

*THE APOSTOLIC CONFERENCE AT
JERUSALEM :*

A STUDY IN CHRONOLOGY AND CRITICISM.

GREAT importance is attached by Prof. Ramsay to the synchronisms between the Acts and the Galatian Epistle with reference to the early visits of St. Paul to Jerusalem. The result of these synchronisms is to exclude from the epistle all reference to the apostolic conference, and to identify the visit of Galatians ii. 1-10 with the visit recorded in Acts xi. 29, 30, xii. 25 in connection with the Antiochian collection for the famine-stricken poor at Jerusalem. Dr. Sanday is not convinced by his argument; and there is reason to think that undue emphasis is laid upon the concluding sentence on the poor of Jerusalem.

It is the purpose of this paper to examine the question in the light of critical analysis, taking for a guide in this extremely dangerous path the results attained by one of the latest critics, Johannes Jüngst, in his *Quellen der Apostelgeschichte*.

We fear that we shall not convince Prof. Ramsay by such a line of argument, as he has what may be termed a wholesome opinion as to the extravagance of the methods pursued by analytical criticism. It is sufficient to say that Herr Jüngst is not amongst the most extravagant, and his careful work may at least claim a hearing by one who allows, with regard to the first four chapters of the Acts, "that at least two accounts by two different authorities underlie Luke's narrative."¹

Jüngst sees two sources only in the Acts: one, the interest of which centres in Jerusalem, which he calls B; another whose interest is in the missionary expansion of the Church, called A. The Jerusalem document (B) does not extend

¹ Ramsay's *St. Paul*, p. 366.

beyond chapter xv. ; the Gentile document with which the book opens, and which is used in these earlier chapters, becomes the sole source from chapter xvi.

The materials of the Jerusalem source have become transposed in the composition of the Acts, and it is this transposition and dislocation which needs attention in the chronological view of the early visits of St. Paul to Jerusalem.

It is not possible here to do more than give the sequence of events in the earlier chapters as they have been worked out by Jüngst.

The Jerusalem source opens with the filling in of the apostolic body (i. 15-26) ; it records the gathering of the nations on the day of Pentecost (ii. 1, 5-11), and the speech of St. Peter (ii. 24-31, 34, 35) ; the unity of the 3,000 in the fellowship of the apostles (ii. 41b-42) ; the Sadducean persecution (v. 17-25, 34-40) ; the conversion of priests to the new faith (vi. 7) ; the works and wonders wrought by the hand of the disciples (v. 12, 15, 16) ; the gifts of the rich to the common fund (ii. 45 ; iv. 36, 37) ; the judgment on Ananias and Sapphira (v. 1-11) ; the appointment of the Seven (vi. 1-6) ; the charge against St. Stephen (vi. 8, 11, 15), his apology and martyrdom (vii. 22-28, 35-43, 51-58) ; Saul's persecution of the Church (viii. 1a, 3), and his conversion (ix. 6-20) ; the reconciliation of Saul with the apostles (ix. 26-28) ; the persecution under Herod Agrippa, and his death (xii. 1-23) ; the missions of St. Peter (ix. 32-x. 48), and of St. Philip (viii. 5-40) ; St. Peter's defence before the apostles at the conference (xi. 1-15, xv. 13-20) ; the peace of the Church (ix. 31).

The year 44 is the important landmark in this record, the death of Herod Agrippa I. The civil persecution recorded in connection with it belongs to his last years ; and it leads to the spread of missionary activity in the following years. This activity opens up the question of the status of

the Gentiles in the Christian Church, and leads to the apostolic conference at Jerusalem. It would be a question of such large importance that delay in it would be ill-advised after the action of St. Peter at Cæsarea. If 42-44 may be taken as the date of the Herodian persecution, and 45-46 for the missions of St. Peter and St. Philip, the conference in this record will fall in the winter of 46-47.

No mention is made of St. Paul in connection with this conference, the event being associated with other missions. The record only contains the formal notice of one visit to Jerusalem, when St. Paul went up after his conversion, and was reconciled with the apostles. If 33 be accepted as the date of the conversion, and 33-36 allowed for his work in Arabia and Damascus, this visit would be assigned to the winter of 36-37.

