction des deux vocables indique nettement le mécanisme de l'argument. On le décrit souvent comme pouvant revêtir deux formes: de minore ad majus, passer d'une espèce moins importante à une espèce plus importante: des hommes à Dieu; et l'inverse, de majore ad minus. Nous avons simplement ce raisonnement de forme très populaire que nous appelons raisonnement a fortiori et qui consiste à passer d'un état, où telle obligation, qualité, disposition, est moins nécessaire ou justifiée, à un autre état où tout cela plus évidemment requis. . . . Cette remarque nous suggère que nous devons voir dans cette forme de raisonnement moins un procédé exégétique et argumentation simple populaire.<sup>8</sup>

According to some scholars, this argument has been classified as a hermeneutical syllogism, to be identified with the Aristotelian type, as Bonsirven observes.<sup>9</sup>

The apostle Paul proceeds with this type of argument in 2 Cor. 3:1-11, as he endeavors to establish the superiority of the new covenant under the Gospel of Christ to the old legal one. In this section, he speaks of the superiority of the new covenant in two ways: first, the Gospel penetrates the hearts of men and converts them to the life of salvation,

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<sup>7</sup>Joseph Bonsirven, "Exégèse Rabbinique et Exégèse Paulinienne," Bibliothèque de Théologie historique (Paris: Beauchesne et Fils, 1939), p. 84.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 84.



while the legal covenant on tables of stone met people in an external manner only, without changing their hearts. Second, while the Mosaic covenant was glorious, the new dispensation of the Gospel surpasses it in glory and also endures forever.

There is evidence of this kind of argumentation also in Gal. 3:15 ff., as Paul reminds his readers that even a human covenant, ratified by men, is held with respect. No one adds or takes away from it. How much more, then, he argues, shall a covenant established by God, continue to have force. Even the Law, which came in four hundred and thirty years later than the promise given to Abraham, will not nullify the promise. This is another example of arguing from the less to the greater.

Aside from the many instances in which it seems rather obvious that Paul operates with the a fortiori argument, there may be some question as to whether he employs this approach in Phil. 4:8 f. He exhorts them to heed the following instruction as to their conduct: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." (AV) The term which is emphasized by some is "virtue," (ἀρετή). It is supposed that here Paul argues from the less to the greater:

Evidently he is exceedingly shy, not only of the Jewish, but also of the pagan way of regarding the moral life. That seems to be the reason for his using the



normal Greek term for virtue ( *ἀρετή* ) only once (Phil. iv. 8), and that in a passage which is a kind of a fortiori, where, as Lightfoot pointed out, he is arguing, or perhaps we should say appealing, on the basis of the Stoic presuppositions and sympathies of his hearers.<sup>10</sup>

However, this interpretation has a number of difficulties. The apostle, on the contrary, consistently showed the inadequacy of pagan virtue. The mere usage of the term "virtue" here would not prove that the apostle was appealing to their previous idea of uprightness. In fact, the same apostle judges that pagan ethic rather severely, as we see from Eph. 2:2; Col. 3:7; and others. While the apostle did not underestimate the "civil righteousness" of certain pagans, he does not seem to argue from that morality to the sanctified living of a Christian. This would be, indeed, an argument from the less to the greater. While we grant that the apostle praises the Athenians on Mars' Hill for their scrupulous attention to things religious, we would not hazard the guess that he placed that much value on pagan virtue as Dewar suggests.<sup>11</sup>

Another passage, in 1 Peter 4:18, comes under consideration here, for it seems that the apostle emphasizes the

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<sup>10</sup>Lindsay Dewar, An Outline of New Testament Ethics (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1949), p. 142.

<sup>11</sup>There is something similar to the a minore argument in Rom. 5:8-10, as Paul says that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us; how much the more, he argues, when we are in the justified state, shall we be saved from wrath.



certainty of divine judgment for the unbelievers. Their punishment will become a reality, Peter says, and the evidence is that the Christians suffer persecution. He argues that, if their suffering be intense, what shall be said of the judgment coming over the wicked?

#### The Argument from the Greater to the Less

We have seen how the writers of the New Testament, as well as Jesus, would argue from a minor case to a major one and then draw the conclusion from these premises. They also reversed this presentation by arguing, on the other hand, from the greater to the less. The Savior employs this manner of arguing in the incident recorded in John 7:22 f. The occasion for this discussion was the miracle of healing the man who had been infirm for thirty-eight years (according to 5:8 f.). When it happened, the leaders faulted the man for carrying his bed on the Sabbath and also condemned Jesus for healing this man on this sacred day. Both of these acts, the healing as well as carrying the mat, were regarded as "work" - a violation of the Sabbath ordinances. Jesus asserted that His doctrine came from God, and showed that the people were trying to slay Him. He then proceeds to defend what He did on the Sabbath. The basis of His argument was the practice of circumcision even on the Sabbath. Furthermore, He comments on the historical fact that circumcision was actually practised before the time of Moses, but that it



was made a legal precept by Moses after the patriarchs. The Savior then proceeded to demonstrate that, when one would be circumcised, he would not be considered a violator of the Law of Moses. If, then, Jesus healed a man's body on the Sabbath, Jesus argued, it must be right. Since it was not wrong to give a spiritual blessing (through circumcision) on the Sabbath, it cannot be a violation of the Law to give the physical blessing of healing on the Sabbath (the latter being a "lesser" blessing).

Like Jesus, the apostle Paul also makes use of the a maiore argument, in 1 Cor. 6:2 f. In verses 7 and 8, for example, he had approached the matter with the a minore argument. He builds up his case in an effective way. In verse 2, he reminds the readers that they, as saints, were to judge the world. In verse 3, he recalls that Christians are judges of the angels. The argument which he presents begins with the greater fact that the believers are judges of the world and of the angels and concludes with the statement (expressed by a rhetorical question) that they must be capable of settling their own disputes in matters of daily life, without resorting to litigations, before heathen judges.

Once more in 1 Cor. 9:11, we note how Paul employs this argument in order to establish the principle that the messengers of the Gospel are to receive remuneration for their spiritual labors. He illustrates this principle in



verses 7 and 9, by referring to the man who plants a vineyard. Then he offers a second illustration, the picture of one who feeds the flock and who partakes of the milk of the flock. Then, too, in verses 9 f., Paul mentions the statement of Deut. 25:4: You shall not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treads out the grain. In verse 11, moreover, he shows that he and the other servants of Christ have sown spiritual things in the behalf of the readers. He, therefore, asks: Is it a great thing if we shall reap your earthly things? The greater thing which Paul mentions first is the spiritual sowing of the Gospel, performed by Paul and his co-workers. The lesser thing which Paul thus proves is that the apostles ought to receive the benefit of their hearers' material blessings, even as those who sow grain will enjoy the fruits of their harvest. Indeed, while Paul employs illustrations here, they are argumentative.

Thus, the apostolic writers, following the example of Jesus, brought proof for their message and proceeded to argue either from the greater truth to the lesser fact, or from the lesser to the greater. As Bonsirven intimates, this was a "popular" way of arguing, a kind of argument which the people in general could recognize.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Bonsirven, op. cit., pp. 83 ff.



## CHAPTER XIX

### THE APPEAL TO PURPOSE

When the apostolic writers set forth their proof for the Gospel message, they interpreted God's dealings with man as the fulfillment of a benevolent design. It was foreign to the apostolic outlook to assume, like the pagan Greeks, that life on earth was a matter of chance. This is evident as the writers of the New Testament explain Christian suffering, as we notice in the remarks in Romans 8:28. Here one can detect how Paul appeals to a divine purpose even in speaking of the afflictions of a believer. All things, he says, work out for the good of them who are called to faith according to God's gracious purpose. The apostle then traces the divine purpose in the election of grace, the call of the Gospel, in justification, and finally in the glorification of the believers. We observe, however, that the writers of the New Testament not only appeal to a specific purpose when they seek to comfort their readers, but they call attention to a certain purpose in order to prove their doctrines true.

