

# CHRISTIANITY AT CORINTH<sup>1</sup>

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**N**OT the least of the merits of this subject is that it enables me to build on the work of T. W. Manson himself.<sup>2</sup> I shall do my best to observe the warning of 1 Cor. iii. 10, and take heed how I build. But the subject has other merits. If Romans gives us the most systematic presentation of Paul's theology, it is nevertheless from the Corinthian epistles that we gain the most complete and many-sided picture of how Paul believed that his theological convictions should be expressed in the life of a Church. To say this is not to claim that the Corinthian Church was a paragon of all Churches; there was often a wide divergence between what happened in Corinth and what Paul thought ought to happen. But both pictures—the actual and the ideal—contribute to our understanding of Pauline Christianity in its practical expression, and we learn much of what Paul thought right from what the Corinthians got wrong. In the Corinthian epistles Paul deals with an exceptionally large number of practical problems, always on the basis of a theological grasp of the situation, so that there is in fact no more important source for Paul's conception of the Christian way of life.

It is also true that 1 and 2 Corinthians provide the most valuable information we have about early non-Pauline Christianity. There is no epistle (apart from Philemon) in which Paul does not deal with some deviation from or perversion of the Christian faith, but nowhere else is so great a variety of deviations and perversions so fully displayed; and their advocates were able to develop their views and consolidate their adherents to such an extent as almost to disintegrate the originally Pauline Church.

Full as the Corinthian letters are of valuable raw material it is no easy task to win from them a clear account of what was going

<sup>1</sup> The Manson Memorial Lecture, delivered in the University of Manchester on 26 November 1963.

<sup>2</sup> T. W. Manson, *Studies in the Gospels and Epistles* (Manchester, 1962), "The Corinthian Correspondence", pp. 190-224.

on in the Corinthian Church of the fifties of the first century. The difficulties that stand in the way of historical reconstruction are well known. First stands the fact, which we shall encounter from time to time, that among the verses of crucial importance there is scarcely one of which the interpretation is not disputed. This difficulty is one that often presents itself in the form of a vicious circle: a certain and unambiguous interpretation of a particular verse would give one a clear insight into part at least of the Corinthian history; yet only if one has a clear picture of the history is it possible to interpret the verse with confidence. There is a trap here, evident enough, yet one that has snared a number of students. How easy to make a hurried inference from a text of one of the epistles to historical circumstances, and then to use the supposedly known historical circumstances to confirm the interpretation of the text!

The outstanding literary problem involved in the Corinthian letters is that of their integrity, and this, as can easily be seen, has important consequences for precisely the kind of historical question that is to be dealt with in this lecture. The view of the matter perhaps most commonly held in this country may be briefly set out as follows<sup>1</sup>:

Paul wrote four letters to Corinth.

The *first* has been lost, unless a part of it is preserved in 2 Cor. vi. 14-vii. 1.

The *second* consists of what we call 1 Corinthians.

The *third* has been partially preserved in 2 Cor. x-xiii.

The *fourth* is contained in 2 Cor. i-ix (omitting perhaps vi. 14-vii. 1).

This hypothetical reconstruction has the effect of knitting the two epistles (as contained in our Bibles) very closely together; in particular, 2 Cor. x-xiii stands next in time to 1 Corinthians. The more elaborate reconstructions,<sup>2</sup> in which 1 Corinthians also is partitioned, 2 Cor. ii. 14-vii. 5 attached to 2 Cor. x-xiii, and 2 Cor. viii, ix separated from each other, have the effect of dove-

<sup>1</sup> See e.g. T. W. Manson, *op. cit.* pp. 190 f.

<sup>2</sup> See e.g. J. Weiss, *The History of Primitive Christianity* (E.T., London, 1937), pp. 356 f.; G. Bornkamm, "Die Vorgeschichte des sogenannten Zweiten Korintherbriefes", in *Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse, Jahrgang 1961:2* (Heidelberg, 1961), pp. 16-23.

tailing the two epistles even more completely. If, however, the unity of 2 Corinthians is maintained, or if, as is perhaps more probable, 2 Cor. x-xiii is detached from the rest of the epistle but regarded as subsequent to it,<sup>1</sup> the two documents preserved to us stand further apart ; in particular, it becomes less likely that the disturbances of 2 Cor. x-xiii should be regarded as a simple continuation of the divisions of 1 Cor. i. 12, and more likely that the Corinthian troubles had by this time taken a new turn.

Corinth was a place in which a rich development of Christian forms of thought, worship, and life was to be expected. Not that it was a centre of intellectual activity ; it had no such reputation. But it was a commercial centre in which men of many races, and of many faiths, met, and were in constant contact. New Corinth was not a Greek city. The old πόλις had lain in desolation for a hundred years when the new foundation of Laus Julia Corinthus was made by the Romans in 44 B.C.<sup>2</sup> The town that commanded the Isthmus was bound to become a busy entrepôt ; and so it was. Roman colonists, more or less local Greeks, and levantine traders, among them a community of Jews large and wealthy enough to have their own synagogue building,<sup>3</sup> probably made up the greater part of the population. It is probable that, before the Christian Gospel reached Corinth, Isis from Egypt, the Great Mother from Phrygia, Dionysus from Thrace and elsewhere, and the strange nameless deity from Judaea, had already met there, and added the spice of speculation and of ecstasy to the more formal, and politically inspired, worship that came from the west.

Moreover, we have in the epistles themselves the plainest evidence that Christian propagandists, other than, and some of them very different from, Paul had been at work in the city : Apollos certainly ; Peter, with very great probability, and if not Peter himself disciples of his who made free with his name.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See e.g. J. Munck, *Paulus und die Heilsgeschichte*, Aarsskrift for Aarhus Universitet, XXVI, 1, Teologisk Serie, 6 (Aarhus-Copenhagen, 1954), pp. 162-6.

<sup>2</sup> See Pauly-Wissowa, *Suppl.* IV, 991-1036 ; VI, 182-99, 1350 f. There is slight uncertainty about the date, and a few other forms of the name appear to have been in use.

<sup>3</sup> A. Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East* (London, 1927), p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> T. W. Manson, *op. cit.* pp. 194-207 ; also C. K. Barrett, "Cephas and Corinth" in *Abraham unser Vater, Juden und Christen im Gespräch über die Bibel*,

These may have been embarrassing but comparatively harmless ; there were others, and a different Gospel, another Jesus, and another Spirit were preached. Alexandrian Judaism, Jewish Christianity, Hellenism, all seem to have played upon the already inflammatory material assembled at Corinth. It is no wonder there was a blaze ; no wonder the city could add to its trade fairs as fine an exhibition of Christian deviations as was to be seen anywhere in the world. There will be all too little time in this lecture to discuss them.

At this point we cannot do otherwise than turn to 1 Cor. i. 12. Surely it is only by a *tour de force* that Johannes Munck can, in the heading of a chapter in his *Paulus und die Heilsgeschichte*,<sup>1</sup> describe Corinth as “ Die Gemeinde ohne Parteien ”. True, he has done well to remind us that, when 1 Corinthians was written, the Church remained united : Paul could address all its members with a comprehensive “ you ”, and expect that all would read or hear what he had to say. The ἔριδες of i. 11 do not refer to separate, schismatic bodies, and the αἵρέσεις of xi. 19 become manifest *συνερχομένων ὑμῶν ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ* (xi. 18) ; they are not such as to prevent all from meeting in one place. Dr. Munck has also very properly reminded us how little we know about these groups.<sup>2</sup> Yet divided loyalties, and ecclesiastical preferences, were certainly visible, and caused Paul deep anxiety, and the unity of the Church, so far as it continued to exist, must have been an uneasy unity.

“ I am of Paul ”, said some, doubtless a reactionary group.<sup>3</sup> As long as no influence but Paul’s was felt in Corinth such a slogan would have been meaningless. Other influences were now at work, into which we must shortly look, and in opposition some fell back on the old and familiar. How far the Paulinists understood Paul, and how far he approved of their tenets, are questions to which we may be able to give brief attention.

“ I am of Apollos ”: here there is a familiar and almost certainly correct explanation.<sup>4</sup> According to Acts xviii. 27f. Apollos

*Festschrift für Otto Michel*, ed. O. Betz, M. Hengel, P. Schmidt (Leiden-Cologne, 1963), pp. 1-12.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 271, n. 1.

<sup>3</sup> See below, pp. 284 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* pp. 134, 141.

