

This file was created October 2021 as a translation for my personal use and without any thought of sharing publicly at the time. I only ask that you keep that in mind when using it. I have made a copy of the French text available at

<https://archive.org/details/turmel-les-ecrits-de-saint-paul-1-lepitre-aux-romains>

Neil Godfrey - November 2023

Turmel, Joseph. *Les Écrits De Saint Paul. 1: L'épître Aux Romains*. Christianisme. Paris: F. Rieder et Cie, 1926.



INTRODUCTION

When Paul wrote the letter to the Romans (in the year 56), he was living in Corinth. His home was in the house of Gaius, which was also the meeting place "of the whole church" (Rom., XVI, 23). The Christians in Rome had never given him any sign of life; he had never seen them.

Nevertheless, he decided to send them a letter which, as it stands today, begins with a big compliment (I, 8: "Your faith is celebrated throughout the world"), then embarks on an abstruse theology with sometimes unexpected moral prescriptions (e.g., XIII, 7: "taxes must be paid") and even more unexpected retrospective observations (VI, 18-23, the Christians of Rome once lived in debauchery).

The exegetes wonder why Paul sent the Christian community in Rome this strange mess, and they give only rather embarrassing explanations. In any case, their solutions leave room for further research.

We will review here successively all the questions treated by the epistle. In this examination we shall follow as far as possible the order of the epistle itself. However, here and there, we will be obliged to abandon it. And precisely, from the very beginning, we will be unfaithful to it, since we will first of all deal with the question of the collection.

8

The collection for the saints of Jerusalem

Towards the end of the epistle, XV, 25-32, Paul deals with the collection he has organized for the poor of Jerusalem, and he makes certain considerations about it which we must consider.

First of all, he says that the Christians (of pagan origin) of Macedonia and Achaia are the "debtors" of the saints in Jerusalem. And he explains his thought by adding that the "nations" (proof that he has in view the Christians of pagan origin) must be at the service of the Jews in the "carnal goods", because they have participated in "their spiritual possessions". By participating in the spiritual goods they have contracted a debt; this debt they pay by giving their carnal goods. The reasoning is clear.

It remains only to know what these "spiritual goods" are, in which the Christians of pagan origin have participated. It is said that these goods refer to redemption and grace, with all that follows. But Christians of Gentile origin can only be "debtors" of the Jews if they have received goods belonging to the Jews, goods which were the property of the Jews (note the expression: "their spiritual goods"). But no one has ever believed that Paul represented redemption as something that belonged to the Jews. The interpretation adopted by the commentators therefore explains neither how Christians of Gentile origin share in goods belonging to the Jews, nor how these same Christians are debtors to the Jews. What exactly is the apostle thinking? We shall soon see. What is certain now is that the information provided by the commentators is erroneous.

Let's move on to another order of ideas. Let us suppose that the Christians in Rome to whom Paul sent his letter were of pagan origin. They could not fail to apply to themselves the text XV, 27. They made the following reflection: "We Christians of pagan origin share in the spiritual

goods that belong to the saints of Jerusalem. We are therefore their debtors. And the debt we owe them must be paid by giving them our fleshly goods. The reading of XV, 27 had the effect of encouraging them to send their alms to Paul. It is therefore not rash to think that Paul foresaw this result, and that, having foreseen it, he wanted it, and that he wrote XV, 27, precisely to obtain money from the Christians in Rome 1.

1. See Origen, In epist. ad Ro, X, 14.

But perhaps the recipients of the epistle to the Romans were Christians of Jewish origin. In that case, the reading of XV, 27 suggested the following reflections to them: "This Paul who has been portrayed in such black colors has good qualities. No doubt he wants the pagans to share in our privileges. But he considers us to be their creditors, and he puts their purse at our disposal. We will inform our brethren in Jerusalem that this man has been slandered, and beg them to be reconciled with him." And this result, too, was foreseen, and, having been foreseen, it was intended.

To tell the truth, when he wrote to the Romans, Paul was concerned to win them to his collection or to his cause, and he asked them to put their money or their influence at his disposal. Commentators suggest that the letter to the Romans has other objectives that are as grandiose as they are obscure. I leave them for the time being, adding only a modest but sure and clear objective.