It appears that the apostolic writers were not the very first to draw attention to a divine purpose in order to demonstrate that a teaching came from God. There is the example of Jesus, Who defends His policy regarding the Sab-



bath by asserting what the original purpose of the day had been. It is the incident in which the leaders of Israel criticize the disciples for plucking grain on the Sabbath. In His reply, Jesus maintained that the disciples were not to be faulted for taking this liberty, inasmuch as David ate the shewbread, which had been intended only for the priests. If David's emergency action was passed by without censure, how can the opponents now judge the disciples? Then Jesus also reminded the Pharisees that they had forgotten the original purpose of the Sabbath: it had been introduced for the benefit of man. In other words, man had not been made for the Sabbath. This day was designed to furnish rest for every Israelite. As Jesus appeals here to the purpose of the Sabbath, He is demonstrating that He has not violated the teaching of Scripture regarding this sacred day. On the contrary, His doctrine of liberty agreed with the purpose which God had in mind for the Sabbath. This reply of Jesus has been interpreted as a "thrust at those Pharisees who kept the Sabbath for its own sake."<sup>1</sup> This appeal, recorded in Mark 2:27, reminds us of the utterances of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, in which He tells the hearers of the purpose of His coming, as well as of the deeper meaning of the Law.

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<sup>1</sup>James A. Kleist, The Gospel of Saint Mark: Presented In Greek Thought-Units and Sense Lines With a Commentary (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1936), p. 192.



On numerous occasions, the Savior appealed to the purpose of His coming into the flesh. Since His critics made the claim that Jesus had been overthrowing the laws of Moses, it was pertinent to make a defense of His doctrine regarding the Law. This he does especially in Matthew 5:17, when He asserts that He has come not to destroy, but to fulfill the Law. Furthermore, when the leaders of Israel frowned on His intimate association with the outcasts, He appealed to the purpose of His coming, namely, to call sinners rather than the righteous, Matthew 9:13.

Following the example of Jesus, the apostle Paul also made frequent reference to the purpose of the Law, for he wished to establish the weakness of the old covenant when he set forth the doctrine of justification by faith. In Rom. 3:19, for example, he shows that the Law condemns the persons who are subjected to its jurisdiction, and, one might add, it does so to those who have not complied with its requirements. The Law addresses itself to its subjects in order to convict all of them of guilt. The purpose of the Law, then, is to establish the universality of sin and condemnation. From this purpose of the Law the apostle concludes, therefore, that no person will be justified on the basis of works done in compliance with Law. For, he says, from the Law comes the knowledge of sin. The apostle, then, affirms that the condemnatory purpose of the Law proves that justification through the Law is impossible.



We note a similar treatment of the function of the Law in Gal. 3:23, as Paul refers to it as the guide which leads us to Christ. Indeed, the apostle does not look at the Law as an instrument of man's conversion. Its purpose is only preparatory as far as the unregenerate are concerned. It can neither justify before God, nor can it give spiritual life. In order to understand the appeal of Paul here to the function of the Law, one must bear in mind the wider application which the term *παιδαγωγός* suggests:

As well in his inferior rank, as in his recognized duty of enforcing discipline, this person was a fit emblem of the Mosaic law. . . . The metaphor of the *παιδαγωγός* seems to have grown out of *ἐκτροφεύμενα* and thus the main idea is that of strict supervision. The *παιδαγωγός* had the whole moral direction of the child, so that *παιδαγωγία* became equivalent to "moral training," and the idea conveyed by the term need not be restricted to any one function.<sup>2</sup>

Inasmuch as the Law served only as a kind of disciplinarian before the sinner came to faith, its function is temporary. The purpose which Paul emphasizes here is that the Law is to be restrictive so that we might be justified through faith. The apostle seems to imply that the Law demonstrated the inability of man to conform to God's precepts. (From Acts 15:10, too, we gather that the people of the Old Testament failed to comply with the requirements of the Mosaic ordinances.) While the apostle does not express it directly, he seems to

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<sup>2</sup>J. B. Lightfoot, The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, n.d.), p. 149.



imply that the purpose of this discipline was to convince the Israelites of the impossibility of finding acceptance before God by means of works. By pointing to this disciplinary purpose of the Law, Paul eliminates the Law as a way of justification and proves his thesis: man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the Law.

As Paul takes up the role of the Law again and again in his argument for justification by faith, he calls attention to what one might call the "medicinal" purpose of the Law, Gal. 3:19. In a rather elliptical manner, the inspired author says that the Law was added "because of transgressions." He refers to this function of the Law in order to show that the Law had nothing to do with justification. As potent medicine renders the sick person even more seriously ill in order that he may become well, thus the Law was given in order that sins might increase and eventually convince the individual that self-help would be futile. Why did the apostle feel compelled to mention the "medicinal" purpose of the Law? This he did since his readers might think that he was negating the Law entirely. On the contrary, Paul asserted, the Law did have a purpose, but not of justifying the sinner.

We have a parallel to this passage in the statement of Romans 5:20, although it does not appear to be argumentative as does Gal. 3:19. Nevertheless, the apostle appeals to the purpose of the Law as provoking and increasing transgres-



sions. He again shows that the Law was rather incidental, and did not play a part in declaring man righteous. The apostle Paul had compared Adam with Christ: As by the disobedience of one (Adam), all are constituted sinners, thus by the obedience of One (Christ), all are constituted righteous. The apostle shows that the Law came in only to increase sins. It renders man guilty and, in a way, prepares (by this conviction of sin) him for grace.

The multiplication of transgression is not the first and direct object of the law, but its second and contingent object: law only multiplies transgression because it is broken and so converts into deliberate sin acts which would not have had that character if they had not been so expressly forbidden.<sup>3</sup>

The same writer has occasion to appeal to God's purposes again in the treatment of the problem of Israel, in Romans 9-11. Paul wishes to show that God has not rejected Israel entirely, but that He has a faithful remnant. In Romans 11:11, he showed that God permitted the Gentiles to be "grafted" to the olive tree (referring to the acceptance of the Gentiles as believers) in order to make Israel jealous and to move them to return to grace. Although Paul himself had expressed disgust because of the way the Jews had rejected the Gospel in Pisidian Antioch and he, therefore, had

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<sup>3</sup>William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans," The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1896), p. 143.



actually turned from them to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46 f.), he was nevertheless concerned about the salvation of his people. This interest in the ultimate conversion of at least some of the Jews is expressed, then, in Romans 9-11. Above all, he wishes to prove that God's plan also for Israel was good and benevolent. In other words, God has not cast off His people, for His purpose is to save them. There has been, he wishes to say, no contradiction in God's dealings with His people. His method of training and restricting Israel, as well as His manner of dealing with the Gentiles are to be understood, Paul demonstrates, only in the light of God's purpose to show mercy to all. How this appeal to the divine purpose agrees with the other arguments of the apostle is to be seen in the following:

St. Paul now generalizes from these instances the character of God's plan, and concludes his argument with a maxim which solves the riddle of the Divine action. There is a Divine purpose in the sin of mankind described in 1:18-3:20; there is a Divine purpose in the faithlessness of the Jews. The object of both alike is to give occasion for the exhibition of the Divine mercy. If God has shut men up in sin it is only that He may have opportunity of showing His compassion. So in Gal. iii. 22 *ἀλλὰ συνέκρινεν ἡ χάρις τὰ πάντα ὑπὸ ἀμαρτίας ἐκ ἧ ἐπαγγελία ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ δοῦτος πνεύματος*, the result of sin is represented as being the occasion for the fulfillment of the promise and the mission of the Messiah. All God's dealings with the race are in accordance with His final purpose. However harsh they may seem, when we contemplate the final end we can only burst forth into thankfulness to God.<sup>4</sup>

As we will notice, practically all of these arguments

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 339.



