

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

times to be considering the Greeks ; and, instead of always thinking of the many unwise, we should occasionally give attention to the few wise. We must seek the lost not only in the purlieus of vice and crime, but on the slopes of Parnassus and among the thyme of Hymettus ; for there human beings may be sinning and suffering quite as much ; and, while we do not withhold from the multitude the rousing message of the evangelist, we must seek, with the Ecclesiast, to find out " acceptable words " for the select few who aspire not only to live but to grasp the philosophy of life. The Apostle who wrote, " My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom," went on to say in the very next breath, " Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect."

JAMES STALKER.

THE CHRIST-PARTY IN CORINTH.

DISPUTE about the divisions at Corinth, reported to Paul in Ephesus by members of the household of Chloe, refuses to be silenced. It is with good reason. The matter is too vital to our understanding of conflicting tendencies in the primitive Church, too indispensable to our appreciation of Paul himself in relation to the older apostles, and withal too inherently obscure and disputable, to permit its quiescence. We urgently need to understand ; yet the varying interpreters refuse to be reconciled. Under these circumstances the needful thing is not the restatement of old arguments, but the contribution of new data. The latter is our aim.

Lietzmann in his recent Commentary on First Corinthians¹ very justly remarks on the passage (i. 12) : " Each one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas,

¹ *Handbuch z. N. T.* iii. 1, 1910, p. 85.

and I of Christ," that since Paul puts the fourth clause "and I of Christ" on precisely the same level as the other party cries of the Corinthians, and therefore connects with it grammatically the primary clause "Each one of you saith," there certainly must have been in Corinth a particular faction which boasted themselves "Of Christ." This grammatical argument is fatal (as Zahn had already pointed out¹) to all interpretations which reduce the factions to three, such as von Dobschütz's, which takes the words "And I of Christ" as Paul's counter-declaration: "Each one of you says . . . ; but as for me, Paul, I am of Christ." The negative argument that aside from the statement itself of 1 Corinthians i. 12 we have little or no reference in the Epistles to a 'Christ-party,' is quite inadequate to overcome the clear grammatical sense. The party-cries at Corinth were not three, but four in number.

But neither can we rid ourselves of the problem as to the nature of the fourth faction by declaring with Zahn and B. Weiss that there were no real *parties*, but at most mere *tendencies*, the party-cries being used by Paul only for purposes of illustration, without any intention on his part of suggesting that there were just these four. Zahn himself, after declaring it the greatest possible mistake to regard these divisions (*ἐριδες*) as "parties," proceeds to interpret the "tendencies" as well-defined movements of thought or action. We need not quibble about the distinction of 'party' *versus* 'tendency,' so long as Paul himself makes clear the fact that "the body of Christ" was in danger of disruption because of factious rallying cries, whereof four at least were sufficiently outstanding to serve as examples of the danger. What we must beware of is the too easy solution obtained by eliminating that one of the four which perplexes us because of a lack of data in the

¹ *Introd. to N. T.*, vol. i.

Epistles. In reality, if the data we are about to adduce are valid, the 'Christ-party,' whose name, or party-cry, seems so difficult to interpret in any reasonable sense, is just the party (or tendency) most important to be understood. To eliminate it with Heinrici as the interpolated gloss of some reader is to destroy the evidence one finds it difficult to interpret. To explain it away, with von Dobschütz, Zahn, or B. Weiss, as representing no particular element in the Corinthian body, is little better. The same result is reached of destroying instead of interpreting the evidence, if with Baur and the Tübingen school we remove all distinction between those "of Christ" and the element which boasted the name of "Cephas." This is not merely inconsistent with the admitted sense of the rest of the passage, but deprives us of the most significant of all the facts at our disposal for understanding the relation of Paul to the Judaizing "false-brethren" on the one side, and to the "Pillar" apostles on the other.