So Paul asks the Romans for their money or their influence. Their money if he is writing to Christians of pagan origin; their influence if the recipients of the letter are Christians of Jewish origin. Between these two hypotheses, can we make a choice? Let us try.

Addressed to former Jews, XV, 27 is flattering, since it says in substance: "Christians of pagan origin are the debtors of Christians of Jewish origin, because they have received spiritual goods which belong to the Jews. But, addressed to former pagans, it means: "You are of an inferior essence to the Judeo-Christians; give them your money, for you are their debtors. This is a humiliating statement, not because of the request for money, but because of the way in which it is made and the considerations on which it is based. This is not the way to deal with someone whose help you are begging for. You flatter him, you do not say derogatory things to him.

Let us see moreover how Paul goes about getting the Corinthians to give him money (II Cor., viii-ix). What he says to them is this: "You who have all the qualities, you cannot lack generosity. You whom I have praised among the Macedonians, you must uphold the reputation I have made for you..." He takes them by vanity, by self-love; but he is careful not to say to them, "You are the debtors of the saints of Jerusalem." The clumsiness he avoided in speaking to the Corinthians, how could he have committed it in addressing the Romans? He did not do it: let there be no doubt about it. He wanted to compliment the Romans by telling them that the Gentiles are in debt to the Jews. And from the fact that he wanted to pay them a compliment, we are authorized to conclude that these Christians of Rome are not ancient pagans from whom he asks for money, but Jews whose sympathy he wants to win.

The rest of the text confirms this conclusion. Paul is worried about the reception he will receive in Jerusalem. He is going to appear before the "saints". He has a treasure of money to offer them. But they have a treasure of hatred in store for him. Who will take away the hatred or the money? Paul is afraid that they will reject him and his offering. And he asks the Romans to work (literally "fight") to make the reception good (XV, 30).

Without doubt it is to their prayers to God that he appeals. But when you have taken someone's interests into your own hands, you don't stop on the way. We have you before all the courts. The Romans would not only commend Paul to God, but also to the "saints" in Jerusalem. And Paul certainly did not fail to foresee this outcome. Once again, we see that Paul does not want money, but recommendations, and that, consequently, the Christians he addresses are of Jewish origin.

We know the occasion on which the epistle to the Romans was written. We know who it was written to. Let us now turn to its content.

13

The PROMISE TO ABRAHAM AND HIS POSTERITY

The first dissertation we find - after deducting the first few verses - deals with the promise made to Abraham and his posterity. It goes from I:16 to X inclusive; but we shall see that it is cut by several enclaves, one of which is very extensive. It reappears in XV, 8-12. Let us begin with this last piece.

There are several easily recognizable ellipses. When they are cleared up, we get this: "God made promises to the fathers of the circumcised people, that is, to the Jewish people (the word "circumcision" refers, by all accounts, to the circumcised people). These promises were a commitment at least to himself. He owed it to himself, he owed it to his truthfulness to fulfill them. And this explains why Christ put himself at the service of the Jewish people. Through him. God honored his promises, he proved his truthfulness. But the Gentiles had not received any promises. They could not claim anything from God who had not bound himself to them. Yet they were allowed to share in the goods promised to the Jews (this is the strongest ellipsis in the text). This participation is due to the mercy of God who, having promised them nothing, owed them nothing. That is why the prophetic oracles described in advance the praises addressed to the goodness of God by the grateful pagans.

This is Paul's thought. A little further on (16) we see him calling himself "the minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles". Here he excuses this title and role in advance - further proof that he is speaking to Judeo-Christians whose sympathies he seeks to win. He preaches the Gospel to

the Gentiles; but he recognizes that the Gentiles are in an inferior position to the Jews with regard to God.

This is the same thought in another form that we have already encountered in XV:27, where we learn that the Gentiles had been admitted to share in property that belonged to the Jews, but we do not know how and by what title the Jews became owners of this property. Here we see that this ownership is based on promises made by God and to which God owes it to himself to be faithful. Our two texts complement each other. They leave in the dark only one thing, which is the most important point, namely the object of the divine promises.