<sup>4</sup> See below, p. 283.

formed and carried out the intention of visiting Achaëa; the probability that such a journey would include Corinth is immediately confirmed by xix. 1. That Apollos was a Jew (xviii. 24) need not be disputed; that he was *Ἀλεξανδρεὺς τῷ γένει* is probably insignificant, for there is no ground for supposing that every Alexandrian Jew was a potential Philo (though some writers seem to think so); that he was *ἀνὴρ λόγιος*<sup>1</sup> would account for his acquiring a following of his own. Many no doubt found him a refreshing change after an apostle who could be dismissed as *ιδιώτης τῷ λόγῳ* (2 Cor. xi. 6). Paul had no quarrel with him<sup>2</sup>; they may well be right who see in Apollos' disinclination to visit Corinth again (1 Cor. xvi. 12) a delicacy of sentiment that made him unwilling to appear even unintentionally in the character of a rival. It is nevertheless probable that Apollos contributed to the Corinthian development of thought about *γνώσις*, *λόγος*, and *σοφία*.

"I am of Cephas" probably implies the presence of Peter himself in Corinth.<sup>3</sup> T. W. Manson's argument<sup>4</sup> that the group that made use of Peter's name is to be detected (for example) in the way in which Paul handles such questions as litigation, the eating of sacrificial foods, and the Lord's Supper, is convincing. It adopted a Jewish Christian "nomistic" attitude, not extreme enough actually to divide the Church (as a demand for circumcision would have done), or to disfranchise Paul from the apostolic body, but awkward enough to raise difficulties, and to cast a certain amount of doubt on Paul's status.<sup>5</sup>

"I am of Christ": here's the rub. Who said these words? According to some,<sup>6</sup> a copyist, who inserted in the margin of his New Testament the pious comment: These Corinthians had their various party leaders—*ἐγὼ δὲ Χριστοῦ*. It is sometimes replied that there is no textual evidence in support of this view, but this is not strictly true. There is no manuscript evidence; but it could be urged that the earliest textual authority for 1 Cor. i. 12 is 1 Clem. xlvii. 3, where Clement says of Paul that *ἐπ'*

<sup>1</sup> Eloquent, probably, rather than learned, though it is a fault of the ancient world that it often confused the two. For Wilcken's view see below, p. 283.

<sup>2</sup> See below, p. 283.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 271, n. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Op. cit. p. 197-206.

<sup>5</sup> And perhaps to provide a foundation for more severe trouble at a later time; see below, pp. 296 f.

<sup>6</sup> Notably, J. Weiss, ad loc.; also Einleitung, pp. XXXVI ff.

ἀληθείας πνευματικῶς ἐπέστειλεν ὑμῖν περὶ αὐτοῦ τε καὶ Κηφᾶ τε καὶ Ἀπολλῶ, διὰ τὸ καὶ τότε προσκλίσεις ὑμᾶς πεποιῆσθαι. In this context there is no reference to Christ, or to οἱ Χριστοῦ. It is at least possible to maintain that Clement did not read ἐγὼ δὲ Χριστοῦ in 1 Cor. i. 12. There are, however, other possible explanations of Clement's silence. Lightfoot<sup>1</sup> thinks that Clement made no reference to the Christ-group because to refer to it would have "complicated his argument", and adds that the exact theological position of this group was probably not known to him.<sup>2</sup> A further possibility is that Clement, who did not always verify his references, was thinking of, or was confused by, 1 Cor. iii. 22, where only Paul, Apollos, and Cephas are mentioned. It would be rash to conclude that ἐγὼ δὲ Χριστοῦ did not stand in Paul's own copy of 1 Corinthians.

We must still ask, however, Who said these words? Are they another party cry, parallel with and analogous to the other three? Or are they Paul's own comment? The latter is an attractive view,<sup>3</sup> for there is at least a superficial difficulty in supposing that the name Christ could be taken as in any sense on the same level as those of Paul, Apollos, and Cephas, and it could be argued that Clement, if the words ἐγὼ δὲ Χριστοῦ did stand in his text, understood them as a comment and not as referring to a fourth party. Moreover, the words seem—superficially again—to be an apt rejoinder to a Church making too much of its human leaders. Against this is the strict parallelism of the four clauses, and the complete lack of indication that in the fourth Paul has ceased to quote. The awkwardness, often remarked on, of the following words is perhaps to be explained by the fact that it was an embarrassment to Paul that one group had adopted as a party cry what should have been the watchword of all.

Perhaps the strongest argument for regarding the words ἐγὼ δὲ Χριστοῦ as indicating the existence of a fourth group is that

<sup>1</sup> *The Apostolic Fathers: Part I. Clement of Rome*, II (London, 1890), 143.

<sup>2</sup> R. Knopf, in *Handbuch zum Neuen Testament, Ergänzungsband* (Tübingen, 1920), p. 123, mentioning this view, adds that the Christ-group may have been enigmatic to Clement "wie sie es der neueren Auslegung ist".

<sup>3</sup> It finds some support in iii. 22. See J. Héring ad loc., with a reference to H. von Dobschütz, *Die urchristlichen Gemeinden* (Leipzig, 1902), p. 58 (*Christian Life in the Primitive Church* (London, 1904), p. 72).

when we have eliminated from 1 Corinthians everything that can reasonably be ascribed to a Paul-group, an Apollos-group, and a Cephas-group, there remains a well defined body of opinion, distinct from the views of the first three groups, consistent with itself, and explicable in the context of events in Corinth. The mere existence of such a body of opinion does not prove the existence of a fourth distinct section of the Church, still less that ἐγὼ δὲ Χριστοῦ was the slogan of this group, but it seems to weight the balance of probability in this direction.

If then we ask what Corinthian Christianity was like, we shall not be surprised if the answer is complicated rather than simple, and that even if we confine our attention to doctrinal matters and exclude almost completely literary and historical problems. The complexity of the situation does not diminish, and, at first at least his own perplexity may increase, when the student makes some attempt to master the range of modern literature that Corinthian problems have evoked.<sup>1</sup> It will, I think, be clear that if (as I hope) I am to give some account of the data, refer to suggestions made by others, and try to offer a few new suggestions, I shall have to be selective, and omit a good deal that could profitably have been included in this lecture if its compass had permitted.

#### Σοφία AND Γνώσις AT CORINTH

No problem arising out of Christianity at Corinth has been more discussed during recent years than that which is suggested by these words.<sup>2</sup> In what sense or senses were they used at Corinth? What theological presuppositions and theological

<sup>1</sup> In addition to Commentaries, and to works mentioned in other notes, I name here by way of example some of the contributions of which I have made most use in preparing this lecture: R. Bultmann, *Exegetische Probleme des zweiten Korintherbriefes* (Uppsala, 1947); G. Friedrich, "Die Gegner des Paulus im 2. Korintherbrief", in *Abraham unser Vater* (see p. 271, n. 4); E. Käsemann, "Die Legitimität des Apostels", in *Z.N.T.W.*, xli (1942), 33-71 (reprinted, Darmstadt, 1956); W. Lütgert, *Freiheitspredigt und Schwarmgeister in Korinth* (Gütersloh, 1908); A. Schlatter, *Die korinthische Theologie* (Gütersloh, 1914); W. Schmithals, *Die Gnosis in Korinth* (Göttingen, 1956); U. Wilckens, *Weisheit und Torheit* (Tübingen, 1959).

<sup>2</sup> See especially the works by Schmithals and Wilckens (note 1 above), and reviews and articles prompted by them.

systems lie behind them? How far was Paul himself prepared to use this terminology and adopt the systems and presuppositions involved?

The distribution of the words suggests that we are dealing with a problem belonging mainly to the period of 1 Corinthians.<sup>1</sup> σοφία occurs sixteen times in 1 Cor. i-iii, once in 1 Cor. xii. 8, and once in 2 Cor. i. 12. The occurrence of the adjective σοφός follows precisely the same pattern: ten times in 1 Cor. i-iii, once in 1 Cor. vi. 5 (but this is not a technical use), and nowhere else in the two letters. That the theme of wisdom is connected with the divisions in the Corinthian Church, which are in mind throughout 1 Cor. i-iii, is hardly to be questioned. The distribution of γνῶσις is less significant. The word occurs once in 1 Cor. i, five times in 1 Cor. viii, once in 1 Cor. xii, twice in 1 Cor. xiii, once in 1 Cor. xiv, four times in 2 Cor. i-ix, twice in 2 Cor. x-xiii. The cognate verbs (γινώσκειν, ἀναγινώσκειν, ἐπιγινώσκειν) have even less to tell us. It seems that γνῶσις was connected less with speculation than with the practical question whether a Christian might or might not eat sacrificial food.