To imagine a tension between Paul and the Cephas-party so great as to call forth the unmeasured denunciation of 2 Corinthians x.-xiii. is to involve oneself in a double absurdity. In the same series of letters Paul begins by calling for the utmost tenderness and consideration for certain persons of Jewish scrupulosity termed the "weak" or "weak consciences" (1 Cor. viii.). A little later he himself violently assails certain Judaizers who "trust in themselves that they are of Christ." (2 Cor. x. 7 ff.) If there is no difference between these two Jewish-Christian groups, Paul sets a very bad example while preaching charity and toleration. Moreover we shall ourselves be puzzled to find a suitable object for his invective. Such expressions as "ministers of Satan," "false apostles," "enemies of the cross of Christ," applied to James and Cephas and John would destroy their own intended effect by their extravagance. Nothing in all Paul's writings

can be pointed to which gives ground for supposing that the ' Pillars ' had ever done anything to evoke from him such bitter hostility. Galatians ii. 1-10 is far from supporting such an idea. It refers indeed in no measured terms to certain " false brethren privily brought in to spy out our (Gentile-Christian) liberty " ; but as regards Paul and the " Pillars " it describes the contrary relation, a cordial agreement, sealed by " the right hand of fellowship " and the communion of giving and receiving. The " Pillars " repudiated the " false brethren," rejected their demand for the circumcision of Titus, and endorsed without reserve Paul's apostleship and " gospel to the uncircumcision." The parallel to this narrative in Acts xv. is equally emphatic on all these points with Galatians ii. 1-10, though unreliable in its further attempt to explain how the *unsettled* point—fellowship between Jewish Christians maintaining their legal purity, and free Gentile Christians—was adjusted. We know in fact from Galatians ii. 11-21 that it was not adjusted without years of trouble and division. The cordial relations established at Jerusalem were marred, perhaps broken off, by the disagreement with Peter at Antioch. But Paul himself does not charge Peter with anything worse than weakness and inconsistency. Peter had first followed the lead of Paul, disregarding Mosaic distinctions in the interest of Christian fellowship. Later he had been over-persuaded by " certain from James " to a different interpretation of the agreement made in Jerusalem. He had thus by his example aided and abetted those who sought " to compel the Gentiles to Judaize." But the argument which follows, whose aim is to show the futility of the attempt to combine law and grace, and which so clearly defines Paul's own consistent doctrine, over against the inconsistency of Peter, proves that the violation of the agreement of verse 10 was not conscious or intentional. Had

it been conscious and intentional, arguments of this kind would be wasted. We need not wonder that Acts should pass over these painful scenes of disagreement between Paul and the older apostles, substituting the adjustment of the "Decrees" for the solution advocated in Paul's Epistles; but to admit this discrepancy is not to class Peter, John, or even James, with the Judaisers. As I have shown in my Commentary on Galatians,¹ it is a gratuitous slander on the "Pillars" to put them in the company of the "false brethren" whom they had just before successfully resisted at Jerusalem (Gal. ii. 3-5). Why should Peter and Barnabas now at Antioch repudiate the agreement secured by their help in Jerusalem? Such conduct would imply a childishness inconceivable in grown men of serious character and responsible position. Undoubtedly the public rupture between Paul and Peter rekindled to more than its original ardour the zeal of the propagandists of circumcision. But Peter and Barnabas and "the rest of the Jews" at Antioch who "were carried away with their dissimulation" can have had no part in the anti-Pauline propaganda. Even had their resentment at Paul's rebuke tempted them to join his enemies, their previous solemn acknowledgment of the divine authority of his apostleship and gospel, and their official refusal to require the circumcision of Titus (Gal. ii. 1-10), made desertion to the anti-Pauline propaganda impossible. Recognition of his apostleship and gospel as *from God* is action which in the nature of the case stands irrevocable. The attempt to revoke it could be made only at the cost of acknowledgment of their own complete untrustworthiness. The Jerusalem agreement and rejection of the Judaisers were *not revocable*.

After the breach at Antioch denial of Paul's apostleship and gospel were indeed resumed. Of that the Epistles to

¹ "Bible for Home and School" series, Macmillan, 1909.

the Galatians and Corinthians give unequivocal proof. But the "false apostles," the "ministers of Satan masquerading as ministers of Christ," against whom Paul fulminates, could not possibly boast the names of either Cephas or James; for both James and Cephas were committed once for all against them and in Paul's favour, both as regards Paul's apostleship, and (in principle) his gospel. The Jerusalem agreement stood. The interpretation of it fluctuated. The argument of Galatians ii. 15-21 proves that it was only on the question whether *Jews too, as well as Gentiles*, were "justified not by works of law, but only through faith in Jesus Christ" that there was difference between Paul and the vacillating Cephas. The Jerusalem agreement had not settled this.