What, then, are the goods which God has promised to give to the Jews, but not to the Gentiles? What are these goods in which the Gentiles are admitted to participate by pure mercy, and for which they are the debtors of the Jews? What is certain is that the remission of sins, redemption and grace do not correspond to this description either closely or at all. But, up to now, we do not know anything more. Since our two texts refuse to answer our question, let us try to find information elsewhere.

In IX, 4, Paul points out various prerogatives of the Jews, among which we need only mention sonship and the "promises". To the Jews belong the sonship; to them also belong the promises.

Sonship - obviously divine sonship - is often mentioned in the Old Testament. It is sometimes attributed collectively to the people of Israel. It is in this sense that Hosea makes God say (XI, 1): "I called my Son out of Egypt" 1. The same idea is contained in various texts which, without using the word "son", teach that God loved Israel and destined it to be his people.

1. See also Exodus, IV, 22.

At other times, sonship is attributed to the king of Israel. This is the meaning of the verse in Psalm II: "You are my son; I have begotten you this day. God, who speaks these words himself, has just said that he has established his king over Zion, that he has anointed him (this psalm was written after the victories of the Maccabees; the son of God he has in mind is probably Hyrcanus).

Elsewhere, it is each individual Israelite who is declared the son of God. This appears in Doubt, XIY, 1: "You are the sons of Yahweh your god.

Paul is mainly concerned with this latter filiation, but without excluding the former, since the two are inseparable. In his mind, every Jew is a son of God, and the Jewish people as a whole are also sons of God.

As for the " promises " to which IX,4 - as well as XV,30 - allude, there is no lack of Old Testament texts which explain them, and it would be easy to provide them. But would we be sure that these explanations correspond to Paul's thought? Nothing would be better than a commentary given by the apostle himself. And this commentary does exist. It is given to us in IV,

13, where we read: "The promise of being heirs of the world was not made to Abraham and his descendants by the Law, but by the righteousness of faith.

Let us pause for a moment in front of this capital text, which contains a promise with the exposition of the conditions to which it is subjected. And, leaving aside temporarily the conditions which we shall soon find again, let us deal solely with the promise. It has as its object the inheritance of the world. Abraham was established by divine decree as "heir to the world". His posterity received the same investiture. They too are "heirs to the world", or, what amounts to the same thing, the empire of the world belongs to them by right of devolution.

It is this inheritance that provides the "saints" of Jerusalem with the "spiritual goods" referred to in the instruction on the collection (p. 9). It derives from divine munificence and, because of its heavenly origin, the prerogatives it provides are "spiritual goods". On the other hand, it was guaranteed to Abraham and his descendants and, consequently, the spiritual goods it provides belong first of all to the Jews. The text IV, 13, thus explains XV, 27. It also explains XV, 8-12, which shows us Christ placing himself at the service of the circumcision in order to honor the divine promises.

The promises which Christ came to fulfill are the promises concerning the empire of the world, promises which all have the same object and, in reality, are one, but which are nevertheless multiple, since the same promise was formulated several times (Genesis, XII, 7; XIII, 15; XV, 18; XVII, 8; XXII, 18). Christ came to give Abraham's descendants the empire of the world. However, he does not give this benefit only to the Jews to whom the promise was made; he also grants it to the Gentiles who are strangers to the promise, so that (X, 12) "there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek". And this again explains XV, 8-12, where we see the Gentiles admitted by mercy to the goods promised to the Jews.

Before going any further, let us answer a question which inevitably arises here. The promise made to Abraham and his posterity, the benefit of which was then extended by mercy to the Gentiles, was the possession of the empire of the world. Why, then, do some texts speak of salvation? Why, for example, does I:16 say that the Gospel is a powerful operation of God "for the salvation" of everyone who believes? Why, in X, I, does Paul desire that the Jews be "saved"? And why does he add a little later, X:13 (see also X:9): "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved"? Is there, then, a link between the empire of the world and salvation?

There is. And the prophets of the Old Testament make it known to the reader who consults them. Let us listen to what Isaiah says, LXVI, 14-15:

Yahweh will show his power to his servants, but he will show his anger to his enemies. Behold, the LORD comes in a fire; his chariots are like a whirlwind. He turns his anger into a blaze and his threats into flames of fire...