I shall deal mainly with σοφία in relation to speculative Christianity at Corinth, and I propose to take as a starting-point the recently stated and undoubtedly important views of Ulrich Wilckens.<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Wilckens asserts, and lays great emphasis upon, the unity of 1 Cor. i. 18-ii. 16, and refuses to accept the notion that there is any disharmony between i. 18-25 and ii. 6-16. The latter section is determinative of the meaning of the whole, and shows against what adversaries Paul is arguing throughout. "The adversaries are thus gnostics, not Greek philosophers"<sup>3</sup> using the rhetorical methods of the Greek philosophical schools. It is true (Dr. Wilckens allows) that Paul speaks of these adversaries as

<sup>1</sup> From the time of Lütgert (see p. 288, and p. 275, n. 1; p. 289, n.5) it has been customary to apply material drawn from 1 Corinthians to the elucidation of 2 Cor. x-xiii; but the change in vocabulary suggests that 2 Cor. x-xiii deals with a new situation.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 275, n. 1; also the article σοφία, κτλ. in Kittel/Friedrich, *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, VII. 465-529. The latter is more convenient for quotation in a brief summary, and will be cited below by page and line.

<sup>3</sup> 523. 25.



Greeks,<sup>1</sup> but in fact “ the Corinthian gnosis was nourished ultimately upon hellenized Jewish apocalyptic conceptions ”.<sup>2</sup> When Paul speaks of *λόγος* he is thinking “ not of traditional Greek rhetoric . . . but of gnostic charismatic speech, as is shown not only by a comparison of ii. 1 with xii. 8, but also especially by Paul’s argument in 2 Corinthians ; cf. especially xi. 6 and x. 10 ”.<sup>3</sup> When Paul attacks the Corinthians’ *σοφία λόγου* (i. 17) it is not as a rhetorical method, but as a gnostic pneuma-Christology. Only this view makes sense of Paul’s argument that the cross of Christ was being made of no effect. “ That a Christian preaching in the style of Greek philosophy was fundamentally impossible, and a distortion of the Christian kerygma, this Paul did not say in 1 Cor. i—and, considering the range of his experience, probably could not have said.”<sup>4</sup> For Paul had not been educated in Greek philosophy.<sup>5</sup>

So far Dr. Wilckens. There is some truth in his view, but taken as a whole it seems to me an unconvincing over-simplification of the facts. He denies the existence of disharmony in the various uses of *σοφία* in 1 Cor. i-iii, but if there is no disharmony there is at least a good deal of polyphony. His argument that Paul could not have been opposing a rhetorical expression of Christianity because he knew nothing of the rhetorical styles of the formal philosophies ignores the fact that in Paul’s day there were plenty of journalistic market-place arguers who themselves had not been trained in and were not exponents of a particular kind of philosophical oratory, but knew all there was to know about the tricks of windy rhetoric.

It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that there is a different shade of meaning in the word *σοφία* (and *σοφός*) every time it occurs ; analysis of the material, however, suggests that the occurrences of the word may be grouped into two categories, good and bad, each with two sub-divisions. Any attempt to draw the lines too

<sup>1</sup> But are the Greeks of 1 Cor. i. 22, 24 in any sense adversaries (*Gegner*)? or even a “ Christ-party ”? Are they not non-Christians?

<sup>2</sup> 523. 26 f.

<sup>3</sup> 523. 33-38.

<sup>4</sup> 523. 45-48.

<sup>5</sup> That Paul had not had a formal Greek education is doubtless true, but it is also true that his writings show marks of Greek rhetorical style, especially of the diatribe.

sharply would lead to error ; there are close relations between all four groups.

First (*pace* Wilckens) there is a considerable group of passages where σοφία denotes a kind of eloquence, a technique for persuading the hearer.<sup>1</sup> In itself this is harmless ; it becomes vicious only when the user of it comes to rely on human device and artifice, and not on the divine power resident in Christ crucified and transferred by the Spirit to the preaching which has Christ crucified as its theme. It was this sort of wisdom Paul refused to adopt when he first preached at Corinth.<sup>2</sup> So i. 17 ; ii. 1. It is instructive to note how in both these verses λόγος and σοφία are combined. ii. 4 is equally clear<sup>3</sup>: here λόγος is used twice, once for preaching and once for mere words. Preaching is not a matter of verbal arguments, however clever (σοφίας λόγοι) ; it is accompanied by the manifestation of the Spirit and of power. Similarly, wise men (σοφοί) are those who try to win over their fellows by the exercise of clever talk. This appears in the quotation of i. 19, and even more clearly in i. 20, where the σοφός stands in parallel with the γραμματεὺς and the συζητητῆς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου. Cf. i. 26 f.

We must, however, pause for a moment over i. 20, for here we may see one meaning of σοφία moving over into another. After scornfully apostrophizing the wise man, the scribe, the debater, Paul asks, οὐχὶ ἐμώρανεν ὁ θεὸς τὴν σοφίαν τοῦ κόσμου ; This

<sup>1</sup> Wilckens gives too much attention to the philosophical uses of σοφία. Essentially the word means "cleverness or skill in handicraft and art" (Liddell-Scott) ; see the discussion in Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.*, 1141a. It can refer to skill in speech, though, it seems, more often of poets than of orators ; cf. e.g. the ἀγὼν σοφίας between Aeschylus and Euripides in Aristophanes *Frogs* (882). The most important evidence of all, however, for our purpose is simply the figure of the Sophist, who for centuries dominated Greek education. The Sophist offers σοφία for money (e.g. Xenophon, *Mem.* 1. 6. 13 : καὶ τὴν σοφίαν ὡσαύτως τοὺς μὲν ἀργυρίου τῷ βουλομένῳ πωλοῦντας σοφιστὰς ὡσπερ πόρνους ἀποκαλοῦσιν), and what he teaches is the art of disputation (e.g. Plato, *Sophist* 232B ἀντιλογικὸν αὐτὸν ἐφαμεν εἶναί που . . . οὐ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων αὐτοῦ τούτου διδάσκαλον γίγνεσθαι; and much more).

<sup>2</sup> He determined not to use this σοφία before he reached Corinth, and thus before any Corinthian Christian gnosis existed—a clear indication of the meaning of σοφία here, though one that is often overlooked.

<sup>3</sup> Apart from the linguistic problems of the word *πειθοῖς*, which need not be discussed here.

question includes the meaning, Has not God, by giving up his Son to the cross, made human arguments look silly? But the human arguments are not merely rhetorical or logical; they rest upon presuppositions, such as the undesirability of suffering, and the necessity of imposing one's will on others. That is, *σοφία* is more than technique; it has come to be a way of estimating and assessing life. A similar shift of meaning can be seen in ii. 5 (cf. ii. 13), and in iii. 18, 19, 20.

There is thus a *σοφία* of speech, no bad thing (cf. xii. 8), but dangerous; dangerous when preachers think they can use it as a substitute for Christ crucified, and most dangerous of all when it ceases to be human technique and becomes a humanistic philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

Second, there is the *σοφία* that wisdom of speech develops into when it ceases to be controlled by Christ crucified. We have already noted passages (i. 20; ii. 5, 13; iii. 19) where this development takes place. ii. 6 is particularly important in its implication that there is (though Paul rejects it) a wisdom of this age, of the rulers of this age. What is this? The expression *οἱ ἄρχοντες τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου* occurs only in ii. 6, 8 in the Pauline letters; cf. however 2 Cor. iv. 4, where the meaning will not be widely different.<sup>2</sup> Paul is referring to the heavenly angelic powers, whom he elsewhere describes in other terms. It is easier to understand their lack of true wisdom than the wisdom they may themselves be said to possess. They showed their failure to grasp God's wisdom by crucifying his Son, and thus unwittingly compassing their own ruin. This is sometimes<sup>3</sup> taken to mean that they simply failed to recognize in the man Jesus the (personal) wisdom of God, and thus thought that they might safely put him out of the way. But this interpretation fails to take into account

<sup>1</sup> Cf. 2 Cor. i. 12 *οὐκ ἐν σοφίᾳ σαρκικῇ*, with which is contrasted *ἐν χάριτι θεοῦ*. Wisdom, though regarded by those who cherish it as supremely spiritual, is, if man-centred, fleshly, and ultimately forms a contrasting counterpart to grace, since by means of it man seeks his own glory and satisfaction. The real trouble with *σοφία* is that it is very difficult to dissociate it from upward aspirations of the human mind.