appeal to some purpose of the Law. One of the emphases of Paul was that men know their sins through the Law, but the Law cannot justify them, Romans 3:20. Another emphasis of the apostle was that the ceremonial law was only an institution of the old covenant to foreshadow the new, Col. 2:16. Inasmuch as Christ had come, the ceremonial law, which predicted His work through certain sacrifices, restrictions of foods, regulations of the Sabbath, and other stipulations, had achieved its purpose. Therefore, it was null and void. The tendency of the Judaizing teachers and Gnostics to revive this legalistic system was, therefore, contrary to the Gospel of Christ. By appealing to the prophetic and symbolic purpose of the Law, Paul proves that it is no longer binding, for its function, being temporary, had been fulfilled in the incarnation of God's Son.<sup>5</sup>

A very enlightening argument is offered with a similar emphasis on the original purpose, for example, of the Levitical ordinances, in Hebrews 8:5 f. Here the author reveals that the function of these ceremonies and various regulations was not to save men, but merely to foreshadow heavenly things, the office of Christ, the High-Priest. Moreover, he states, in 8:7-13, that the very failure of the old covenant demonstrates that God had another covenant in

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<sup>5</sup>We are reminded here of what 1 Tim. 1:9 says of the purpose of the Law, namely, that it is for the lawless. Cfr. Gal. 5:18.



mind. Thus the writer appealed to the purpose of God. Likewise, in Hebrews 10:1 f., he affirms that the Law, being a shadow of things to come, could never make perfect, for its original purpose was not to make righteous, but to serve as a prophetic institution and as a type of Christ. There is also another appeal to the purpose of the Levitical ordinances in 10:3, to show the superiority of the new covenant to the old. The function of the ancient rites and ceremonies was not to remove sin, but to keep alive in the Israelites the consciousness of sin.

Thus the writers of the New Testament establish the faith of the Church as true by showing that, if the purpose of God and of earlier institutions were understood, there is nothing in Israel's past which contradicts or calls the apostolic doctrine into question. This appeal to purpose clarified the relationship between the old covenant and the new, and also proved that the message of the latter was from God.



## CHAPTER XX

### THE PERSONAL ARGUMENT

An effective method by which one can refute an opponent is to quote his authority against him. For instance, if a debater has built up a number of premises on the basis of what a renowned expert has said, another person can offer a rebuttal by taking a different statement of the same author and prove that he actually overthrows the view which seems to have been established previously. This has been called "the personal argument."

We have an example of this manner of arguing in the discourses of Jesus. He frequently selects that authority whom the Pharisees and scribes themselves claimed for their point of view. For example, for their witness against the teachings of Jesus, these leaders argued on the basis of the writings of Moses. As their prejudice against the Savior increased, they endeavored to find more points of difference between the theology of Jesus and the doctrines of Moses, the lawgiver of Israel. They centered their attention particularly on the Savior's apparent leniency regarding certain ceremonials, as we see from Matthew 15:20 and from Mark 7:5, but also on His view of the Sabbath, as we notice in the accounts in Matthew 12:1 ff., and Luke 13:14, together with other passages.



On one of these occasions, the Savior takes up the question of His deity in John 5:18 ff., which the Jewish leaders had seriously debated. In defense of His claim to be the Son of God, Jesus offered many replies, including the appeal to the witness of John the Baptist and to the evidence of His own works. The concluding argument, however, which seems most effective in this connection, is His attack on their prejudice and unbelief. He bases this reproof on the statements of their favorite authority, Moses. Jesus, therefore, uses this challenging question: "Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"

(AV) This is the argument that is contained in John 5:45-47. Although Jesus does not cite a specific passage from Moses' writings, He probably alludes to the same verse which Stephen quotes in Acts 7:37, namely: "The Lord thy God will raise up a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him shall ye hearken." (AV) This quotation is taken from Deut. 18:15. This evidence from the remarks of Moses himself was devastating. It silenced the opponents, for this "personal" argument was based on testimony they could not and would not challenge.

Jesus turns the authority of Moses to the same advantage in His remarks in John 7:19-23. When the leaders said that



He had a devil and opposed Him for healing a man on the Sabbath, Jesus defended Himself by showing that, although Moses gave them the Law, they did not keep it. He implies that their appeal to the authority of Moses was a "front," and did not rest on facts. He then proceeds to prove that Moses also gave them the command to circumcise. Yet, even if one be circumcised on the Sabbath, he is not breaking the law of Moses. He argues in this manner: "If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day?" (AV) This is recorded in John 7:23.<sup>1</sup>

Another favorite authority of the scribes and Pharisees was Abraham, the patriarch, as we notice from the narrative recorded in John 8:33 ff. When the Savior stated that those who follow Him will know the truth and that the truth will make them free, the Jews resented this, inasmuch as it implied that they were in bondage. They protested that they needed no liberation, for they were the free sons of Abraham. The rejoinder of Jesus to this claim of theirs appeals to the works of Abraham: "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of

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<sup>1</sup>John 9:29 indicates how the leaders of Jesus' day appealed to Moses, while Mark 12:26 shows how Jesus did this.



God; this did not Abraham." (AV) Thus, by appealing to the works and to the faith of Abraham, He removes the strongest support to which the opponents had been clinging in their arguments.

During the same discourse, the enemies of Jesus once more imply that they rely on their relationship to Abraham. In John 8:52-58, the discussion centers about this authority of theirs. Because Jesus claimed immortality for His followers, the opponents again charged that He had a devil. They wondered whether He were making Himself greater than Abraham. We observe here how they again sought escape in the fact that they had descended from Abraham. In reply, Jesus made clear that not physical descent, but the spiritual, is of significance here. He removes the foundation of their argument by revealing the true Abraham to them, whom they did not know. The real Abraham was the believer who rejoiced to see the day of Christ, though afar off, with the eyes of faith, John 8:55 f. Therefore, the leaders who are prejudiced against the doctrines of Jesus cannot be genuine children of Abraham, for he accepted the promises regarding the coming Savior. The argument of Jesus reaches a climax as He asserts that He has a claim that extends beyond any claim which Abraham could make: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Cfr. the appeal in Matt. 3:9; Luke 3:8; and others.



While it is not altogether clear whether or not the opponents of Paul also made an appeal to Abraham as the leaders did in attacking the claims of Jesus, the apostle takes up the incidents of Abraham's life to prove his doctrine of justification by faith: Gal. 3:6 ff. He is mentioned a number of times as the recipient of the gracious promise: 3:8; 3:14; 3:16; and others. Since Abraham was justified, not on the basis of works, but by faith, those who believe in Christ are the real children of Abraham, as Paul says, Gal. 3:29, as well as in Rom. 4:2-4. The case of Abraham is significant for all of Paul's encounters with the legalists, for, as he states in Rom. 4:10-12, the father of the faithful was justified before he received circumcision. The latter ceremony was merely a seal of that righteousness which he had previously received through faith in the promise. Although Abraham was the first to receive the specific command to be circumcised, he did not place his trust in that rite for his justification before God. Hence, we might say that Paul's reference to Abraham for establishing the doctrine of justification by faith was, in a way, a "personal" argument, and "he thus converts the arguments of opponents for His own."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Ernest De Witt Burton, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians," The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), p. 160.



Since the Judaizers had apparently drawn much of their argumentation from the law of Moses, the apostle Paul again appeals to the Law, that is, the "Law" in a broader sense, to a historical incident in which the implications of the bondage of the Law are illustrated. Inasmuch as the legalists had relied on the Law to state their case, now Paul also lets the "Law" speak for itself, that is, he cites Scripture. The Law (the Pentateuch), includes the story about Hagar. It records the facts regarding the differences between the son of Hagar, the sons of the bond-woman, and the son of Sarah, the real heir. Paul settles the argument for the justification by faith as he proves that mere physical relationship to Abraham does not justify before God. This he shows with the example of Hagar's son. But those who are like Isaac, born of the Spirit, are the real children of Abraham.