If, then, the extreme and bitter opponents of Paul, against whom he launches the unrestrained invective of 2 Corinthians x.-xiii., are represented at all among the four party-cries: "I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ," it cannot be by those "of Cephas," it can only be by the last; for Apollos, the disciple of Prisca and Aquila, established at Corinth by their commendation, whose return thither is still greatly desired by Paul himself (1 Cor. xvi. 12), is clearly out of the question. And not only is this identification of the Judaising "false brethren" with "they of Christ" among the Corinthian factions suggested by their remoteness from those "of Paul" and nearness to those "of Cephas" in order of enumeration, but Paul himself in concluding the section on the use of 'wisdom' (1 Cor. iv. 6) says expressly that he has limited the application of his rebuke to the matters concerning himself and Apollos. The nature of the discussion shows that the matters in debate with the Judaisers are not here considered. The least of the differences at Corinth is that concerning the use of 'wisdom' (philosophy), and the statement of iv. 6 implies that those

concerning the Cephass-party and the Christ-party are deferred. Indeed it is hardly needful to prove that the Judaisers could boast neither the name of Paul, nor that of Apollos. Only Godet hits upon an eccentric and ill-advised idea in identifying the 'Christ'-party with certain hypothetical ultra-Hellenisers, forerunners of the Docetists of the second century, to whom reference would be made in 1 Corinthians xii. 3, as men who say "Jesus (i.e. the Nazarene mechanic, as against the Aeon Christ) be anathema." But this, of course, would put the party-cry of 1 Corinthians i. 12 out of all relation to the boast "I am of Christ" of 2 Corinthians x. 7.

If, then, at Corinth those "of Cephas," and those "of Christ" were Jewish Christians of the two types, (1) the "weak," who conceded liberty to the Gentiles but were timorous for themselves, and (2) the anti-Pauline Judaisers, in what sense were these names "of Cephas" and "of Christ" employed, especially by the latter group?

Even Lietzmann seems none too clear in his distinctions; for he writes: ¹ "We may regard the Cephas party as Judaisers (*Judaisten*): ix. 1 f. will have been directed against them." Unquestionably 1 Corinthians ix. 1 f. does allude to the Judaisers; but for reasons already given opponents of Paul's apostleship cannot possibly at this time have boasted the name "of Cephas." Those who said "I am of Cephas" certainly represented a much milder line of divergence. They were the "weak brethren," willing enough to concede liberty from the Mosaic requirements to Gentiles, but scrupulous as regards themselves, and therefore asking concessions when among Gentile believers, particularly on the score of "meats," lest their weak conscience should be defiled. Peter had demanded them at Antioch. Such concessions Paul is ready and anxious to see made by his own followers—if it be

¹ Op. cit. p. 85

as a matter of grace. When they are demanded as "necessary" (Acts xv. 28, *ἐπιβάναγκες*) they lead to "doubtful disputations" and should be refused (Rom. xiv. 1f.). He had acted on this principle at Antioch (Gal. ii. 11 ff.); but when he went up to James in Jerusalem (Acts xxi. 18) it certainly was not without hope of amicable adjustment. The tone employed in his subsequent references to Peter and Barnabas, a tone of respect and regard (1 Cor. ix. 6; Col. iv. 10), agrees with the great stress laid in all the Epistles on the duty of avoiding "offence" to tender consciences. On this point I must ask leave to quote from the little commentary already cited:—

The great emphasis laid both in First Corinthians and Romans on the duty of avoiding offence to the 'weak' brother, by inconsiderate application of the Pauline principle 'All things are lawful,' especially in the matter of 'distinctions of meats,' and the 'pollutions of idols,' is very noticeable. It can only be for the benefit of Jewish Christians [i.e. Christians of Jewish birth and training, *not* "Judaisers"], scrupulous of conscience regarding Sabbaths, holy days, and meats (Rom. xiv. 2, 5), yet peaceably disposed, and not making their scruples a subject for "doubtful disputations." Who are these toward whom Paul shows himself so considerate, if not those who at Corinth claimed to be 'of Cephas,' and who at Antioch seem to have remained masters of the field?