<sup>2</sup> See also John xii. 31; xiv. 30; xvi. 11; also Eph. ii. 2. Cf. Ignatius, Eph. xix. 1. Earthly rulers (such as Pilate) are not intended by Paul's words.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Lietzmann, ad loc.

(a) the recognition of Jesus by supernatural powers,<sup>1</sup> and (b) the fact that if the ἄρχοντες had thought Jesus to be merely a man they would have had no ground for crucifying him—what harm could a man do them? It is more probable that the wisdom the rulers failed to understand was God's purpose of redemption<sup>2</sup> not simply through Christ but through Christ crucified; this indeed is God's wisdom ἐν μυστηρίῳ.<sup>3</sup>

Now it may be that in ii. 6 f. Paul is merely denying that the divine wisdom belongs to this age, or to its rulers, without asserting that they have a wisdom of their own.<sup>4</sup> This might cover i. 22—the wisdom sought by the Greeks is a mirage having no real existence. But it would not do justice to i. 21, which implies that the world has a wisdom—that is, a wisdom which it regards as wisdom, though it is totally inadequate for acquiring knowledge of God. There is in fact a close substantial parallel—perhaps in the end substantial identity—between the human wisdom that is confident of its own powers and resources both to attain to the truth and also to commend that truth to others, and the supernatural, demonic wisdom that is incapable of recognizing the wisdom of God in Christ crucified; and though Paul himself no doubt believed in the personal existence of the ἄρχοντες τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου, it may not be improper for us to demythologize them as a sublimation of anthropocentricity—the spirit of the age, if you will.<sup>5</sup> Their wisdom is one that arises within this αἰών, or (and Paul uses both terms) within the κόσμος. Like other gnostic systems it is a way of escape from this world<sup>6</sup> to the upper world of divine existence, based upon the authority of the ἄρχοντες. More than this we can hardly say, since Paul is writing allusively, and tells us no more.

<sup>1</sup> Especially in the synoptic gospels, e.g. Mark. i. 24.

<sup>2</sup> See R. Liechtenhan, *Die urchristliche Mission* (Zürich, 1946), p. 71, n. 12.

<sup>3</sup> See below, p. 282.

<sup>4</sup> As e.g. at Rom. viii. 15 he contrasts a πνεῦμα δουλείας with the πνεῦμα υἰοθεσίας, without meaning to imply that the former has as real and distinct an existence as the latter.

<sup>5</sup> See *From First Adam to Last* (London, 1962), p. 90 (and elsewhere).

<sup>6</sup> The notion of escape, of disentanglement from the evil (material) world, seems to be primary. Whether the redeemer-figure of gnosticism existed independently of Christian influence is at present a notoriously controversial question.

We turn next to the good uses of σοφία ; of these the first arises directly out of the last observations, and can be stated quickly. The σοφία of the rulers is a self-regarding, self-preserving σοφία; over against it stands God's wisdom, that is, his mysterious—and by human standards foolish—plan for destroying the rulers and thereby delivering men who were living in subjection to their authority. In this sense, σοφία is essentially a *Heilsplan*. It has a negative aspect, which is expressed in two ways, mythological and anthropological. (a) It was a means of overthrowing the rulers of this age, who, since their foolish act in crucifying the Lord of glory, are καταργούμενοι, in process of destruction (ii. 6 f.). The destruction of these rulers is a necessary condition of the bringing in of the age to come.<sup>1</sup> Paul stands at the point where the two conceptions, of two ages, and of two worlds, meet. Because the new age is at hand the angelic powers no longer decide who shall have access to the heavenly world ; through Christ crucified the way is open. (b) It was part of God's wise plan (i. 21) that men should not know him by the exercise of their own wisdom, since this, being a self-seeking wisdom, was orientated in a direction opposite to his own. Like the angelic rulers, man must himself be καταργούμενος if he is to receive the gift of salvation. Elsewhere<sup>2</sup> Paul expresses this truth in terms of death and resurrection with Christ ; in 1 Corinthians he has a significantly different way of putting it.

iii. 18 : If anyone among you thinks he is wise in this age, let him become a fool, in order that he may become wise (cf. i. 25).

viii. 2 f.: If anyone thinks he has come to know something, he has not yet come to knowledge as he ought ; if anyone loves God, he has been known by him.

Already in speaking of the negative aspect of God's *Heilsplan* we have reached the positive. By destroying the rulers of this age God brings near the age to come. By demonstrating the falsehood of human wisdom and gnosis he opens the door to the truth. It will suffice here to draw attention to the implications of ii. 13. With " words taught by human wisdom " Paul contrasts

<sup>1</sup> Cf. especially 1 Cor. x. 11.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Rom. vi. 3 ff., 11 ; Col. ii. 12 ; iii. 1-4.

words that come from the instruction of the Spirit. It is the Spirit who supplies the knowledge of things which eye has not seen or ear heard (ii. 9), of the things that God has given (ii. 12), and indeed of God himself (ii. 11).

From this point, the transition to the second "good" use of σοφία is easy. It is sometimes disputed whether, in these chapters of I Corinthians, σοφία is better understood as *Heilsplan* or as *Heilsgut*.<sup>1</sup> The answer is that it is both. We have seen passages where it means *Heilsplan*; there are (in addition to the hints we have already noted) at least two where it means *Heilsgut*. In i. 24, 30 Christ himself is σοφία,<sup>2</sup> and, in both verses, other terms used in parallel with σοφία make the meaning clear. Christ is also δύναμις, δικαιοσύνη, ἁγιασμός, and ἀπολύτρωσις. The overlap between *Heilsplan* and *Heilsgut* is a function of the absolute centrality of Christ crucified in Paul's conception of God and of salvation. The placarding of a crucified Christ before men's eyes (Gal. iii. 1) is the means by which God destroys all human wisdom, overthrows the cosmic powers, and establishes his kingdom; but during the establishing the kingdom is Christ's and he himself is the substance of it, as he is also the ground and basis of reigning humanity, the heavenly Man in whose image man will be created anew.

We can tidy up the evidence by noting that we now have the explanation of the fact that, notwithstanding i. 17, Paul can declare in ii. 6 that he does, in the right circumstances,<sup>3</sup> speak wisdom.<sup>4</sup> His wisdom is identical with the λόγος τοῦ σταυροῦ (i. 18).

Among Paul's many virtues is not to be counted a strict consistency in the use of terminology. This observation is not least true of his use of σοφία; but as far as this word is concerned Paul is hardly to be blamed. He was dealing with a complicated

<sup>1</sup> See Wilckens in *T.W.N.T.*, VII. 520, n. 382.

<sup>2</sup> Other passages, notably I Cor. viii. 6, are often taken to imply the same identification without use of the word.

<sup>3</sup> ἐν τοῖς τελείοις. The sense of the word is disputed. Cf. iii. 1, where the τελεῖοι are πνευματικοί, contrasted with σάρκινοι, νήπιοι. The meaning is certainly "mature Christians", but it seems to have been borrowed from the gnostic background.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. I Cor. xii. 8, where a λόγος σοφίας is a gift of the Spirit.

situation, and the complicated situation and inconsistent terminology are to some extent mutually explanatory.

It is, to say the least, a not unreasonable guess that it was Apollos who popularized in Corinth what we may call the wisdom method of preaching—a method which Paul acknowledged was not his own, a method of which he was clearly (perhaps more clearly than Apollos) aware of the dangers, but one which he could not and did not reject out of hand ; if he had done so he could not have written 1 Cor. ii. 6 ; xii. 8. It is true that Dr. Wilckens warns us<sup>1</sup> not to build on the *ἀνὴρ λόγιος* of Acts xviii. 24, but it is not improper to ask where, if not at this point, Apollos differed from Paul. The two were in substantial agreement, and iii. 6-9 suggests that the contribution of Apollos may have been a version of Christianity more advanced in its presentation even if no more fundamental in its content. Apollos' use of the wisdom method would have been harmless enough if others—and is there any good reason why we should not think of the Christ-group?—had not developed form into substance, and produced out of a technique of preaching and teaching a radically changed gospel, accommodated to Greek tastes—a wisdom of this age. It is worth noting that we have in Corinth precisely the accumulation of factors out of which gnosticism (in its mature form) may be supposed to have emerged.<sup>2</sup> It seems to me that we lack clear exegetical evidence that any adversaries of Paul's in Corinth taught a *σοφία*-myth, in the sense of a story about a figure called *σοφία* who descended through the powers for the redemption of mankind : this sort of myth arose rather in Paul's response to a *σοφία* which was that of the powers themselves. It was the necessity of combating this *σοφία*, which may well have laid more stress on charismata than on myth, together with the apocalyptic-eschatological consideration that the powers were now in process of being overthrown, that led Paul himself to the development of a myth, which spoke of the descent of Christ, his crucifixion by and victory over the powers, and the consequent redemption of mankind.