It is probably this kind of argument which Stephen implies in his answer to the charge that he changed the customs of Israel and violated the Law of Moses, Acts 6:14. He endeavors to show his regard for Moses as he reviews the career of Israel's first leader, verses 20-44. He recalls the message of Moses to prove to the Sanhedrin that he is proclaiming the same doctrine which their favorite authority did, Acts 7:37. Stephen also reminds the leaders that the fathers refused to listen to Moses, and, like them, the present accusers resist the Gospel of Christ and the activ-



ity of the Holy Spirit. He demonstrates that they, the leaders of Israel, are the ones who are not abiding by what Moses has taught.

It is this "personal" argument, then, that finds a proper place in the apostolic writings. While it does not occur frequently, it is that way of arguing which illustrates how both Jesus and the apostles took the offensive, rather than remain on the defensive, in their various controversies. Where they, then, step into the camp of the opponent, as it were, and employ his weapons, we have a personal argument.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>This argument is described in greater detail, with other implications, in Joseph V. Denney, Carson S. Duncan, and Frank McKinney, Argumentation and Debate (New York: The American Book Company, 1910), pp. 89 ff.



## CHAPTER XXI

### THE ARGUMENT E CONTRARIO

In the course of a debate, a speaker may actually concede to his opponent that his argument is correct. At least momentarily, he assumes the contrary view to be the acceptable one. In John 18:23, for instance, Jesus even assumes that He does something evil, but only for the sake of argument. This He does to refute His accusers. He challenges them to prove that He has spoken evil, and if they are unable to do so, what reason have they for striking Him? In an argument of this type, one may go so far as to admit that the statement is true, but he may point out that the principle does not apply in this particular instance. This he does for the sake of argument. He will thereby perhaps deprive the opponent of sufficient issues to attack, and thus prove that the objections of the other party have no validity or basis. Or, he may proceed to demonstrate that the ideas proposed by the opponent lead to something disastrous. This is what we call the argument e contrario.

We encounter this manner of arguing, for instance, in Gal. 2:18, as Paul indicates that restoring the ordinances of the Law with the hope of being justified through them is constructing something which he has torn down. In other words, after showing that through Christ the Law no longer



is valid, the apostle reasons that, if he reverted to a righteousness based on the Law, he would be making himself a sinner again.

By this statement the apostle sustains his *μη γένοιτο*, in which he denied the validity of the argument that by becoming a violator of law he had made Christ a minister of sin, the suppressed premise of which, was that violation of law was sin. By *κατέκρυψεν* is obviously meant the statutes of the law which Paul had by his conduct declared to be invalid. The reasoning of this sentence is of the type a contrario. So far from its being the case that I commit sin by violating statutes of the law, it is, on the contrary, the fact that I build up again those commands of the law which I broke down, I show myself therein a transgressor.<sup>1</sup>

This argument is decisive for Paul's doctrine because it indicates that the restoration of legalism leads to disaster, which in this case meant a return to the state of guilt.

We notice how this argument a contrario also proves in Gal. 5:2-6 that legalism and the Gospel are mutually exclusive. If the Galatians submitted to circumcision (in the hope of being justified by it), they would suffer the consequences of falling from grace. Furthermore, if they rely on this rite, Christ profits them in no way. The real disaster lay, as Paul saw it, in their gradual acceptance of the legalistic teachings. The readers were unaware of the fact that their willingness to adopt the Judaistic pattern of the observance of festivals, of ascetic restrictions, and

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<sup>1</sup>Ernest De Witt Burton, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians," The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1921), p. 130.



similar regulations, made them debtors to do the whole law. Far from justifying them before God, the legal system would bring them back into spiritual bondage. This proves that the doctrine of the Judaizers, in contrast to Paul's, leads to unsatisfactory results. It is to be rejected, then, while the apostle's Gospel is to be accepted as true.

In a similar vein, the apostle proves the doctrine of the resurrection of the believers in 1 Cor. 15:17-19. If one were to grant that the resurrection is an impossibility, he argues, the hope of the Christian is empty, and the ones who have died in the faith have perished. Not only are the consequences disastrous for the departed, Paul adds, but also for the living. Then we would be most wretched, having a hope centered only in the present world.

Les vers. 18 et 19 complètent ce raisonnement, en montrant que la conclusion négative est profondément attristante. Il faudrait cependant la tirer, si le Christ n'était pas ressuscité. Les chrétiens déjà morts seraient alors tombés dans le néant, et il est extrêmement significatif que le verbe ἀπαλλοτρίω - ils sont perdus est le même qui est employé au sujet des mecreants, pour indiquer la disparation dans la mort qui est engloutit. Une autre conclusion, c'est que les chrétiens seraient plus misérables que les autres hommes. Pourquoi? Parce que le chrétien reconcerait aux joies terrestres pour être le martyr d'une illusion.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, Paul considers the case of the heathen Gen-

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<sup>2</sup>Jean Hering, "La Première Epître de S. Paul aux Corinthiens," Commentaire du Nouveau Testament (Neuchâtel et Paris: Delachaux et Nestle S. A., 1950), VII, 137.



titles, and indicates how they fail to attain the righteousness which God demands, in spite of the fact that they know God from His manifold works, Romans 1:18. The apostle, then, observes that the Gentiles are lost without the Gospel. This negative argument, in addition to demonstrating the disaster to which the Gentile position leads, proves for Paul that the Gospel of Christ saves man. Here we have, then, another example of the argumentum e contrario.

It is interesting to observe that James, too, in his satire on the idea that faith can be present without producing good works, employs this manner of approach. In James 2:19, for instance, he proves the statement which he had made in verses 14 and 17, namely, that faith without works is dead. For one thing, the illustration in verses 15 and 16 (regarding the refusal to help a needy brother) proved that proposition. Faith, that is, faith in itself without the attendant work of mercy, cannot help that individual. As a parallel here, the apostle ironically mentions the "faith" of the devils. Yes, he argues, if you wish to speak of an intellectual faith, there is an example of this in the devils. If mere knowing about God is faith, the devils have faith, for they acknowledge that God exists. What is more, they tremble. The barren fruit of their faith is only a satanic fear. Thus James proves that faith without works (as its fruits) is dead. This argument e contrario in the theological presentation of faith by James is an argument



from reason, and establishes his doctrine from a negative angle, showing that the opponent's view of faith only leads to disastrous consequences.<sup>3</sup>

Somewhat related to the argument e contrario, although not perhaps identical with it in every respect, is that appeal to the danger of reaction.<sup>4</sup> One of the main examples of this argument we find in Gal. 4:8 ff. The warning of Paul is directed to his readers who were formerly pagan. In their previous state, they conformed to a number of ordinances and ceremonies. Now they were tempted to fall into a similar legalistic formalism, if they yielded to the Judaizers. If they submitted to the rites of circumcision and other parts of Judaism, they would be reverting to an elementary religion which sought justification in the works of man. In that case, it would mean that Paul had labored among them with the Gospel in vain. If they returned to an elementary re-

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<sup>3</sup>The argument which is an assumption or argumentum ex concessio, reminds us of Hebrews 6:9, and other passages. The apostolic writers on some occasions make a statement for the sake of argument, although it may seem as if they are yielding to the opponent. Thus in 2 Cor. 11:23, for instance, Paul allows the claim of the false brethren to be "servants of Christ" to stand merely for the sake of argument. Likewise, Jesus praises the zeal of the Pharisees (Matt. 23:15), but also points out the tragic fruits of their "missionary" activity. In Rom. 2:27, Paul also shows the undesirable plight of the circumcised who pride themselves in the Law, while the Gentile, less privileged, often follows the Law more consistently.

<sup>4</sup>Cfr. Merrill C. Tenney, Galatians: The Charter of Liberty (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), pp. 130 f.



ligion of legalism, they would not keep the benefits which the Gospel of Paul had given them.