The Gentile source opens with the charge of the Risen Lord (i. 6-8); it records the meeting in the upper room (i. 12-14); the gift of tongues (ii. 4), and the speech of St. Peter (ii. 12-23, 32, 33); the baptism of the faithful (ii. 41*a*); the joy of common life (ii. 46, 47); the acts of St. Peter and St. John (iii. 11-iv. 31); the unity of the faithful (iv. 32, 33); St. Stephen before the council (vi. 9, 10, 12-14); his defence and martyrdom (vii. 1-21, 29-34, 44-50, 58*b*-60); the persecution of the Church (viii. 1*b*); the conversion of Saul (ix. 1-5, 22-25); the mission of St. Barnabas to Antioch (xi. 19-23, 25, 26), and the apostolic conference at Jerusalem (xv. 1-4, 30, 32-35); the Galatian journey of Barnabas and Saul (xiii., xiv.), and their return to Antioch (xiv. 25-28); the visit of Barnabas and Saul to Jerusalem (xi. 27-30; xii. 25), and their separation (xv. 36-41) on their return to Antioch.

The long gap in the record between the conversion of St. Paul and the mission of St. Barnabas to Antioch is explained by the purpose of the document, the development of the mission work in the world. The gap represents the

years of work probably carried on by St. Paul between his visit to Jerusalem in 36-37, and the mission of St. Barnabas in the years 45-46. There is nothing definite to date this mission, but it is associated with the other missions of St. Peter and St. Philip in the general order of St. Luke. The gap corresponds with the "ten years of quiet work" recognised by Professor Ramsay in his chronology.¹ No mention is made of St. Paul's earlier visit to Jerusalem; but the visit on the occasion of the conference occupies a prominent place in the fellow work of the two Gentile apostles. In the analysis of Jüngst it occupies the same position as in the Jerusalem record, immediately after, and as the result of the early mission activity of the Church of Jerusalem. The conference was a necessary step towards the further development of that work represented by the Galatian journey. If we accept the date 47-49 for this journey, the second visit of the Gentile record, the visit subsequent, therefore, to the conference, must be placed in the winter of 49-50.

The argument used by Jüngst must be briefly noticed.

The opening verses (xv. 1-4) give the Pauline version of the conference as contained in the Gentile source. Certain Judaistic teachers go down to Antioch, and stir up strife by saying that circumcision, according to the law of Moses, is necessary to salvation. The Pauline teaching that the formal recognition of circumcision necessarily involves the fulfilling of the whole law, and is therefore inconsistent with the liberty of the Gospel, is thus attacked. Barnabas and Saul, in consequence of the strife stirred up by these teachers, go up to Jerusalem to confer with the apostles and elders. They are sent by authority of the Church; they pass through Phœnice and Samaria, announcing the conversion of the heathen; and they are formally received by the Church at Jerusalem, the apostles and elders being

¹ *St. Paul*, p. 47.

specially mentioned as present at the conference. The details are absent, or only perhaps faintly traceable in the following narrative. The sequel is contained in xv. 30*a*, 32-35, in which verses the return of the apostles to Antioch, the return of Judas and Silas to Jerusalem, and the activity of Barnabas and Saul at Antioch, are recorded. This is, according to Jüngst, the sum of the Gentile source on the conference.

The only portion of the narrative which he assigns to the Jerusalem source is the speech of St. James (xv. 13*b*-19*a*, 20), which he places between the speech of St. Peter xi. 1-17, and the conclusion of the record (ix. 31). He thus ascribes it to the conference on the matter of St. Peter's mission to Cæsarea. The Noachian precepts in this connection would have a special reference to the case of the Gentiles of Cæsarea, the "strangers in the land" (Lev. xvii. 12; xviii. 26).

The rest of the narrative (xv. 5-13*a*, 19*b*, 21-29, 30*b*-31) is given by him to the redactor. Amongst other considerations leading to this conclusion is the different point of view of the ground assigned for the acceptance of the Gentiles in xv. 9*b*, compared with that in chapters x., xi. The cleansing by faith is an advance on the abolition of the distinction between the clean and the unclean in the earlier narrative. The style of the letter appears to him similar to that of the prologue of St. Luke's Gospel; and the letter refers to Syria and Cilicia, the districts named in the Gentile source A, the Noachian precepts originally passed, according to the Jerusalem source B, with reference to the district of Cæsarea.

It is not necessary to follow Jüngst through every detail in his analysis; this may be done by reference to his work.¹ He allows that the redactor was making use of written sources, because of the mention of Judas, called Barsabbas,

¹ *Quellengeschichte*, pp. 134-144.

and Silas. Had the names occurred in B, the Jerusalem source, the mission of the two would have been Cæsarea and not Antioch. Moreover, this record has already made mention of a Barsabbas, the Joses Barsabbas, surnamed Justus (i. 23) whom, with Ewald, he identifies with the Barsabbas of xv. 22. The difference of the names Joses and Judas points to the difference of source.