<sup>1</sup> *T.W.N.T.*, VII. 523, 35 f.

<sup>2</sup> There seems to be a connection between gnosticism and Jewish apocalyptic. See R. M. Grant, *A Historical Introduction to the New Testament* (London, 1963), pp. 204 ff.

The development of the Christ-group, with its *σοφία* and *γνώσις* (viii. 1) may have been due to reaction to the Peter-group.<sup>1</sup> Paul in turn reacted creatively as well as negatively to both groups. The adherents of Peter had to be vigorously resisted so far as they represented a legalistic perversion of the Gospel, even though in practice Paul might agree with some of their conclusions, on the different ground of Christian love and consideration for weaker brothers. The Christ-group too had to be resisted if it taught or implied that human wisdom offered a way of placating the rulers and thus of ascending independently into heaven; yet (as Apollos' colleague could not deny) there was a Christian *σοφία* whose theme, whose very substance, was Christ crucified.<sup>2</sup>

It was characteristic of Paul that he should see, in the new situation, precisely in the dangerous errors that were being propagated in Corinth, the possibility of advance in the understanding and statement of the Gospel. Few men in his own, or in any other age have had minds big enough to do this. In Corinth there were some who adhered to the old Pauline Gospel, as they had first received it. Their watchword was, *Ἐγώ εἰμι Παύλου*. There is little clear indication of their presence in the epistles (one could not expect Paul to blame them severely, though they may well have embarrassed him), but we may, I think, point to one place where their views are expressed.

There can be little doubt that at several points in 1 Corinthians Paul quotes opinions that were current in Corinth. One example<sup>3</sup> is to be found at vi. 13. It seems probable that some at Corinth were arguing from analogy: *τὰ βρώματα τῆ κοιλία, καὶ ἡ κοιλία τοῖς βρώμασιν*. This is incontestable truth, and it is consistent with it that neither food nor belly has permanent existence. From this some would conclude: *τὸ σῶμα τῆ πορνεία*—other physical organs may be used as freely as those of digestion. Paul

<sup>1</sup> See T. W. Manson, *op. cit.*, especially p. 207: "It [the Christ party] seems to stand at the opposite extreme to the Cephas party."

<sup>2</sup> This is confirmed by 1 Cor. i. 25: true wisdom, the wisdom that is the Gospel, is described by a striking oxymoron as God's folly (*τὸ μωρὸν τοῦ θεοῦ*). This is more than a rhetorical device; by human standards the cross was folly.

<sup>3</sup> See e.g. Allo, *ad loc.* "Si Paul n'avait pas supposé qu'un tel sophisme avait cours à Corinthe . . ., alors sa comparaison serait un hors-d'œuvre assez inutile, pour ne pas dire un peu trop brutal."



firmly denies this conclusion, but it is evident that some at Corinth accepted it.

Dr. J. Jeremias<sup>1</sup> has shown that 1 Cor. vii. 1 also contains a quotation : *καλὸν ἀνθρώπῳ γυναικὸς μὴ ἄπτεσθαι*, a judgement accepted by Paul only with severe qualifications. Dr. Jeremias's analysis of the opening verses of this chapter seems to me convincing, but it presents us with the difficulty, which he does not discuss, of attributing to the Corinthians two diametrically opposed views : on the one hand, fornication is a natural function of the body and is therefore not merely pardonable but inevitable ; on the other, it is a good thing for a man to avoid any sexual contact with a woman. Is it reasonable to suppose that both views were maintained in the one community?

Schlatter<sup>2</sup> thought so, and that both views could be ascribed to the Christ-group. It is wrong, he says, to explain the two attitudes as respectively hellenistic and Jewish. "The desire for celibacy breaks off every connection with Judaism, but it is not for that reason Greek. It is thinkable only under the protection of the slogan 'All things are lawful for me', and this has nothing to do with the traditions of Greece, but was the Christian answer to Jewish subservience to the law."<sup>3</sup> Schlatter continues,<sup>4</sup> "They evaluated celibacy just as much as access to a harlot as the putting into effect of Christian strength, as the fulfilment of the liberty grounded in Christ. The continent man is strong ; he proves his strength by dispensing with a wife. This does not take us beyond the profession, 'We are of Christ'."

Thus the watchword of the Christ-group is Christian freedom; and this may be expressed both in sexual licence, and by dispensing with the opportunities of sexual expression that most men need, or desire. We are reminded of the varying moral practices of various second-century gnostic groups.<sup>5</sup> It is doubtful, however, whether Schlatter's explanation is the best available. It seems more probable that those who proclaimed *καλὸν ἀνθρώπῳ*

<sup>1</sup> In *Studia Paulina in honorem J. de Zwaan*, ed. J. N. Sevenster and W. C. van Unnik (Haarlem, 1953), pp. 151 f.

<sup>2</sup> *Paulus der Bote Jesu* (Stuttgart, 1962 (1934)).

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 212.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 213.

<sup>5</sup> See e.g. H. M. Gwatkin, *Early Church History* (Cambridge, 1927), ii. 26 f.

γυναικὸς μὴ ἄπτεσθαι were the Pauline group. Certainly Paul comes much closer to their opinion than to approving Christian freedom in fornication.<sup>1</sup> He was himself unmarried (1 Cor. vii. 7), and gives limited agreement to the Corinthian view: abstinence has a good deal to be said for it, but it cannot be required of Christians because it fails to take account of all the facts of the human situation.

Paul was a great enough Christian thinker to learn from the changing facts of his environment, as well as from his friends and from his adversaries. We can scarcely say so much of all Paulinists—whether of the first century or of later ages.

## 2 CORINTHIANS x-xiii.

It has too often been assumed that the troubles with which Paul deals in these chapters were a simple continuation of those that appear in the first epistle<sup>2</sup>; in particular that the trouble-makers of the second epistle are the same persons as those described in 1 Cor. i. 12 as the Christ-group. There is some superficial justification for this belief, especially in the fact that in 2 Cor. x. 7 Paul deals with an unnamed person who *πέποιθεν ἐαυτῷ Χριστοῦ εἶναι*, and makes a reply not widely different from that of 1 Cor. i. 13: it is not wrong to claim to belong to Christ; indeed any Christian may and must make such a profession (1 Cor. iii. 23). But to make it exclusively, so as to deny that others belong to Christ, is to divide Christ. So in 2 Cor. x. 7 Paul rejoins, *καθὼς αὐτὸς Χριστοῦ* (this is not denied), *οὕτως καὶ ἡμεῖς*. Moreover, there is common material. There is at least some reason to think that the Christ-group in 1 Corinthians were Christians of a gnostic type, who laid stress on charismatic and spiritual phenomena, against whom Paul found himself obliged to defend his apostleship. It seems that his opponents in 2 Cor. x-xiii also laid some stress on charismatic speech and visions, and despised Paul for his deficiencies in these respects; in reply, Paul vehemently defends his apostleship.

<sup>1</sup> It is possible that in the "previous letter" Paul may have said, or have appeared to say, more than he intended (cf. 1 Cor. v. 9).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Käsemann's note on Lütgert quoted on p. 289, n. 5; also p. 288, n. 5.

This assimilation of 2 Cor. x-xiii, and the anti-Pauline movement to which these chapters bear witness, to the evidence of the earlier letter, is nevertheless to be rejected.<sup>1</sup> It is bound to appear in a new light if we cease to think of the four chapters as constituting the intermediate "severe" letter (or part of it),<sup>2</sup> but take them to be not earlier, and perhaps later, than 2 Cor. i-ix. More important still, however, is the simple but too often neglected observation that whereas 1 Cor. i. 12 deals with native inhabitants of the Corinthian Church,<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. x-xiii is directed against strangers who intrude themselves into the Church from without.<sup>4</sup> It is true that from time to time Paul speaks of the Corinthians themselves with some bitterness, because they have allowed themselves to be deceived and corrupted by those who have visited their Church: Paul needs to commend himself to those who should spontaneously have taken his part. But the source of the trouble is outside the Church not within it; and it follows that the problems of 2 Cor. x-xiii must be treated separately from those of 1 Corinthians—though naturally this is not to say that there was no resemblance, or connection, between them.