Such a reaction from the higher way of faith back to the old way of ritual could only have a damaging effect on the lives of the Galatians. There is no spiritual darkness more dense than the darkness brought on by light rejected. The return to bondage would be fatal to spiritual progress, and would produce a result quite opposite to that which the Galatians sought in turning to legalism for perfection.<sup>5</sup>

A similar trend to return to legalism was in evidence at Colossae, where false teachers were coming in, introducing Judaistic ideas. In addition to reducing the doctrine of the person of Christ to a conception of the Savior as a kind of ethereal being, these teachers also insisted upon a number of prohibitions regarding food and drink and also called for a restoration of the Sabbath. According to his words in Col. 2:16 ff., these ceremonies of the old covenant were null and void, for they had foreshadowed the coming of Christ. In 2:20, then, he shows how the false teachers, promising good things, pay a severe penalty (a life of ascetic bondage) for their doctrines. The apostle implies, therefore, that embracing something so contrary to what Paul had taught them would bring regrettable consequences.

This argument, which calls attention to the undesirable consequences of an opposing view, is seen also in Hebrews 13:9 ff., which resembles the remarks of Paul both in his

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid.



admonitions to the Galatians and to the Colossians. The readers of the Epistle to the Hebrews were also in danger of reverting to a system of dependence on human works and of a reliance on ordinances for justification. The writer tells his addressees that, if they embrace this Judaistic legalism, they must bear in mind that those who previously had occupied themselves with these rites in the hope of attaining fellowship with God "were not profited." (AV) They were unable to satisfy God by means of these outward things. The disillusionment of those who previously attached themselves to the Judaistic system should be proof sufficient that any present trend in that direction would be wrong. This appeal ought to be a deterrent for them and convince them that the writer is supplying them with the truth.

There was a danger lest the Hebrews should be carried away from the straight course of the Christian life. The phrase shows that the activity of religious speculation had by this time produced large results. . . . The attractiveness of the novel views which endangered the faith of the Hebrews lay in their promise of security and progress; but such promises in the case before the Apostle were obviously vain. For no true stability can be gained by outward observances to which Judaizing and Jewish teachings lead. This must come from a spiritual, divine influence. The position of *χαρις* throws a strong emphasis upon the idea of "grace." Our strength must come from without. . . . It is natural that the Apostle should describe the privileges which were overvalued by a term which set them in a truer light as simply outward things. . . . They did not gain the end of human effort, fellowship with God.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Brooke Foss Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text With Notes And Essays (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), pp. 436 f.



Since, therefore, the acceptance of a legalistic system of rites and ceremonies does not convey spiritual satisfaction which it claims to do, a religion of this kind is false. This means that the author has scored another point in behalf of his doctrinal theme that the religion of Christ is superior to the legal covenant.<sup>7</sup>

While the argument e contrario is apparently a negative argument, it is a just and fair reply to an opponent, for it is a thorough consideration of the latter's views. It proves that the view which is contrary to the apostolic teaching is not only false, but is contrary to one's best interests. Although an argument may even begin with a concession to the opponent, as in Romans 4:2 ("If Abraham were justified by works, he has something to glory in, but not before God"), or passages like Rom. 4:3; 3:30; 2 Thess. 1:6; 2 Cor. 5:3; and others, it ultimately refutes the opposing position by demonstrating its negative results.<sup>8</sup> This is a method of arguing by which the writers of the New Testament, we might say, "unmasked" the opponent's fictitious claims. While the chief purpose of this reference to the failure of

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<sup>7</sup>The same author warns regarding this danger of reaction also in Hebrews 5:12-16:6.

<sup>8</sup>Assuming the view of an opponent to be true for the sake of argument and employing with it a neutral condition, has been called "rhetorical politeness." Cfr. Joseph Henry Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, Being Grimm's Wilke's Clavis Novi Testamenti: Translated and Revised and Enlarged (New York: The American Book Company, 1889), p. 172.



these opposing views is to prove the correctness of apostolic doctrine, this rejoinder is employed rather generally in the New Testament to warn against being deceived by the promises of false teachers, as we note in 2 Pet. 2:19, as well as in Jude 4.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Both apostles argue against the claims of the libertines, who actually lead men into a condition which is the reverse of their promises.



## CHAPTER XXII

### THE APPEAL TO NON-INSPIRED WRITINGS

It is rather common in the historical books of the Old Testament Scriptures to find a reference to writings, which while not inspired, were regarded with a degree of appreciation.<sup>1</sup> The fact that the prophetic writers mention them in no way establishes the quality of these records. In a similar way, the writers of the New Testament appeal to non-inspired documents as they unfold certain aspects of Christian doctrine and prove that their teaching is from God.<sup>2</sup>

The first type of documents involved here is the non-canonical literature of the Jews, which, according to a number of critics, exerted an influence on the apostles. Although we question the latter conjecture, we know, at any rate, that they must have been acquainted with these writings. It is felt that the apostles make use of these non-inspired works in order to prove their doctrinal statements. Since scholars have indicated certain apparent parallels be-

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<sup>1</sup>Writings like the Book of the Wars of the Lord, the Book of Jasher, the Book of Gad the Seer, and others which are mentioned to direct the readers to a source of more complete information regarding the characters of the Old Testament periods. Cfr. Josh. 10:13; 2 Sam. 1:18; Num. 21:14.

<sup>2</sup>It is evident, however, from Paul's remarks in Rom. 14:17 that the apostle had no interest in the views expressed by the Apocalypses. The latter held materialistic views.



tween these literary works and the statements in the New Testament, they also maintain that the apostles relied on these materials in formulating their position.<sup>3</sup> In general, we may say, however, that mere similarity in the subject matter in no way compels one to accept this point of view.<sup>4</sup>

First of all, it has been claimed that the apostle in Jude 14 does this very thing, namely, relies on the non-canonical writings for his source materials. At least, it is asserted that he quotes from the Book of Enoch:

The most noticeable case of formal citation, by a N. T. writer, of one of the apocrypha is in the Epistle of Jude, verses 14 f., where the words of Enoch, "the seventh from Adam," are given. The passage (probably quoted from memory, as was usually the case) is found in Enoch 1:9; cfr. 5:4 and 27:2. Jude 6 also has Enoch in mind.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>The importance of the apocalyptic literature has been perhaps exaggerated. It was a strange theology limited to a small group of adherents in Israel, for neither the Talmud nor Philo refer to it very frequently. For a discussion of the differences of outlook in Pauline theology and in the theology of the Apocalypses, cfr. Justus Koeberle, Suende und Gnade: Im Religiosen des Volkes Israel bis auf Christum: Eine Geschichte des vorchristlichen Heilsbewusstseins (Muenchen: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1905), p. 570. He seems to refute the claim that Paul leaned on the Apocalypses for his thinking.

<sup>4</sup>Fr. Torm, Hermeneutik des Neuen Testaments (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1930), pp. 185 ff.

<sup>5</sup>Charles Cutler Torrey, The Apocryphal Literature: A Brief Introduction (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1945), p. 19.



It is this claim that we wish to examine.<sup>6</sup> We notice that Jude is enumerating several examples in which God sent a judgment on man. After referring to these catastrophes, the apostle asserts that there will be a final judgment. In order to prove this, he appeals to the prophecy of Enoch: "Lo, the Lord comes with ten thousand holy ones, to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of their misdeeds in which they have acted in an ungodly way and of all their harsh words which they have spoken against Him as ungodly sinners." Here the apostle, some say, implies a dependence on the Book of Enoch:

The quotation that follows is a combination of passages from Enoch. "And, lo, He comes with ten thousand of His holy ones to execute judgment upon them; and He will destroy the ungodly, and will convict all flesh of all that the sinners and ungodly have committed against Him," 1:9; "Ye have slanderously spoken proud and hard words with your impure mouths against His greatness," v. c; cfr. also, xxvii, 2: the translation here given is that of Mr. Charles.<sup>7</sup>

It is commonly assumed that Jude cited the Book of Enoch in order to prove his teaching that there would be a final judg-

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<sup>6</sup>Another scholar states: "He has literary affinities with some of the apocryphal books and with some of Paul's writings." A. T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research (Fourth revised edition; New York: Hodder and Stoughton, George H. Doran Company, 1923), p. 124.