And Zephaniah, I, 15:

This day is a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of havoc and destruction, a day of darkness and gloom...

Amos, V, 18; Jeremiah, XXX, 7; Joel, II, 11,

if we were to ask them, they would tell us the same thing. The prophets say that the Lord will one day make a great slaughter of his enemies.

Brought up in their school, Paul counts on this carnage, he waits for the big night. Only, he believes that God has entrusted Christ with the execution of his great works. Christ will therefore come from heaven where he is now, to cut the unbelievers to pieces. Of course, the believers will have nothing to fear. They will escort Christ, so their place will not be with the victims: they will be "saved". And this is "salvation" as Paul understands it. It is the privilege by which believers will escape the great slaughter that will take place when Christ inaugurates the empire of the world. Or, if you like, it is the privilege that will allow believers to belong to the empire that Christ will inaugurate on earth. As we can see, the salvation promised to the faithful is intimately linked to the empire of the world which is also promised to them.

Let us return to our subject. We have seen that Jews and Gentiles, the one in virtue of a promise, the other by mercy, are admitted to participate in the empire of the world. But we do not yet know the conditions they have to fulfill to receive this benefit. This is what we have yet to find out.

In the past, in order to be a friend of God, one had to observe the Law. Indeed (X, 5): "Moses writes that the man who does the righteousness that comes from the Law will live in it" (i.e., will be, through the fulfillment of the Law, the friend of Yahweh; there is no allusion here to a future life) 1.

1. See Lagrange, Epistle to the Romans, p. 254.

But, (X, 4), "Christ is the end of the Law" (he has put an end to it). The Law has ceased to be a title to the possession of the inheritance of the world. Another regime has been substituted for the regime of the Law: the regime of faith. This is the thesis that Paul develops in chapters IV, IX, X, and which he states at the beginning of his letter in the following text (1,16-17): "The Gospel is a powerful operation of God for the salvation of everyone who believes, first of all the Jew and then of the Greek, because in him the righteousness of God is revealed through faith and for faith, as it is written: The just shall live by faith.

So, it is faith and no longer the Law that gives the right to participate in the great promise. What faith? We learn this in III, 21, which tells us: "Now without the Law, the righteousness of God has been manifested, attested by the Law and the Prophets: the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe." Jesus Christ is "Lord", i.e. the holder of the empire of the world promised to the seed of Abraham.

He was raised by God precisely to be Lord. The faith that saves, the faith that gives the right to participate in the promise, is faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and as resurrected by God (X, 9): "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved. The two titles are one. God would not have raised Jesus from the dead if he had not destined him to possess the empire of the world, and Jesus is Lord only because he was previously raised by God. Hence, IV, 24: "We who believe in him who raised our Lord Jesus from the dead", and X, 13: "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved".

To participate in the empire of the world, to be saved, one must have faith in Christ. But is it not also necessary to have circumcision? Is the faith that saves faith without circumcision? Is it not rather faith joined to circumcision? This is a formidable problem, which brought Paul into conflict with the "saints" of Jerusalem.

Paul addresses it (in IV, 9). Why does he raise it? Precisely because this is the source of the hatred that pursues him. Once again, let us look at his situation. He wants to conciliate the benevolence of the Christian Jews of Rome. To obtain it, the best means is obviously frankness. So he has to go ahead and confess that he disagrees with the Christian community in Jerusalem about circumcision.

He admits the disagreement. But, at the same time, he pleads his case, he proves the validity of his feeling. This proof, he asks the chronology. He notes, in fact, that the patriarch Abraham was not yet circumcised when he obtained God's friendship (IV, 10). Since Abraham was not yet circumcised, circumcision had no part in the promise he was given. For Abraham, faith was everything and circumcision was nothing. Abraham's descendants can obviously be under no other regime than that to which their father was subjected. For them too faith is everything, circumcision is nothing. What does this mean, and what does it mean? The following text (IV, 11) tells us: "(Abraham received circumcision as a seal of the righteousness which he had obtained by faith when he was uncircumcised) so that he might be the father of all those who believe without being circumcised, so that their faith might be imputed to them for righteousness, and the father of those who are circumcised, who not only have circumcision, but also follow in the footsteps of the faith which our father Abraham had when he was still uncircumcised. In two words: these have Abraham as their father and are his children who, although uncircumcised, have faith. And those who are circumcised have Abraham for their father and are his children only if they have faith in circumcision.