Who then were these latest opponents of Paul's, and what, in addition to personal animosity, which does not seem to have been absent, were the grounds of their opposition to him?

The old view, which goes back to F. C. Baur,<sup>5</sup> was that the trouble-makers ironically described as *ὑπερλίαν ἀπόστολοι* were the Jerusalem apostles, who were now beginning, in person or through deputies, to carry on in Corinth the same kind of Judaizing propaganda that they had earlier conducted in the Churches of

<sup>1</sup> See Kümmel's additional note in H. Lietzmann—W. G. Kümmel, *An die Korinther I, II* (Tübingen, 1949), p. 208, on the view that 2 Cor. x. 7 refers to the Christ-group; also p. 289, n. 5.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 271, n. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Paul, Apollos, and Cephas, [and Christ], are certainly not Corinthian figures; but at least as far as the first two are concerned we can be confident that they did not desire the formation of groups in their names; the fault lay with the Corinthians, not with their missionaries and ministers.

<sup>4</sup> See especially x. 12-18 (discussed below); xi. 4 f., 12-15, 22 f.; xii. 11 ff.

<sup>5</sup> See *Paulus, der Apostel Jesu Christi* (Stuttgart, 1845), pp. 259-332 (this theme is the main subject of the chapter); also "Die Christuspartei in der korinthischen Gemeinde", reprinted in *Ausgewählte Werke I*, ed. K. Scholder (Stuttgart—Bad Cannstatt, 1963), pp. 1-76.

Galatia. This view found support in the fact that the opponents claimed that they were the seed of Abraham, servants of Christ (that is, perhaps, disciples during his earthly ministry), and servants of righteousness (that is, perhaps, upholders of righteousness according to the law).<sup>1</sup> It was, however, vigorously assailed by Lütgert,<sup>2</sup> who at least succeeded in making it very difficult to hold the old view in the old form. That the adversaries were Jews is incontrovertible; but it does not follow from this, said Lütgert, that they were Judaizers. The unmistakable badge of the Judaizers was an insistence on circumcision, as we see in Acts and Galatians; of this insistence there is no trace in 2 Corinthians. Lütgert proceeded to make merry over his predecessors, who, aware of this difficulty, tried to devise means of getting round it—suggesting, for example, that the supposed Judaizers were keeping circumcision up their sleeve as a card they would play at a later date when first they had won the confidence of their victims. It need not be said that there is no evidence of such plans; if they had existed it is more than likely that Paul would have seen through them, and that we should have heard a good deal of the duplicity of these crypto-circumcisionists.<sup>3</sup> According to Lütgert, the intruders in Corinth were *Schwarmgeister*, gnostics and charismatics of Jewish origin,<sup>4</sup> libertine in their interpretation and practice of Christian freedom.<sup>5</sup> The greater part of Lütgert's thesis was difficult to refute, though

<sup>1</sup> This is not a necessary interpretation of *διάκονοι δικαιοσύνης* (2 Cor. xi. 15), in which the genitive may well be adjectival—not satanic but righteous ministers.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 275, n. 1.

<sup>3</sup> For Paul's ability to see through such tricks cf. e.g. Gal. iv. 17, *ζηλοῦσιν ὑμᾶς οὐ καλῶς*.

<sup>4</sup> "Sie bekämpfen ihn [Paulus] nicht wie die Judaisten in Galatien als einen Irrlehrer, der die Gemeinde verführt, nicht als Sündendiener, der sie vom göttlichen Gesetz weglockt, nicht als Antinomisten, nicht als gefährlichen Gegner der alten Frömmigkeit, als Neuerer und Revolutionär, der zu weit geht,—sondern umgekehrt: als Schwächling, sie hassen und fürchten ihn nicht, sie verachten ihn" (op. cit. p. 68).

<sup>5</sup> "Sie [die Gegner] entstammen einer Richtung, die aus der urchristlichen Freiheitspredigt erstanden ist . . . Sie sind libertunistische Pneumatiker" (op. cit. p. 86). It is unfortunate that both Lütgert and Schlatter (see p. 275, n. 1.), who followed him closely, took 2 Cor. x-xiii closely with data deduced from 1 Corinthians about the Christ-group.

some, for example E. B. Allo,<sup>1</sup> questioned the assertion that the opponents were in any proper sense gnostics. They were (according to Allo) hellenized Jews of the dispersion, who did not preach circumcision, suspecting that this would not go down well at Corinth, but exalted Moses at the expense of Christ.<sup>2</sup>

Lütgert's work remains of great importance, but it cannot be said that he answered satisfactorily all the questions raised by 2 Cor. x-xiii. Another very important contribution is that made by E. Käsemann.<sup>3</sup>

According to Dr. Käsemann, Paul was accused by his adversaries of deficiency in spiritual gifts; because of this deficiency he could be no independent apostle, but must be subordinate to the original group. Since he claimed to be an independent apostle when he was not he must be acting for unworthy ends; hence his whole Christian existence, his *Χριστοῦ εἶναι*, was called in question.<sup>4</sup> The adversaries themselves were Jews but not Judaizers,<sup>5</sup> spiritual men (*Pneumatiker*) but not gnostics, since no specifically mythological gnosis is attributed to them. In fact, it is necessary to ask why, in so fierce a battle, Paul said so little about his opponents' beliefs. The answer is that the *ὑπερλίαν ἀπόστολοι* of 2 Cor. xi. 5; xii. 11 (to be distinguished—according to Käsemann—from the false apostles of xi. 13) were the Jerusalem apostles; the opponents in Corinth were "a delegation sent out from the primitive community".<sup>6</sup> This is why the central theme of 2 Cor. x-xiii is not myth, not charismata (as in 1 Corinthians), but

<sup>1</sup> *Seconde Épitre aux Corinthiens* (Paris, 1956). See also below, pp. 289 f.

<sup>2</sup> "Ainsi nous n'allons pas, comme Lügert, jusqu'à prendre ces opposants déclarés pour des libertins 'gnostiques' proprement dits, mais pour des faiseurs de spéculations où, sur la base prétendue des enseignements évangélique et mosaïque combinés, se dressait quelque mystique d'allure gnosticisante. On comprendrait fort bien alors comment ils pouvaient grouper autour d'eux les mécontents des partis les plus divers" (op. cit. p. 272).

<sup>3</sup> See p. 275, n. 1. Käsemann treats the problem with special reference to the conceptions of apostleship involved. It is very important that he does not make the mistake of confusing the situation of 2 Cor. x-xiii with that of 1 Corinthians.

<sup>4</sup> Thus 2 Cor. x. 7 does not mean that 2 Cor. x-xiii is to be closely connected with the Christ-group (1 Cor. i. 12).

<sup>5</sup> "Kennzeichnend ist jedoch, dass Lütgerts These—in der Negation durchschlagend—in ihrer positiven Beweisführung solange farblos bleibt, wie sie ihre Argumente nicht aus 1 Cor entleiht" (op. cit. p. 40 (18 of the reprint)).

<sup>6</sup> Op. cit. p. 46 (27 of the reprint).

spiritual freedom, the authority of the apostle. The fact that his immediate adversaries could invoke the Jerusalem apostles was an embarrassment to Paul. "He intends to reckon relentlessly with the intruders in Corinth, yet he is neither able nor willing to come into conflict with Jerusalem and the primitive apostles. . . . Perhaps we may formulate the matter thus: He defends himself against the primitive apostles, and smites the intruders in Corinth."<sup>1</sup>

In this disputing of his apostleship Paul saw at the same time a falsifying of the Gospel—hence he traces it back to satanic deception (xi. 3 f.). In this respect at least Baur was right.<sup>2</sup> The adversaries' position led to an insistence on tradition (*Traditionsprinzip*), according to which every new-founded Christian community must recognize the authority of Jerusalem. Only so could the work of the Spirit be guaranteed. Paul was accordingly accused of walking after the flesh (x. 3).<sup>3</sup>

The issue at Corinth was not merely personal; it touched the "constitution of the early Christian Church".<sup>4</sup> Gospel, Christ, and Spirit (xi. 4) were all viewed in a way different from Paul's. "In his own person he is merely the example in which, for the first time in Church History, the question of the Christian ministry (*Amt*) appears with a radical demonstration of the problems involved (*mit radikaler Problematik*)."<sup>5</sup>

The most searching criticism of Dr. Käsemann's essay is that of Dr. Bultmann.<sup>6</sup> Dr. Bultmann does not find convincing the argument that Paul's adversaries were *Pneumatiker*, but not gnostic. Why should Paul say explicitly that his adversaries had a mythological, speculative, saving gnosis? He had one himself. The fact that material from 1 Corinthians is not repeated in 2 Cor. x-xiii is no proof that it was not applicable to the adversaries there; in 2 Cor. x-xiii Paul had more important matters to discuss. It is

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit. pp. 48f. (30 of the reprint).