<sup>7</sup>Charles Bigg, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude," The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909), p. 336.



ment.<sup>8</sup> This view has been justified on the basis of the fact that Gen. 5:24 suggests that the patriarch Enoch was the recipient of special divine revelations.<sup>9</sup> There is, however, the obvious difficulty with the information supplied in Genesis, for the narrative of the life of Enoch there is brief, containing nothing about his message in particular. Others base their argument (that here Jude quotes from the Book of Enoch) on the similarity which exists between his quotation and the various translations of the document (the Book of Enoch).

There is scarcely any doubt that Jude is taking his quotation from the Book of Enoch, as a comparison of the Greek and Ethiopic texts of that work will show. While the quotation does not agree in all particulars with either the Greek or Ethiopic text, it shows such a striking similarity between them, agreeing at one time with one, and at another time with the other (in cases where they differ), that it is impossible to believe that this is not a quotation. Many scholars hold that the Book of Enoch was originally written in Hebrew, and we may assume that Jude is translating directly from the original. If this is the case, it will serve to explain the variations which we find in the quotation in the letter before us. This prophecy, which in the Book of Enoch (1:9) is spoken by an angel who interprets a vision which the patriarch had received as foretelling the final judgment, is introduced with the interjection

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<sup>8</sup>E. Kautzsch, "Die Apocryphen und Pseudepigraphen des Alten Testaments," Die Apocryphen und Pseudepigraphen des Alten Testaments (Tuebingen: J. C. B. Mohr - Paul Siebeck, 1900), II, 217 ff.

<sup>9</sup>Torrey, op. cit., p. 110.

<sup>10</sup>William J. Hassold, "An Interpretation of the Epistle of St. Jude" (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1949), p. 82.



The fact nevertheless remains that there is a lack of harmony in the details of the paragraph in question. Furthermore, accretions may well have crept into a work of this kind. Then there is also that problem which we encounter because we have no original of the Book of Enoch in existence. Another recent study takes these questions into account:

Not all those revelations attributed to him are contained in this book, and on the other hand some of the material included here was not in the original edition. While mainly the work of one author, it has received accretions of its own type. . . . The Semitic (Aramaic) original has perished, and only a small part of the Greek translation has been preserved. For a complete text of the book we are confined to the Ethiopic version, which was made from the Greek. There is especially to be mentioned the Book of the Secrets of Enoch, published by W. R. Morfill and R. H. Charles in 1896. This is a book originally composed in Greek but now extant only in a Slavonic version. It is based throughout on our apocalypse, but contains some new material and is completely refashioned. It is not clear that it is of Jewish origin, not that the claim of an early date is justified.<sup>11</sup>

Another argument in favor of the view that Jude here cites an apocryphal work to prove his teaching regarding the final judgment is the patristic evidence. It was usually supposed that Jude included a reference to the apocalyptic literature, for Eusebius and Jerome both defend the Epistle of Jude, although they grant that he used non-inspired literature.<sup>12</sup> At least, the secondary evidence favors the position that

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<sup>11</sup>Torrey, op. cit., p. 110.

<sup>12</sup>Hassold, op. cit., p. 3.



Jude cited the Book of Enoch. On the other hand, there are certain hazards which one encounters if one takes this point of view. First of all, Jude does not specify whether or not he is quoting from a written source. Then, too, there is the possibility that Jude had some of these quotations from some Jewish oral tradition. To be sure, this is a rather difficult point to establish. Furthermore, one might suggest that Jude received a special divine revelation in this instance. Third, it is possible that Jude uttered this appeal independently (as he was inspired) of the Book of Enoch, although he himself may have known the book very well. At least, it seems that the burden of proof lies with those who assert that he appeals to a non-inspired work.

Jude quotes Enoch, not some book. How well or ill or in what manner the Book of Enoch reproduces Enoch's prophecy, is a minor matter entirely and does not effect Jude. Jude quotes directly; whether the Book of Enoch quotes directly or indirectly, what difference does it make? Jude and the Book of Enoch say about the same thing; but that lends nothing to Jude, nor does it detract from him. Jude and the Book of Enoch both have the marked repetitions of the word "ungodly" (noun, verb.12).<sup>13</sup>

While there are a number of difficulties that surround this passage in Jude, one feels that the latter quotation dis-

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<sup>13</sup>R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of the Epistles of St. Peter, St. John, and St. Jude (Columbus, Ohio: The Lutheran Book Concern, 1938), p. 652. (Also in reply to Lenski's remark, we might state that the very familiarity of the lines in the Book of Enoch may have made it unnecessary to say that it was from this work. The mere mention of Enoch's words could have refreshed their memories regarding the message which they probably had read in the Book of Enoch.)



poses of the matter rather arbitrarily. The value of patristic evidence, while limited, is not to be discounted. Moreover, it is not necessary to demand that a writer state his source. Paul, for example, frequently draws on the utterances of the prophets of the Old Testament without identifying the material as an excerpt from a sacred book. The various possibilities seem to indicate that Jude, without specifying it, is quoting from the known work, the Book of Jude. At least, we can say that Jude is citing something which is not found in the canonical literature in this form. Even if Jude does not accept the Book of Enoch as inspired, he probably quotes from it to prove his point because he is assured that this particular statement in it is true.

#### The Appeal to Pagan Literature

Not only did the apostles appeal to general experience, but they also called attention to truths expressed by pagan writers. In his address on Mars' Hill, the apostle Paul mentions a statement uttered by one of the famous Greek writers: "As also some of your poets have remarked: 'We are His (God's) offspring.'<sup>14</sup> He could make this appeal

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<sup>14</sup>While the poets themselves may have been thinking in terms of abstract principles, about the "world-principle," Paul at least notices, in spite of their limitations, a grain of truth in what the pagans say about God. We might also remember here the difficulty of analyzing the Greek concept of God, for, at one time the Greeks employ the singular, *θεός*, and then, again, the plural, *θεοί*.



because of what he himself had been teaching and also because of what he mentions in Rom. 1:21 ff.; namely, that natural man has a conscience, as well as a natural knowledge of God. From this remark of the poets, Paul concludes, we are not to conceive of God in a materialistic manner. We are not to represent God in images of silver, gold, or of man's art, as if He were these tangible things. The passage which Paul cites here is an appeal to the pagan poets in behalf of his doctrine of God, and it is a significant one. The source of this statement in the Greek literature is observed in the following explanation:

The language here is quoted from an address to Zeus by his own son Minos: "They fashioned a tomb for thee, O holy and high - the Cretans, always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies! But thou art not dead; thou art risen and alive forever, for in thee we live and move and have our being." The whole of this extract is quoted (in Syriac) by the Syriac father Isho'dad in his commentary on this passage (probably based on Theodore of Mopsuestia). He ascribes the words to a panegyric of Minos over his father Zeus; we learn, however, from Clement of Alexandria (Strom. 1. 14. 59, 1 f.) that the second line (*κρήτες ἀεὶ ψεύδεσσιν, κακὰ θνητὰ, ψαλλέσθαι ἀρχαί*), quoted in Tit. 1:12 comes from a work of Epimenides the Cretan. . . . Rendel Harris . . . suggested that the panegyric in question might be the poem by Epimenides on Minos and Rhadymanthus referred to by Diogenes Laertius, 1. 112. (Or it might come from his *Theogenia* Diog. Laert., 1. III.) The four lines have been turned back into Greek by Rendel Harris (*Exp. VII. 111* (1907), p. 336, and by A. B. Cook (*Zeus*, 1 (1914), p. 664) . . . τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γ. ἔκ. From Aratus, *Phainomena* 5. The poem commences *ἐκ Διὸς ἀρχοῦ κέσθαι*.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1951), p. 338.



It is apparent that the apostle Paul draws from the literature of the Greeks to supply proof that his doctrine of God is acceptable. Here he intimates to his audience that, with their many shrines and altars, they were actually contradicting their own poets.