The dislocation of the materials brought about in the compilation of the Acts calls for some note. The narrative of chapter xv. is not in the chronological order that it occupied in the original Gentile source on which it is based. The key to the solution of the difficulty and to its recognition is found in the contradiction in the best texts between xv. 32-33 and xv. 40. This is met in C, D, and some other codices by the insertion: "But it seemed good unto Silas to abide there"; and in D by a further interpolation: "And Judas alone went away." The close juxtaposition of the visit of Silas to Antioch after the conference in A.D. 47, and his presence at Antioch on the eve of the second journey in 50, caused by the transposition of the original sources, led both to the apparent contradiction and the attempt made to explain it.

Another argument in favour of this transposition Jüngst finds in the reference to Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia in xv. 23. This presupposes that in the Gentile source the mission field of Barnabas and Saul had been those districts alone, and not the Galatian country implied by the present order of the narrative. Chapter xv. should precede chapters xiii., xiv.

Another argument may be mentioned, though it is not so clear and strong as these two. St. Barnabas had been sent to Antioch in consequence of the report which had reached the Church of Jerusalem. It is reasonable to suppose that St. Barnabas on his return to Jerusalem would bring up his report as to the conditions and progress of the work. No

such report is alluded to in the record of the visit in xi. 30 ; xii. 25. The argument from silence is a dangerous one, especially in view of the long insertion of the Herodian persecution. But this does not, in Jüngst's opinion, justify the omission, and he sees a reference to this report in the statement of xv. 4: "They rehearsed all things that God had done with them."

To restore the order of the Gentile source it is only requisite to transpose xv. 1-35 and xi. 27-30, xii. 25. The various contradictions then disappear. Judas Barsabbas and Silas, according to xv. 32-33, return to Jerusalem. The sudden appearance of Silas in Antioch (xv. 40) is not more surprising than that of Mark in xv. 37. Syria and Cilicia had been the only sphere of mission labour, and therefore are the only district referred to in xv. 23. The work could be called "the conversion of the Gentiles" (xv. 3). The report of xv. 4 was brought up after the whole year's intercourse and fellow work at Antioch (xi. 26), to which period also belongs the visit of the Judaisers (xv. 1). The record of the gathering of the Church in Antioch (xiii. 1) follows naturally upon the ministry of xv. 35, "Paul and Barnabas tarried in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also." The brief record (xi. 27-30, xii. 25) follows upon xiv. 28. The expression "in these days" is more suitable as a sequel to the "no little time" of xiv. 28, than to the "whole year" of xi. 26.

The transposition of the two journeys to Jerusalem, and the dislocation of material, is due to the notice of the death of Herod Agrippa in the Jerusalem source (xii. 20-23). This was in 44, and, according to the evidence which St. Luke had at hand, the famine also in xi. 28 must be associated with the same period. In the order of the Gentile source the famine of xi. 28, and the visit to Jerusalem consequent upon it, was subsequent to the expansion of the mission work amongst the Gentiles by the Galatian

mission. But to have inserted the narrative of chapter xii. so late would have been contrary to the plan of the work. The centre of interest, transferred to the Gentile missions, would have been carried back again to the Herodian persecution at Jerusalem, and thus the scheme of development and progress would have been marred.

The course of events in the chronological scheme presented in this paper may be tabulated as follows :—

Conversion of St. Paul (B A)	33
Arabia and Damascus (B Gal.)	33-36
First visit to Jerusalem (B)	36-37
Syria and Cilicia (Gal.)	37-45
The Herodian persecution (B)	42-44
The Famine (A)	45
Mission activity of the Church (B A)	45-46
The Apostolic Conference, second visit (B A)	46-47
The expansion of Mission activity in Galatia (A)	47-49
The third visit (A)	49-50

There is a break in the chronological record between the death of Tiberius in 37 and the accession of Claudius in 41. This break corresponds with the reign of Caius Caligula, whose treatment of the Jews gave some kind of respite to the Church of Jerusalem, and afforded opportunity for the steady growth of the Aramaic communities in the neighbourhood (v. 16). The accession of Herod Agrippa to power at the beginning of the reign of Claudius again turned the attention of the Jewish authorities to this progress of Christianity in their midst. They take occasion to kindle the religious zeal of Agrippa, and induce him to organize a systematic persecution of the Church and its leaders. It was not till after his death that the mission activity burst out again, and then it extended to those Gentiles who had already been drawn to Judaism in the synagogues. The work amongst these proselytes opened up the difficult question of the admission of the Gentiles to Christian fellowship, a question which, as has already been

seen, called for early settlement by the authorities of the Church. It is for that reason that the earlier date, 46-47, is preferable for the conference at Jerusalem.