<sup>2</sup> Op. cit. p. 50 (33 of the reprint).

<sup>3</sup> At this point (op. cit. p. 51 (36 of the reprint)) Käsemann makes the interesting suggestion, "Hier ist vor allem das  $\Gamma\iota\lambda\psi$ -Institut zu erwähnen, das zwar kaum die Entstehung des christlichen Apostolates ausreichend erklärt, wohl aber die Entsendung urgemeindlicher Emissäre in das Missionsgebiet."

<sup>4</sup> Op. cit. p. 51 (35 of the reprint).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> See p. 275, n. 1.

true that the opponents were Jews ; but they need not have come from Jerusalem, still less need they have been an official delegation. " Since there is no indication that leads us to think of Judaizers we may have to do throughout with a hellenistic gnostic Jewish Christianity . . . the spirituality against which Paul contends can only be the hellenistic spirituality which we know as characteristic of the gnostic movement."<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Käsemann's distinction between the adversaries in Corinth and the *ὑπερλίαν ἀπόστολοι* will not stand. According to him, Paul would not have said (xi. 5) of those whom he describes as the servants of Satan (xi. 14 f.), " I am no less than they ". But why not (says Dr. Bultmann), if this were necessary in order to open the Corinthians' eyes? In xi. 3 f. Paul accuses his adversaries of Satanic deception. But, the Corinthians could reply, these men have proved themselves in *λόγος* and *γνώσις*. Paul answers—I no less! Moreover, xii. 11 refers to activity in Corinth itself<sup>2</sup>; thus the *ὑπερλίαν ἀπόστολοι* had been in Corinth. And the reserve which, according to Dr. Käsemann, Paul shows in attacking his adversaries is due not to respect for the Jerusalem apostles, whose backing the adversaries are supposed to have, but to the situation itself.

Our discussion of divergent views of 2 Cor. x-xiii leaves us with a number of outstanding questions, of which three may now be briefly considered. If in these we can reach firm ground we shall have made considerable progress towards the solution of a very difficult problem.

(1) The interpretation of 2 Cor. x. 12-18.<sup>3</sup> Paul writes

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit. p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> " Denn xii. 11 heisst es im Aor. οὐδὲν γὰρ ὑστέρησα τ. ὑπερλ. ἀπ., und das κατειργάσθη ἐν ὑμῖν (Vers 12) bestätigt es. Dann müssen aber doch die ὑπερλίαν ἀπόστολοι eben in Korinth den Paulus durch ihr Wirken . . . in den Schatten gestellt haben " (op. cit. p. 28).

<sup>3</sup> I have no space to show in detail how my interpretation of this passage is indebted—both positively and negatively—to Käsemann and Bultmann, as well as to the commentators. I am however unable to follow Käsemann and Bultmann in accepting the reading of the Western text, which omits the last words (*οὐ συνιᾶσιν*) of verse 12 and the first words (*ἡμεῖς δέ*) of verse 13, thus running the two verses together. The Western reading is smoother than that of the other manuscripts (with its abrupt change of person and absolute use of *συνιᾶσιν*), and not to be preferred.

ironically. He<sup>1</sup> will not count himself among, or compare himself with, those who commend themselves.<sup>2</sup> His language is thus consistent with his ironical description of certain men as *ὑπερλίαν ἀπόστολοι*—naturally, no one would think of comparing himself with super-apostles! This creates at least a presumption that, in this paragraph, Paul is thinking of the same persons as in xi. 5; xii. 11. Paul does not dare to make such comparisons; they however measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, because they recognize no authority or standards external to themselves. Doing so they fail to understand<sup>3</sup> what apostleship, and even Christian existence, are. They glory *εἰς τὰ ἄμετρα* (cf. xi. 22 f.), as Paul will not do. *εἰς τὰ ἄμετρα*, used by Paul only in this paragraph, was no doubt suggested by the foolish self-measurement (*μετροῦντες*) of verse 12; to measure oneself by oneself is inevitably to fall into unmeasured excesses of boasting, which there is no objective, external standard to check. This, “we” will not do. What “we” will do would have been easier to understand if Paul had seen fit to use a verb to express it; the reader must repeat *καυχησόμεθα*, or, perhaps better, understand (*ἑαυτοὺς*) *μετροῦμεν*. The latter alternative is suggested by *κατὰ τὸ μέτρον τοῦ κανόνος*.<sup>4</sup>

According to Dr. Käsemann, Dr. Kümmel, and others, *κανών* means a “standard of judgement”,<sup>5</sup> relating to the mandate for evangelism which the success of the mission demonstrated (cf. I Cor. ix. 2). This interpretation is not satisfactory. (a) It involves redundancy, for *μέτρον* also means a measure or rule,<sup>6</sup> and *μέτρον τοῦ κανόνος*, if *κανών* means “measuring-rod”, is absurd. (b) The words *ἐφικέσθαι ἄχρι καὶ ὑμῶν*<sup>7</sup> point clearly to the

<sup>1</sup> Paul uses the first person plural. He may be associating colleagues with himself; this makes no difference to the argument.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. iii. 1; v. 12.

<sup>3</sup> N. Turner, in *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* by J. H. Moulton, III *Syntax* (Edinburgh, 1963), p. 160, translates, “they do not realise that they are measuring themselves by their own standards”. But cf. the other uses of *συνίημι* in Paul (Rom. iii. 11; xv. 21).

<sup>4</sup> For the construction of *οὐ ἐμέρισε* see Blass-Debrunner, 294:5 (Anhang).

<sup>5</sup> “Beurteilungsmaßstab” (Kümmel, p. 209).

<sup>6</sup> *μέτρον* has other meanings also, but none that is applicable here.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *ἐφικνούμενοι εἰς ὑμᾶς, ὑπερεκτείνομεν, ἄχρι καὶ ὑμῶν ἐφθάσαμεν* (verse 14), *ὑπερέκεινα* (verse 16).



extension of Paul's mission in space, rather than its success in any particular place. In view of these facts it is better to take *κανών* in the sense of limit or boundary, and thus of measured space. Not that Paul's thought is exclusively geographical<sup>1</sup>: the geographical bounds of his apostleship are such as to include Corinth, and his apostleship includes not merely a visit to Corinth but the foundation of a Church there.

Verse 14 brings this point home yet more clearly. If Paul had not legitimately and effectively reached the Corinthians as an apostle he would in dealing with them be stretching himself out (*ὑπερεκτείνομεν*) beyond his appointed limit; but this is not so. He did get so far (*ἐφθάσαμεν*), and that not merely as a sight-seer; he came *ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ*.

In verse 15 Paul's rivals appear once more by implication. They do what Paul does not. The participial clause *οὐκ . . . καυχώμενοι* is parallel to and takes up the clause *οὐ . . . ὑπερεκτείνομεν*, re-introducing the theme of glorying, as in verse 13 with the adverbial phrase *εἰς τὰ ἄμετρα*. In his relations with the Church at Corinth Paul is neither extending himself beyond limit nor glorying beyond measure, for the Church is (under God) his own work, and he is adhering strictly to his rule (cf. Rom. xv. 20) of not interfering with other men's work. This, it is implied, is exactly what his opponents in Corinth are doing; they are illegitimately extending the scope of their apostolic activity, and that with a view to glorying in the work of others.

With the next participial clause (*ἐλπίδα δὲ ἔχοντες*) the grammar becomes yet more confused, and we might excuse ourselves from continuing to the end of the chapter were it not that there are two further uses of the word *κανών* that must be noted in confirmation of what was said above. The hope Paul cherishes is that, as the faith of the Corinthian Church grows, he may be magnified among them<sup>2</sup> according to his *κανών* (*κατὰ τὸν κανόνα ἡμῶν*), that is, in terms of the field of apostolic work assigned to him (which includes Corinth). He adds, *εἰς περισσείαν*. The grammatical construction is not clear, but the sense, added as an

<sup>1</sup> For this use of *κανών* cf. 1 Clem. xli. 1 : . . . *μὴ παρεκβαίνων τὸν ὠρισμένον τῆς λειτουργίας αὐτοῦ κανόνα*.