This appeal to the Greek writers, particularly to the poets, is not merely assembling analogies or parallels. A special significance, as we know, was attached to the very term, *ποιητής*, "poet." Among the ancients, the poets were regarded as men with unusual insight, and, therefore, were given the honor accorded to prophets and seers.

This estimate of the utterances of the poets is observed as Paul again in Tit. 1:12 makes an appeal to them: "A certain prophet of theirs, one of themselves, said: Cretans are always liars, wicked beasts, slow bellies." F. F. Bruce has suggested that, while the first line of Epimenides' work (according to the opinion of Clement of Alexandria), is quoted by Paul in Acts 17:28, the second line of the same Greek work is to be found in Tit. 1:12, both being taken from an address of praise to Zeus.<sup>16</sup> While critics have agreed that the lines were originally addressed to Zeus, not all maintain that they come from Epimenides. Chrysostom suggested that the line in Titus (1:12) came from Callimachus, Hymn to Zeus. Others suggest Aratus as the

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.



author. The problem seems to be there because many Greek works contain the sentences which are parallel to Paul's quotation, and there is often no way of telling what author or what work is being quoted, or whether it is a borrowed expression or original remark. While the source of the quotation is not definitely established, at least we can say that the apostle cites a pagan literary work to prove a particular point in his argument. A detailed discussion about the place of Epimenides among the poets and his reputation as a prophet among the pagans leads one to assume that Paul is alluding to him here. There is no doubt that references like these had a telling effect on his readers, who were well aware of the importance of these quotations.<sup>17</sup> From the study made by Dibelius, it is evident that Paul here refers to Epimenides in particular. He does so in connection with his comment on the false teachers among the Cretans, unruly and deceptive as they were. He supports this statement with the remark that even their own prophet had

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<sup>17</sup>A thorough study of this matter strengthens one in this view. Cfr. Martin Dibelius, "Die Pastoralbriefe," Handbuch zum Neuen Testament (Zweite Auflage; Tübingen: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr: Paul Siebeck, 1931), XIII, 85 f. This author treats the significance of Epimenides, supplying various testimonies from ancient writers who refer to the wisdom of this poet, as well as to the accuracy of his sayings. He also mentions the characteristic lying of the Cretans who said that Zeus had died. It was Epimenides who spoke in defense of the immortality of Zeus. This material points to the fact that Paul had a proper basis for his remarks to Titus, and the poet of the Cretans was his closest authority here.



made this commentary on the ways of the Cretans. Titus, therefore, was to be equipped with sound doctrine, in order to meet these deceivers, described as such even by their own authorities. Here again we see that the terms *πονηρὸς* and *πρόφητος* appear to be synonyms, for, if Epimenides were known as a poet (if he were the author of the words which Paul cites in Acts 17:28), then the apostle is accurate in calling him also a prophet, Tit. 1:12. It is interesting, too, as F. F. Bruce points out, that Plato calls Epimenides "a godly man," while Plutarch calls him a "lover of God and wise in godly matters."<sup>18</sup> This reference to the most prominent Cretan prophet was to serve as evidence that Paul, in warning against deceitful and exploiting false teachers of Crete, was giving an accurate appraisal. Here, Paul had a polemic interest: to refute the false prophets and to expose them. The best evidence that he could furnish in this situation was to appeal to one of the prophets whom the Cretans themselves had accepted. This particular emphasis in the apostle's appeal is evident:

Whom therefore they ought to believe, and whom I may quote without offense: Epimenides, whom they regarded not merely as a poet but as a prophet, a great religious reformer (*θεοφιλὸς καὶ σοφὸς περὶ τὰ θεῖα* . . . Plut. Solon, 12) and predictor, who had predicted the failure of the Persian invasion of Greece ten years before it took place (Plato, *Laws*, 1. 642 D), and whom

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<sup>18</sup>Dibelius, *op. cit.*, pp. 85 f.



we may still regard as a prophet. . . .<sup>19</sup>

If this line which Paul cites in order to give due weight to his warnings about doctrine, as critics have maintained, really comes from Epimenides, the quotation served as a potent argument in favor of the apostle's stand.<sup>20</sup> This becomes all the more clear if one notes what the status of Epimenides was among his people, the Cretans:

But that the Pastor attributed the verse to Epimenides can scarcely be doubted, for the Cretans had exalted their poet to mythical heights; not only could he predict the future but he could work marvellous miracles, including the prolongation of his life until he was two hundred and ninety-nine years old. And to him, as the wisest of philosophers, the authorship of all manner of epigrams, maxims, etc., was accredited.<sup>21</sup>

The same apostle turns once more to the Greek writers in 1 Cor. 15:33: "Be not deceived! Evil associations defile good manners." Here Paul, we admit, is not so much trying to establish a doctrine (for he had done this in previous verses), as to underscore a warning. He quotes this line in order to show that there is a definite danger in keeping

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<sup>19</sup>There is nothing in this appeal which would call for disapproval, for Paul is fair to say, as far as the sages utter the truth about the Cretans, they support what he says about the false prophets of Crete.

<sup>20</sup>Walter Lock, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles," The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924), pp. 133 ff.

<sup>21</sup>Burton Scott Easton, The Pastoral Epistles (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1947), p. 88. We, however, accept the Pauline authorship of Titus rather than Easton's view.



company with deceivers who deny the resurrection. The apostle, furthermore, suggests that a denial of this doctrine will affect the conduct of the proponents of the heresy. Moreover, by this saying Paul indicates that the error will also corrupt the character of Christians who associate with these errorists. Without identifying the saying, the apostle calls attention to it for strengthening his point. It is probably taken from Menander's Thais:

Paul may have known this saying only as a proverb, and so he appropriates it here, Menander, the Attic comic poet, has it in Thais. He may have originated this line, or again he too may have found it already coined. Menander has many apt maxims, and for this reason he was much read in the schools. Not much can be deduced from Paul's use of this proverbial saying. . . .<sup>22</sup>

Mentioning one of these maxims from the poet, Menander, the apostle makes his presentation convincing, because this saying must have been accepted by the general public.

Moreover, when we examine the previous verse, we note that the apostle repeats a remark used by the philosophers who sought the highest good. While it is more plausible that, when the apostle says: "If the dead rise not, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we may die," he may refer to the Septuagint translation of Is. 22:13, it is nevertheless interesting to note how closely this resembles the motto of the

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<sup>22</sup>R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians (Columbus, Ohio: The Lutheran Book Concern, 1935), p. 713.



ancient Epicureans.<sup>23</sup> While this does not seem to constitute a direct or positive argument for the doctrine of the resurrection, the appeal to what Menander says about evil company, from a negative angle, furnishes evidence against the denial of the doctrine. It demonstrates and proves that rejecting the doctrine actually leads to no advantage. We might say that the apostle argues for the resurrection in this manner: a denial of the resurrection leads the individual to view man's life as equivalent to the life of beasts.

Thus the New Testament contains, at least in these isolated instances, an appeal to writings which were not divinely inspired. This, however, does not detract from the forcefulness of the apostolic arguments. Although this is a minor appeal, it serves as an auxiliary argument to show that even in these incidents the apostle has taught accurately and in a manner characteristic of one sent from God. Above all, however, we assume that the supernatural element was always present as the apostle used these non-inspired authors for his arguments. The Holy Spirit, we maintain, guided the apostle so that he would select those portions from the non-inspired documents which were expressive of

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<sup>23</sup> More accurately, this represents the motto of those who misrepresented the views of Epicurus, who, to be exact, did not advocate the pursuit of baser pleasures, as his later followers did.



general truths, and which did not contain ambiguous or untrue statements.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

As one thus surveys the New Testament, one notices the cumulative effect of all the apostolic arguments for Christianity upon the reader. While there is little argumentation in the Johannine writings and in the epistles of Paul to the Thimotheans and to the Ephesians,<sup>1</sup> the writers of the New Testament employ every possible means of persuasion. The force of their arguments was acquired partly from the example of the Jewish, and partly from their own training, particularly in the case of Paul, who had opportunity to acquaint himself with the methods of the Greek orators, as well as with the patterns of Hellenistic argumentation, the latter of which he incorporated in his own style. The apostolic writers constructed arguments from Scripture and from the contents of their sermons,<sup>2</sup> from the logical patterns of the day, and from the unclassified Greek, namely, from non-technical literature.