The chief chronological difficulty presented by this scheme is the date of the visit in 49-50. This is connected in the narrative (xi. 27-30) with the relief of the famine-stricken brethren in Judæa, and took place in the days of Claudius. The reference to Claudius, whose reign extended from 41 to 54, would present no difficulty if the famine in Judæa were not ascribed by Josephus to the years when Cuspius Fadus and Tiberius Alexander were successively procurators. Fadus was sent to Judæa on the death of Agrippa in 44, and in 48 Alexander was succeeded by Cumanus. On these grounds it is usual to assign this famine to the years 45 or 46, and to place the visit as near these years as possible. Professor Ramsay places the prophecy of Agabus early in 44, the beginning of the famine in 45, the relief visit of Queen Helena in 45, and the visit of Barnabas and Saul in the winter of 45-46.

The prophecy of Agabus has reference to famine over all the world. The building of the new harbour at Portus in consequence of the silting up of the harbour of Ostia would be a subject of wide-spread interest and conversation along the shores of the Mediterranean. It is associated by Dion Cassius with the great famine, and is regarded as a work of high importance for the trade of Rome. The harbour works of Portus would be thus a standing witness to the famine, and to St. Luke writing between 80 and 90¹ would suggest the reign of Claudius for the "great famine." There is good reason to think that in the synchronisms of St. Luke the famine and the visit are associated not only with this reign but with the death of Herod (xii. 1) and the visit of Helena in 45. But this does not prove that in the original source it was narrowed down to that date.

¹ *St. Paul*, p. 387.

There is a further advantage in this readjustment, that the chronological order of the visits corresponds with the order in the Galatian Epistle. The winter of 36-37 sets a term to the three years of Galatians i. 18, and the winter of 46-47 to the fourteen years reckoning from the conversion in 33. There is no question of any omission of a journey, and the subject of Gentile liberty seems to recover its natural position of importance in the thought and argument of St. Paul.

There are one or two minor points which appear to support this scheme. The famine was in 45; the mission of St. Peter has been assigned to the years 45 and 46. Is there not in the narrative of chapters ix., x., allusion to the distress caused by the famine in the coast district? Dorcas is prominent by reason of her good works and alms-deeds at Joppa. Cornelius at Cæsarea gave much alms to the people. And may there not also be in the vision of St. Peter a passing allusion to the famine? The strictness as to meats would at such a time be a special trial to the faithful Jews; the vision presented the temptation in a form which would have been frequently felt at the time. It suggested to St. Peter in his exhaustion (x. 10) freer intercourse between Jew and Gentile for the material advantage of both in the fellowship of the Church. The vision is suitable to the period of famine.

The conference took place at Jerusalem in the winter of 46-47. The work of St. Peter amongst the Gentile proselytes of the coast was perhaps the immediate cause of it (xi. 1). The jealousy of the Pharisees had already caused certain teachers to go down to Antioch and stir up strife in the Churches of Syria and Cilicia, and perhaps also to create doubts throughout Phœnicia and Samaria amongst the Gentile Christians. The mission of Barnabas and Saul to Jerusalem, and the strong tone they had already taken and were prepared to take at the conference, restored confidence in these Churches (xv. 3). Their fellow work at Antioch

was sufficient justification for a more liberal policy. They add their testimony to that of St. Peter, and win for the Gentiles freedom from the bondage of circumcision. The position presented in the Galatian Epistle is similar to that of the Acts. St. Paul laid before the Apostles the gospel he had preached among the Gentiles (Gal. ii. 2), and rehearsed all things that God had done with them (Acts xv. 4). The apostles saw that St. Paul had been entrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision as St. Peter with the gospel of the circumcision (Gal. ii. 7). St. Paul had for ten years past been labouring among Gentiles (Gal. i. 16); St. Peter had only under strong guidance included the Gentiles within the sphere of his labours (Acts ix., x.); his main work lay amongst the Churches of the circumcision. The apostles made use of the occasion to give authority to Barnabas and Saul to extend their work among the Gentiles; they themselves undertook the responsibility of the supervision of the Jewish Churches. It is only at the close of the conference that the poverty of these Churches is mentioned, and an earnest appeal made on their behalf. Such an appeal is evidence that the poverty caused by the famine of 45 was still felt in the winter of 46-47 in the Churches of Jerusalem and its neighbourhood.

At the close of the conference, Barnabas and Saul return to Antioch in the company of Silas and Judas Barsabbas. They for a short season exercise their prophetic gifts to the edification of the faithful in the Church, and then return to Jerusalem. Barnabas and Saul are then entrusted with apostolic authority to extend the Gentile work to the west, and start on their long journey into Southern Galatia. They return to Antioch in 49, to be reminded by the prophecy of Agabus that the danger from famine had not yet passed, and that the need of the churches of Judæa was still urgent. They go on, therefore, with the alms of the faithful to Jerusalem, in the winter of 49-50.

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