This relatively mild and harmless type of Jewish Christian, not able, if he wished, to make trouble while in the minority, might well put forward the name of "Cephas" as his example; for such precisely was the attitude assumed by Peter after the coming to Antioch of "certain from James." Its weakness has never been so overwhelmingly exposed as in the brief argument which Paul reports in Galatians ii. 14–21. It has faith that like "sinners of the Gentiles" it is "justified by faith in Christ," but not faith enough to let go the additional ground of Abrahamic descent and Mosaic purity. So (all unconsciously) they "make void the grace of God" and act as though "Christ died for nought."

Paul's logic against Peter is remorseless ; but we have all the less reason to believe it had effect on Peter, Barnabas and "the rest of the Jews," from the fact that our own Book of Acts attributes precisely the Petrine standpoint not only to James and all the apostles, but actually to Paul himself ! Paul, according to Acts xxi. 20-26, even takes public and formal action at James' request, to prove that when among the Gentiles he sets the example himself of strict legalism and teaches "the Jews which are among the Gentiles" to circumcise their children and to obey the Mosaic customs. That is, according to Acts, Paul repudiates as a slander the statement that he teaches the very things which his Epistles insist upon as obligatory !

It appears, then, that those at Corinth who said, "I am of Cephas" meant that on the burning questions of the day, circumcision and the Mosaic requirements, they *followed the example* of Peter, who had welcomed Gentile converts without the yoke of the law, but shrank from Paul's application of Christian liberty to his own case in becoming "as without the law to men not under the law." This became as a matter of fact the general standpoint of the church : The law is obligatory on Jews, even when they become Christians. Other Christians do not need to observe it except in certain parts which the apostles have specified for good reason.

In attempting to make unmistakably clear the distinction between the Cephas-party and the Judaisers, or Christ-party, I shall ask leave once more to resort to my Commentary on Galatians, continuing from the close of the preceding citation.

It is a different type against whom Paul launches the fierce invective of Galatians, Corinthians and Philippians, denying to them even the name of brethren, calling them 'spies,' 'ministers of Satan disguising themselves as angels of light,' 'false apostles,' 'super-extra apostles,' intruders in the ready-reaped harvest-fields of others. These intruders he expressly excludes from the

farewell blessing of his letter to the Galatians (vi. 16), and even invokes on them his solemn anathema (i. 9). Had we Galatians alone we might easily be misled into thinking that Paul classes Peter and Barnabas in this group. . . . But the later epistles enable us to discriminate. The Judaisers, even if any of them now came from Antioch into its mission field, were not of Antiochian origin [Gal. ii. 4; Acts xv. 1], and did not appeal to its authority. 'Those of repute' at Jerusalem were the authority to which they at first appealed. Later, it would seem, [when the 'Pillars' had given verdict against them, Gal. ii. 3-10], they appealed to the example of Christ himself 'after the flesh' (1 Cor. i. 12, 2 Cor. x. 7, v. 16). It does not appear that they ever claimed the support of Peter, nor even of James after Gal. ii. 12. They urged that Jesus himself had been a Jew faithful to the law. Paul too, they pointed out, would admit that Christ had been 'a minister of the circumcision' (Rom. xv. 8). In the letter of boasting which his disloyal Corinthian converts compel him to write (2 Cor. x. 1-xiii. 10) to offset the 'letters of commendation' which these interlopers displayed, Paul draws their portrait with no gentle hand. They were 'Hebrews,' 'Israelites,' 'the seed of Abraham,' 'ministers of Christ.' They stretched themselves to reach out into another's province. They called themselves 'apostles (i.e. missionaries) of Christ,' and magnified their authority to take tribute of the churches. The name of James is not mentioned. Paul could not bring it in on his own behalf otherwise than he has done in Gal. ii. 1-10, until a personal interview (Rom. xv. 30-32, Acts xxi. 18, 19) should clear away mutual misunderstanding [that of Gal. ii. 12]. James' death occurred but shortly after (ca. 62 A.D.). Judaisers boasted a higher name (2 Cor. x. 7), and perhaps were themselves not altogether sure of the approval of James; for on at least one critical occasion his verdict had been given against them (Gal. ii. 9). Certainly Paul was hopeful of a good understanding when he 'went in unto James' attended by the delegates of his Gentile churches (Acts xxi. 18).