On the other hand, it would be rather hazardous to at-

<sup>1</sup> It is true that simply because Paul rejects the use of rhetorical devices for his own sake, this does not mean that he did not employ certain methods of arguing when he set forth his Christian message. Cf. George Allison, *St. Paul's Sermons in the Thimotheans: The Greek Text with Introduction and Notes* (New York: William E. Glazier, 1934), p. 111.

<sup>2</sup> For example, the "Appeal to Types," the "Appeal to the Resurrection," and others.



## CHAPTER XXIII

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

As one thus surveys the New Testament, one notices the cumulative effect of all the apostolic arguments for Christianity upon the readers. While there is little argumentation in the Johannine writings and in the epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians and to the Ephesians,<sup>1</sup> the writers of the New Testament employ every possible means of persuasion. The form of their arguments was acquired partly from the example of the Savior, and partly from their own training, particularly in the case of Paul, who had opportunity to acquaint himself both with the methods of the Greek orators, as well as with the patterns of Rabbinical argumentation under Gamaliel. The apostolic writers constructed arguments from Scripture and from the contents of their message,<sup>2</sup> from the logical patterns of the day, and from the unclassified group, namely, from non-inspired literature.

On the other hand, it would be rather hazardous to at-

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<sup>1</sup>We feel that simply because Paul rejects the use of rhetoric merely for its own sake, this does not mean that he did not employ certain methods of arguing when he set forth the Christian message. Cfr. George Milligan, St. Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians: The Greek Text With Introduction And Notes (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1952), p. xliii.

<sup>2</sup>As, for example, the "Appeal to Types," the "Appeal to the Resurrection," and others.



tempt classifying the various arguments of the apostolic writers according to the audiences addressed. For instance, while Paul uses the Scriptural argument sparingly on Mars' Hill, it would be inaccurate to say that the writers of the New Testament employ this particular argument only before Jewish audiences. This would be an over-simplification. While it is true that the apostle in Gal. 2:7 f., refers to the mission to the Israelites on the one hand and the mission to the Gentiles on the other, the groups which the apostles addressed in person or by letter were not homogeneous assemblies. This means that no single group could claim that it was "the church of the Israelites," except perhaps the mother church at Jerusalem, or that it constituted "the church of the Gentiles." We notice this condition very early, in fact, on the Day of Pentecost, when the Gentiles were also present to hear the Gospel. To this we add the fact that in centers where Paul preached in the synagogues, there, too, Gentiles ("God-fearers") participated. We mention these facts to emphasize that one cannot generalize about Paul's manner of presenting proof for his teaching, as if he never used the Old Testament Scriptures in arguing before Gentiles.

Nevertheless, certain characteristics of the apostolic approach in their argumentation are worthy of consideration. In general, we may say that in the New Testament we find the writers arguing less in a case in which there is more need for consolation than correction of abuses. As is to be ex-



pected, we encounter several arguments which meet a local situation involving the danger of losing the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith, as in the case of the churches of Galatia. Here, the apostle Paul, to meet the controversy with the Judaizers, employed a type of polemics which met the opponents on their own ground. Not only did he confront errorists of the latter type, but also the Gnostic type of teachers. Furthermore, there is no doubt that the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews endeavored to counteract a Judaizing influence, too, in his argument for the superiority of the priesthood of Christ.

However, it is not only in controversy or in situations of defection that the apostles argue for the genuineness and for the divine origin of their Gospel. There were also moral and practical problems which had to be solved, for example, at Corinth. The apostles were thus compelled to draw on whatever arguments could be adduced to deter the Corinthians from their present disorderliness and immorality and move them to live according to the purpose for which Christ had redeemed them.

Moreover, the apostle Paul in particular had to offer a rejoinder to the arguments which critics of his ministry had expressed. Therefore, he appealed, for example, to the accomplishments of his preaching or to his divine call, or other pertinent facts. These arguments were mainly in the interest of the office of Paul's ministry, but if he had not



defended his apostleship, the faith of his readers might be endangered, for they were beginning to doubt the message of Paul because of what others had said.

Then, too, the writers also argue, though less frequently, in order to remove the doubts of their readers. This appears to be the apostle's purpose in discussing the Parousia of Christ in 2 Pet. 1:16-21, and in fortifying his instruction by recalling what he saw at the Transfiguration. In a similar way, Paul seeks to dissolve the misgivings of the Christians at Thessalonica regarding the lot of deceased believers, 1 Thess. 4:13 ff.; 2 Thess. 1:5; 2:1 ff. Finally, the apostle Paul faced an audience of an unusual nature on Mars' Hill, for the persons were tolerant, yet the results show that most of them had been hostile after the argument for Christianity had been presented. While it seems that at first Paul met a neutral or fair-minded audience, the subsequent comment of Luke lists a number of reactions: procrastination, skepticism, hostility, and ridicule. Yet, he also mentions the fact that some were converted, as "certain men," together with Dionysius the Areopagite and Damaris, and others.

Although we can visualize how the learned men of Athens employed their skill in argumentation at the market-place or on Mars' Hill, we have something remote from mere academic exercise of the Stoics or Platonists when we encounter the arguments of the apostolic writers. Their interest was



rather a theological one. They had the purpose in mind of exalting and glorifying the Savior Whose Gospel they proclaimed and in Whom they themselves believed. Their aim was to show that this Jesus was both Christ and the Son of God. With untiring frequency, they testified concerning His atoning death and triumphant resurrection, for they were His chosen eyewitnesses. Furthermore, they did not argue in a detached, abstract manner, but bore in themselves the consequences of their activity. When, therefore, Paul has relied on every conceivable argument before the Galatians to prove that man is justified by faith and not by works of the Law, he makes a personal appeal: "From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." (AV) This reference is in Gal. 6:17. Then, too, the apostles argued in the fear of God, for they knew the terror of God and thus persuaded men, with the day of their accounting in view, 2 Cor. 5:11. While for their contemporaries the chief goal was the winning of an argument, whether by casuistry or sophistry, the aim of the apostles was consistently practical. They were primarily concerned with winning people rather than arguments alone. They argued, for example, the matter of giving and taking offense because they were troubled lest someone might cause a weak brother to fall from faith, "for whom Christ died." The underlying purpose of all their argumentation is to persuade men to accept Christ as the Savior, and, in the case of the



regenerate, to safeguard and to strengthen that faith.

These, then, are the reasons why the apostles seriously endeavor to prove that their doctrines are true and that they come from God.

Finally, we note that this argumentation of the apostolic writers was part of their conflict with individuals and with ideas opposed to the Gospel of Christ.

"Seeing that we demolish seducing reasonings," that is, sophistries and plausible fallacies with which Jews and Gentiles evaded the teaching of the Apostles. Cfr. Prov. xxi. 30. There is nothing personal in the warfare which the Apostles wage. They assail arguments and ideas in order to win over those who hold them. They do not attempt to destroy the reasoners in order to stop the arguments. And in demolishing reasonings St. Paul did not use *πρώτης σοφίας λόγους*, though some missionaries did according to their ability; the spiritual power with which he was endowed sufficed.<sup>3</sup>

After thus exploring the methods of argumentation used by the writers for this basic objective, we make Paul's aim our own, as 2 Cor. 10:5 f. expresses it:

*αἰχμαλωτίζοντες τὰν νόημα εἰς τὴν ὑπακοὴν  
τοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ ἐν ἐσολμῶ ἔχοντες ἐκδικῆσαι  
πᾶσαν παρακοήν, ὅταν πληροῦσθῃ ὑμῶν ἡ ὑπακοή.*

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<sup>3</sup>Alfred Plummer, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary On The Second Epistle Of St. Paul To The Corinthians," The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1915), p. 276.



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