<sup>2</sup> *ἐν ὑμῖν*; perhaps "on account of them".

afterthought, is that Paul hopes to be magnified yet further, and this will be by preaching the Gospel in parts beyond Corinth. The fundamentally spatial use of *κανών* is emphasized here, and again in the exegetical clause *οὐκ . . . καυχήσασθαι*, which refers by implication to Paul's adversaries, who, instead of seeking out new mission-fields, invade the fields of others (*ἐν ἀλλοτρίῳ κανόνι*), and for their boasting make use of what they find ready to hand (*εἰς τὰ ἔτοιμα*).

The point of this exegetical sketch is as simple as the details of the passage are obscure. Two or three questions are superimposed one upon another. Within whose area of apostolic activity does Corinth fall? Whose work has justified itself (in Corinth, for example) in the creation of new Churches, and not in a mere façade of boasting about the achievements of others? Whose ministry shows the true marks of apostleship?<sup>1</sup> It is impossible to state these questions without calling to mind Gal. ii. 1-10, where there is not only a mutual recognition of apostolic ministries but also an agreed division of apostolic labour. Paul is to go to the Gentiles, Cephas to the Jews. This was an agreement the practice of which was bound to cause difficulty because there were few places that were purely Jewish or purely Gentile in population, and there is no reason to be surprised that trouble of precisely this kind arose in Corinth. We have here an important pointer to a solution of the problems of 2 Cor. x-xiii, and are directed to a new question.

(2) Should we distinguish between the *ὑπερλίαν ἀπόστολοι* and the *ψευδαπόστολοι*? Our examination of 2 Cor. x. 12-18 has led to a clear suggestion that Paul had in mind those with whom the agreement of Gal. ii. 9 was made—in the first instance Cephas, next the so-called "pillars", and perhaps the Jerusalem apostles as a whole. It is reasonable to suppose that these are the persons whom he describes as *ὑπερλίαν ἀπόστολοι* (xi. 5 ; xii. 11). Dr. Kümmel<sup>2</sup> says that even so indirect a polemic against the original apostles as Dr. Käsemann posits is nowhere to be found; but in fact the irony of *οἱ ὑπερλίαν ἀπόστολοι* is precisely parallel to that of *οἱ δοκοῦντες* (Gal. ii. 6).<sup>3</sup> In both xi. 5 and xii. 11 Paul claims that

<sup>1</sup> See xii. 12 ; and Käsemann, *op. cit.* pp. 61-71 (51-66 of the reprint).

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 210.

<sup>3</sup> See *Studia Paulina* (p. 285, n. 1.), pp. 1-4.

he does not fall behind (*ὕστερεῖν*) these exalted persons. This is exactly what he does elsewhere (Gal. i. 1, 18 f.; ii. 6; 1 Cor. ix. 4 ff.) with reference to the same apostles.

That *οἱ ὑπερλίαν ἀπόστολοι* are the Jerusalem apostles is confirmed by study of the contexts in which the expression occurs. It has been argued<sup>1</sup> that in xi. 5 the Twelve cannot be intended because in verses 2 f. Paul has spoken of the seduction of the Corinthian Church by satanic agencies, and in verse 4 of one who comes and preaches another Jesus, a different Spirit, a different Gospel. The conclusion is valid only if it is known that Paul was unable to conceive radical divergence between himself and the Jerusalem authorities. That Paul was quite able to do this is proved by Gal. i. 8 f.; ii. 5 f., 11, 14. Further, the difficulty is severe only if we try to establish a direct connection between verse 5<sup>2</sup> and verse 4. But verse 5 looks back to verse 1, and the run of thought (which is no more irregular than many a passage in Paul) goes as follows: Please put up with a little folly from me (verse 1). I must speak, for I have reason to be extremely anxious about you (verses 2 f.). You are willing even to put up with one who preaches a false Gospel to you (verse 4). You should put up with me, for I do not come behind (those whom you consider) the highest apostles of all (verse 5). It is true that some despise my power of speech, but I do not lack knowledge (verse 6). Or perhaps I injured you by preaching the Gospel for nothing (verse 7). This last point had already been noted in 1 Cor. ix as a point of difference between Paul and the Jerusalem apostles.

In xii. 11 similar points arise. Paul has uttered his folly; he has become a fool. He affirms once more that he does not fall behind the *ὑπερλίαν ἀπόστολοι*—*εἰ καὶ οὐδέν εἰμι*. This recalls the unfavourable comparison of Paul with the earlier witnesses to the resurrection in 1 Cor. xv. 8; and almost immediately (verse 13) we return to the theme of the payment of apostles.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Kümmel, p. 210; Bultmann, *op. cit.* pp. 27 f.

<sup>2</sup> The *γάρ* (B: *δέ*) seems to demand such a connection, but it is by no means every *γάρ* in Paul that links directly with the immediately preceding sentence.

<sup>3</sup> All the signs of an apostle (verse 12) were present—except the demand for payment.

It is unlikely that Paul felt any inhibition in speaking ironically of the Jerusalem apostles, but unlikely also that he would call them false apostles, evil workers masquerading as servants of Christ, servants of Satan masquerading as servants of righteousness (xi. 13 ff.). We may be confident that those whom he so bitterly attacked formed a different group. If we look for an analogy we may turn again to Galatians : to the envoys of James who, in ii. 12, succeeded in turning Peter from the "right road toward the truth of the Gospel"<sup>1</sup>, and disrupting the alliance between him, Paul, and Barnabas. To say this is not to give a complete answer to the question, Who were the evil intruders in Corinth? We know little about the process by which the Jewish Christianity of the first generation became the hellenized, gnostic, Jewish Christianity of a later time ; we may for the present be content to locate the Jewish Christianity of Corinth somewhere between the two extremes.

This observation suggests the last question that calls for brief discussion.

(3) Were there Judaizers who did not circumcise? Lütgert, it will be remembered,<sup>2</sup> argued that Paul's opponents in Corinth could not have been Judaizers because there is no indication that they required that Gentile Christians in Corinth should be circumcised. The argument has often been repeated, but it is not conclusive. There were Judaizers who did not call for circumcision, and one of them had most probably been in Corinth already before 1 Corinthians was written—Cephas. Without demanding circumcision he had attempted to impose a Judaic pattern of thought and religious life upon a Gentile community ; for the evidence I may refer once more to T. W. Manson's convincing paper.<sup>3</sup> The verb "to judaize" can be used of Peter and of his influence on the authority of Paul himself: *πὼς τὰ ἔθνη ἀναγκάζεις ἰουδαΐζειν* ; (Gal. ii. 14). With Peter we may class the group

<sup>1</sup> See G. D. Kilpatrick, "Gal. ii. 14 ὀρθοδοδοῦσιν", in *Neutestamentliche Studien für Rudolf Bultmann* (Berlin, 1954), pp. 269-74.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 288.

<sup>3</sup> Op. cit., especially p. 205 : "I suggest that the demand [for *glossolalia*] came from the leaders of the Cephas party, and was part of the concerted move to instil Palestinian piety and Palestinian orthodoxy into the Corinthian Church."

(which can hardly have included Paul) that promulgated the Apostolic Decrees<sup>1</sup> of Acts xv. 20, 29.

Thus, if there is a connection between the troubles of 2 Cor. x-xiii and those of 1 Corinthians, it is to be found, not, as is often supposed, in the Christ-group, but in the group of Cephas; though indeed there has been much development between the two epistles.

When the curtain falls on the last scene of the first act of the story of Christianity at Corinth the stage is in confusion. It has cleared but little when, forty years on, Clement of Rome raises the curtain for us once more. The Corinthians are still divided<sup>2</sup> and in themselves they have perhaps little to teach us except the important truth that the apostolic age was not one of primitive perfection and unbroken unity. But Paul, who learnt at Corinth what it is to be weak in Christ, shows there perhaps more clearly than elsewhere his full stature of Christian intelligence, firmness, and magnanimity.

<sup>1</sup> See *From First Adam to Last*, pp. 25 f.

<sup>2</sup> See especially 1 Clement xlvii, with specific reference to 1 Cor. i. 10 ff.