But next to the Judeo-Christians who have faith and whose only fault is to want to add circumcision to it, there are the Jews who remained unbelievers. Paul deplores their aberration (IX, 1-4), and he wonders whether the unbelief of the mass of the Jewish people does not bankrupt the divine promises. In his answer (6-7) he states a principle which he then applies.

The principle is that the word of God did not remain without effect. The "word of God" refers to God's promises to Israel. The meaning, then, is this: "The divine promises have not been

bankrupted by the unbelief of the Jewish people as a whole; in spite of this unbelief, the promises are being fulfilled."

Let us see how Paul understands the application of the principle, that is, how he proves that the unfaithfulness of the Jewish people does not bankrupt the divine promises. The proof he gives is peremptory: "One is not Israel because one comes from Israel; one is not a child of Abraham because one comes from the seed of Abraham. If the unbelieving Jews were really Israel, then we would have to admit that the divine promises had failed, since these promises were addressed to Israel, to the children of Abraham. But the unbelieving Jews are not Israel because they are from Israel; they are not the children of Abraham because they are from the seed of Abraham. Therefore, the unbelief of the Jews does not hinder the realization of the divine promises. Moreover, this unbelief was announced by the prophets. Paul quotes (IX, 33; X, 19; XI, 7) various oracles in which the hardening of the Jewish people is predicted. And these oracles emanating from the same God who made the promises are undoubtedly in his eyes commentaries by means of which the promises must be interpreted.

24

I have said that the dissertation on the promise made to Abraham and his descendants, which runs from I:16 to XI, is cut off by several enclaves. I will now study these intercalated pieces.

The redemptive death of Christ

The longest enclave is that which goes from IV, 25 to VIII, 39. Untouched by the alterations which it underwent and which will be discussed later, it has to do with the redemptive death of Christ, and it constitutes the capital dissertation of the present epistle to the Romans.

What does it say? That we were sinners, enemies of God, and that Christ, by his death, reconciled us to God. That God loved us even when we were sinners, that he gave his Son to obtain eternal life for us, and that this eternal life cannot fail to be given to us after all that he has done for us. What else does it say? That the Christian participates in the death of Christ, but also in his resurrection. He died with Christ in the sense that his body of sin was destroyed. He is resurrected with Christ in the sense that he must lead a new life and not let the passions act in his members to produce fruits of death.

What does Paul teach in chapters IV, IX and X? In essence, he says this to the non-Christian Jews: "The empire of the world was promised to Abraham and his heirs. But you wrongly imagine that you are Abraham's heirs by birthright, or, if you like, his children. To be a child of Abraham and to be his heir, you must believe that God raised Jesus from the dead. This is what is needed, and this is all that is needed.

We are faced with two irreducible programs. Paul leaves heaven out of his horizon: he is concerned only with earth. His Christ must come to fulfill the promises made to Abraham, to exercise a dominion over the world which all his followers will enjoy with him. That is why God raised him from the dead. In Paul's program, the reconciliation of sinful men with God has no meaning, nor does the mystical death of the Christian. The piece IV, 25-VIII, 39, which occupies the place between IV and IX, is the result of an interpolation. It has no connection with the two chapters which it separates violently.

The essay IV, 25-VIII, 39 is not by Paul. What is its origin? Let us try to wrest its secret from him.

It depicts for us in a striking contrast, on the one hand, the misery of men, on the other, the goodness of God for these so unfortunate beings. The misery of men is distressing; for they are all condemned to be sinners, all condemned to death. But these sinners, God loved them, reconciled them to Himself and gave them eternal life. What aggravates the misfortune of men is that they are victims of the fault of one, victims of a fault that they did not commit. Moreover, the Law was imposed on them to multiply their sins. What makes the goodness of God more admirable is that, in order to reconcile men with him, to procure for them eternal life, he did not shrink from the death of his Son.