The citation of this earlier statement is not made for purposes of change or correction, but for the purpose of making unmistakable the distinction between the Cephas-party and the Christ-party at Corinth, before introducing certain new evidence which shows by ancient testimony that the party-cry "I am of Christ" was actually used by this particular faction of the extreme anti-Pauline Judaisers (the "Ebionites" as they came to be called) in the sense: I *follow the example* of Christ in His obedience to the law.

The Christ-party did not avail themselves of the name of James ; mainly, no doubt, because they could not. Between the occasion of Paul's onslaught at Antioch on the delegates "from James" (Gal. ii. 12) and the renewal of cordial relations at the second Jerusalem conference (Acts xxi. 18), they could probably count on James' silence, but certainly not on his support for their covert attacks upon Paul. But the name of James would hardly have availed them much could they have used it. What they most needed, and could best depend on, was the far higher,—the supreme authority of Jesus. Here they had the immense practical advantage over Paul of being able to claim personal knowledge of Christ in His earthly ministry. Moreover even Paul could not deny that Jesus had been "born under the law" (Gal. iv. 14), that He had lived in blameless obedience and loyalty to it, had been, in short, "a minister of the circumcision" (Rom. xv. 8), though according to Paul this was "not to please himself." Jesus had (according to Paul) shared the reproach of Israel "for the sake of the truthfulness of God, to make good the promises given to the fathers." If the party-cry "I am of Christ" means "I *follow the example* of Jesus on the disputed points of practice, I *am an imitator* of Christ," this is precisely what we should expect the Judaisers to claim. It was a plea for which Paul could have no answer save to maintain that in the deeper and more spiritual sense he was a better "imitator of Christ" than they. This is in fact the plea of Paul, and this is even his very expression in Corinthians and Ephesians.

We have every reason to suppose that those among the Corinthians who had consulted Paul by letter on the various points answered *seriatim* ("Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote," 1 Cor. vii. 1, 25, viii. 1, etc.), are his own professed adherents. It is they who claim to be "of Paul"

and who profess to "remember him in all things," to "hold fast the traditions as he had delivered them" (1 Cor. xi. 2). These imitators "of Paul" quote the Pauline principle of liberty in 1 Corinthians viii. 8: "Meat will not commend us to God: neither, if we eat not (the *εἰδωλόθυστα*) are we the worse; nor if we eat are we the better." Paul answers (ver. 9-13) with the qualifying principle of consideration for the 'weak' which limits personal liberty. He ends the long and enlightening section on "meats offered to idols" (chaps. viii.-x.) with the meaning command: "Be ye *imitators of me*, even as I also am *of Christ*."

In what sense Paul means this injunction to imitate him in a deeper and fuller way may be seen from the parallel injunction to consideration for the 'weak' in Romans xiv. 1-xv. 7. Paul has liberty; but "pleases not himself," just as Christ "pleased not Himself," but became a "minister of the circumcision" and shared the reproach of His people, as one born under the law. They who declare themselves "of Paul" should be "imitators of" him in the self-denial required by consideration for the weak, and not merely in the selfish claim of liberty (1 Cor. x. 23-xi. 1).

The phrase recurs on a higher plane in Ephesians v. 1, where the example of Christ is declared to be an imitation of God. To be kind, tender-hearted, and forgiving is to "be imitators of God as beloved children," "as God also in Christ forgave you." In these expressions of Paul we have at least enough to show that the cries "I am of Paul—Apollos—Cephas—Christ" could be meant in the sense I *follow the example of* Paul, Apollos, Cephas, Christ, on the matters in dispute, i.e. the obligation of the Mosaic law. Just as he does with the term "apostle" boasted by his opponents Paul takes the term "(imitator) of Christ" and raises it to a higher significance.

What we have finally to submit in confirmation of these

internal evidences from the Epistles and the Book of Acts is the testimony of early witnesses that in the specific case with which all modern debate is concerned the cry "I am of Christ" was actually employed in this sense of the imitation of Jesus' conduct in conforming to the law, and that those who thus employed it were no other than the Judaisers, the bigoted opponents of the apostleship and gospel of Paul.

Epiphanius, unsupported, is a poor authority. Especially where his prejudices are concerned every possible check must be employed to counteract his blundering misrepresentation. Fortunately it *is* blundering; were it astute discrimination would be less easy. Epiphanius plagiarises and contradicts himself. But he did have close connexions with Palestine, and does give Palestinian traditions and sources, which when disentangled and corroborated, as they often may be, from Hippolytus and other older and better writers than Epiphanius himself, prove serviceable in the highest degree. Of this character is the description in *Panar.* xxviii. 1-6 of the heresy of Cerinthus, a name familiar to us from the statements of Irenæus and his disciple Hippolytus as that of the great opponent at Ephesus of the Apostle John. As E. Schwartz has just pointed out,¹ Epiphanius in xxviii. 1 is simply telling the familiar tale from Irenæus (doubtless borrowing from Hippolytus) about Cerinthus the Docetic opponent of John in Ephesus. But in the following sections (2-6) he goes on with another and totally inconsistent representation :

This man, beloved, was one of those who stirred up the opposition to the Apostles, when those who were of the following of James wrote an epistle to Antioch, saying, We know that certain of us have come unto you and troubled you with words which we did not command them.²

Cerinthus is further made responsible for the Judaising

¹ *Zts. f. ntl. Wiss.* xv. 2 (1914), p. 210 f.

² *Panar.* xxviii. 2, referring to Acts xv. 23 f.

opposition to Peter related in Acts xi. 2 f., for the demand for the circumcision of Titus made at Jerusalem in opposition to Paul by the "false brethren" (Gal. ii. 3), and for the charge against Paul that by bringing the uncircumcised Titus (*sic*) to Jerusalem (!) he had defiled the temple.¹ His followers are said to employ a mutilated form of the Gospel of Matthew for the sake of its genealogy, which proved the human descent of Jesus, and to repudiate Paul because of his rejection of circumcision. All this describes just the opposite of the Docetic Cerinthus of Irenæus and Hippolytus. Instead of minimising with the Docetists the human and Jewish elements of the Lord's nature and teaching, it lays all stress upon these, and violently opposes the Hellenising tendencies which made Paul's gospel acceptable to the Greeks. Schwartz puts this curious inconsistency in Epiphanius' testimony together with that of Gaius of Rome, who in his Dialogue against the Montanist Proclus (*ca.* 180), denied the Johannine authorship of Revelation, declaring it a forgery of "the heretic Cerinthus." Gaius based his charge upon the crude eschatological realism of Cerinthus the Jew, whose craving for sensuous delights was responsible (said Gaius) for the apocalyptic description of the thousand years of Messianic enjoyment in Jerusalem. This would be the height of absurdity if Cerinthus' doctrine was Docetic, for as we learn from Ignatius and others, one of the chief abominations to the Docetist was the Jewish doctrine of a material Paradise and a "resurrection of the flesh." It was mainly for the sake of avoiding this sensuous Jewish

¹ *Panar.* xxviii. 4; cf. Acts xxi. 28 and Galatians ii. 3. In a less blundering writer than Epiphanius one might suspect that the variations from Acts which agree better with the Pauline Epistles were derived from some independent source. Thus 2 Timothy iv. 20, in a passage which would otherwise agree well with the journey of Acts xx. 4; xxi. 28 f., leaves Trophimus the Ephesian behind at Miletus, sick, though in Acts xxi. 28 f. he occasions the attack in Acts upon Paul in Jerusalem. Titus is never mentioned in Acts.

eschatology that the Docetist made the flesh "mere semblance" even during the earthly ministry of Jesus. But if Cerinthus was an Ebionite Jew the Book of Revelation might be attributed to him with perfect plausibility; for an intensely realistic millenarianism went hand in hand with anti-Pauline legalism in this Jewish-Christian sect. Schwartz, therefore, is inclined to acquit the "very learned Presbyter Gaius" of the folly of imputing such a book as Revelation to the very father of Docetism, and to attribute the little that Irenæus and his disciple Hippolytus have to tell of the Docetic doctrine of Cerinthus to their common endeavour to bolster up the tradition of "John in Asia"; for it is as the bulwark of apostolic orthodoxy against the Docetic heresy of the time, that the John of Irenæus (i.e. the author of the Gospel and Epistles) is depicted.