God loves people. He is interested in them. He works to alleviate their pain. Why does he do this? Obviously because he considers their misfortune undeserved. To make the sin of a single member of the race fall on the whole race is, in his eyes, an iniquity. And to enact the Law on purpose to multiply sins is another. It is certainly not he who has put the human race under the regime of death and sin, since he wants to tear it away from it. This becomes even clearer when we consider the means he uses to achieve his purpose. If he himself is the author of the treatment which men have to undergo, and if, belatedly overcome with remorse, he feels that he must put an end to it, he has only to give an order, and immediately the condition of the human race will change. Instead, what does he do? He sends his Son to earth and lets him be put to death. What is the use of moving heaven and earth for a result that a word was enough to obtain? And what use is such a display of force?

Will it be said that it serves to make people admire God's love for men? But love, in order to be admirable, must first of all be reasonable, and in order to be reasonable, it must impose only useful sacrifices. The God who makes one man's fault fall on the whole human race, who promulgates the Law for the sole purpose of multiplying sins, is certainly a cruel God. But if this same God, in order to put an end to his cruelty towards men, dares to deliver his Son to death, he is extravagant. But it is not in front of such a character that the text V, 8, which celebrates the love of God for men, places us. Christ, who dies here for us, dies because, without the sacrifice of his life, men would not be freed from the cruel yoke that weighs upon them. He is surely not to blame for the misfortune of the human race. The God who sent him because he loved mankind has nothing to do with it either.

But, on the other hand, the picture of human misery that the Epistle to the Romans paints for us is clearly a replica of the fall of Adam, as recorded in Genesis. It is from Genesis that it has been

traced, it is to Genesis that it owes its existence. Without doubt, he does not let the author of the punishment inflicted on men appear anywhere, he relegates him to the shadows. The turns of phrase he uses, all cast in the same mold, note the effects without ever mentioning the cause: sin entered the world, death spread over all men, death reigned through the fault of one, condemnation reached all men, the Law intervened so that sin was multiplied. But this calculated reserve cannot deceive us, since Genesis is there to complete our information. It is God who has made the fault of their father fall on all the children of Adam; it is he who is the author of the misery of the human race. This is certain, since Genesis tells us so. And the epistle to the Romans, which does not name God, which affects not to name him - we will say why later - counts on us to understand half a word and to clarify its text by Genesis. She also expects us to understand, when she tells us (V, 20) that the Law was given so that sin would be multiplied, and that we will know how to refer to Exodus, where the divine institution of the Law is reported.

So God has nothing to do with the misfortune of the human race. And yet he is the author responsible for it. And here we are stuck between two assertions which clash. How can we get out of this situation? By removing one of the terms of the contradiction? The way would be radical, but childish. To evade a difficulty is not to solve it. Since the two aforementioned assertions are as solidly established as each other, we have no right to sacrifice any of them. Let us remain, at least temporarily, locked in our prison, and see how God has managed to rescue men from their misfortune. Perhaps, in the course of this research, we will find a way out.

Here is the industry by which God has succeeded in reconciling us to himself. He sent his Son to earth. He sent him with a body that had the likeness of the flesh of sin. This Son of God, that is Christ, died. At the same time as he died, sin was condemned to death in the flesh (VIII, 3). Now, sin was the obstacle that separated us from God. He was condemned to death or, if you like, killed, but we were reconciled with God through the death of his Son (VI, 10).

This is the principle. But in order for us to really participate in this benefit of reconciliation, sin must first be killed in each of us. This is what happens when we are baptized (VI, 3-11). We are then grafted onto Christ, grafted onto his likeness of death. Our old man is crucified with Christ, so that our body of sin is destroyed (VI, 6). And since we are one with our body of sin, it follows (VII, 4) that we are put to death by the body of Christ on which we are grafted. But as we participate in Christ's death, we also participate in his resurrection. In the Christian, "the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life" (VIII, 10). The Christian is no longer in the flesh (VII, 5: "when we were in the flesh"; therefore we are no longer in it); dead as he was, he has become alive (VI, 13). He lives for God with a life that must be eternal. (VI, 23).