For our present purpose it is fortunately unnecessary to take sides one way or the other on the thorny question of the Irenæan tradition of John in Asia. All we require for present purposes is the recognition that Epiphanius' portrait of the *Ebionite* Cerinthus comes from somewhere, because it does not stand alone. We may, in fact, leave the mere name "Cerinthus" entirely out of account, so long as we recognise that Epiphanius, and Gaius, and Origen (in a passage which also has a bearing on our case), all testify to the persistence of an ultra-Jewish Christian sect, clinging obstinately to circumcision and the law, and bitterly opposing Paul. By the testimony of two of these (Epiphanius and Gaius) Cerinthus was the leader in apostolic times of this sect. Epiphanius even declares that it was against his false teaching that Paul directed his doctrine of the resurrection in Corinthians xv. 16, 32 f. By the testimony of Epiphanius, Origen and Hippolytus the sect put forward as their chief argument *the practice of Jesus* in respect to the great matters in dispute in apostolic times, viz. circumcision and

the Mosaic festal system,¹ thus declaring themselves "of Christ" in the sense that they alone were truly and completely imitators of Him.

It is in his description of the followers of the *Ebionite* Cerinthus, after the passage referring to their use of a form of Matthew adapted to their own tenets, that Epiphanius goes on to say :

And they adduce this testimony from the Gospel, saying again, 'It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Teacher' (Matt. x. 25). What, then, say they? Jesus was circumcised; thou also, be circumcised. Christ conducted himself in accordance with the law; thou also, do the like.²

That Epiphanius is not inventing arguments for the Judaisers, but reporting (probably at second hand) their actual language in defence of circumcision and legal purity, is proved by what we learn from an older scholar, as critical and accurate as Epiphanius is the reverse. Origen was better informed than Epiphanius on the history of Ebionism in Palestine, where he had studied it on the ground. In his Commentary on Matthew (§ 79) Origen tells us of these same sectaries, and of the attitude they took on that other great ecclesiastical question of the first and second centuries, the keeping of the Mosaic feasts and sacred days. Origen's comment on Matthew xxvi. 17 is made in answer to an Ebionite who defends the ancient observance of the passover on the fourteenth Nisan. The reply is of less importance to us than the form of the Ebionite's defence. It is as follows :

"We as imitators of Christ ought to do as He did."

We have independent confirmation of this statement of Origen from no other than Hippolytus himself. In the *Paschal Chronicle* Hippolytus' answer is given to the Jewish-Christian plea for Quartodeciman observance as follows :

¹ Gal. iv. 10; v. 2. Josephus also makes these the essential marks of Judaism.

² *Panar.* xxviii. 5.

For this is his plea: Christ then observed the passover on its proper day, and suffered death. Therefore for me also it is needful to do just in the same manner as the Lord did.¹

If the chain of witnesses linking back these Jewish sectaries of the second and later centuries to the time of Paul is unavoidably incomplete we have at least the *a priori* probability that those whose sole effort was to hold fast to the old and to resist the new were not changing their own fundamental position. What they were claiming for themselves in the time of Epiphanius was that in holding to circumcision and the Mosaic observances they were "following the example of Christ." In the time of Origen they were making the same plea. In the time of Hippolytus the same. In the time of Gaius the same. There would seem ample reason to hold that in the time of Paul they were also making the same; and that these are they whose party-cry in Corinth was: "I am (an imitator) of Christ." To these Paul finally answers when driven at last by the disloyalty of his Corinthian converts to take up the burden of his own defence (2 Cor. x. 7): "If any man be persuaded that he is (an imitator) of Christ, let him again consider this with himself, that even as he is (an imitator) of Christ, so also are we." In how much higher a sense Paul meant his 'imitation of Christ' we have already seen.

B. W. BACON.

*RESEMBLANCES BETWEEN THE DISCOURSES
OF EPICTETUS AND THE NEW TESTAMENT.*

So much does the language of Epictetus resemble that of the New Testament that a grammar devoted to the one would, in many points, be applicable to the other. In the "Discourses" there are found the same phrases, the same

¹ Extract in Charteris' *Canonicity*, p. 194.