Thus the liberation of the Christian is the result of his union with Christ. This intimate union is similar to that produced by the operation of grafting. The Christian is freed from the yoke that weighed on him, because he participates in the resurrection of Christ after having participated in his death, because he is resurrected like Christ, after having suffered death like Christ.

Like Christ? Is this possible? And do we have the right to use this formula which, if it were correct, would have a rather serious consequence? Let us be reassured. By using it, we are only conforming to the intentions of the author who tells us that our body of sin has been destroyed and that we are no longer in the flesh. He knew the value of words. It is not by inadvertence that he spoke repeatedly of the destruction of our body, our flesh, as a fact that is accomplished in the immersion of baptism! He saw the consequence that would be drawn from his language, and he wanted it to be drawn. Let us draw it. The Christian shares in the death of Christ. He dies just as Christ died on Calvary... But the Christian does not really die; he remains full of life and the death he suffers is a pure fiction. Christ, too, died only fictitiously. At the moment when he appeared to give up the ghost, he did not cease to live, and death did not reach him.

This is the deduction to which we have been led by the texts that speak of our death with Christ. It is not lacking in rigor. But we have better than that. We have text VI, 5, where the author himself warns us that Christ's death was not a real death, but a "resemblance of death", something that had the outward appearance of death without having the reality of it. He confirms our deduction. He even adds an explanation. He tells us how it came about that the death of Christ was purely apparent. He tells us in VIII, 3. Christ did not have this sinful flesh that we have. He had only the appearance of it, something that resembled this flesh, in *homoiōmati sarkos harnartias*. Therefore it was impossible for him to really die, since he did not have what was necessary for that. He only suffered a phantom of death because his body was only a phantom.

Here we are in front of the phantom Christ. We might as well say that we are in Marcion's house and that our dissertation is a product of the Marcionite school. At the same time, we have the key to the enigma which was so embarrassing for us, the key to this God who has nothing to do with our calamities and who is, however, their author. The solution to this enigma is quite simply the solution to the problem of evil as Marcion proposes it. And since we are in Marcion's house, we should not be surprised to hear him, through the mouth of a disciple, explain his theodicy. Free from the reticence in which it is wrapped up here, the Marcionite theodicy is this:

There are two gods: one who created the world, who created man and who has always been known; the other who is alien to the world, and whom no one knew until Christ came to reveal him.

The Creator God is cruel. At the beginning, he made all the children of Adam bear the guilt of their father; later on, he imposed the Mosaic law to multiply sins; he takes great pains to make men unhappy: unhappy on this earth where he burdens them with all kinds of punishments, unhappy in the other world where he will punish them for the sins he made them commit on this earth.

The other God is the good God, so called because goodness is part of his essence. The good God had pity on men who were nothing to him, and he decided to take them away from the empire of the cruel God who tortured them. In order to achieve his purpose, he came himself to

the earth, hidden under an ethereal cloak that had the appearance of a human body. This phantom body was called Jesus, called himself the son of God, and revealed to men the good God whom he called his father. The Creator, taking Jesus for a mere mortal delegated by the good God, had him crucified. He did not crucify anything. But his intention was known for the fact. He thought he was crucifying sinful flesh. Sinful flesh, sinful flesh was said to have been crucified, to have been killed, at least among Christians who, by baptism, are grafted into Christ. Having thus been put to death by the Creator God, Christians no longer exist for him, are no longer under his rule. They belong to the honored God who reserves eternal life for them.

But the author, writing among Catholics and for Catholics, has proceeded as modernists have proceeded in our day. He spared Catholic sentiment; he substituted the method of violence for that of surprise. The whole thing for him was to make accept enigmatic formulas which, once introduced into the Catholic belief, would do their work little by little. Hence these turns of phrase which say a part of things and leave the rest to be guessed. I have mentioned them above and do not need to return to them here. A word only on VIII, 20, of which I have not yet spoken and where one reads: "The creature was subjected to vanity, not of its own free will, but by the will of the one who subjected it". This text is very embarrassing for the exegetes who either confuse it to their heart's content, or else pass it by quickly and skip the step. Those who enter into some explanations generally recognize - at least today - that VIII, 20 refers to Genesis, III, 17, where God curses the earth. Thus, our author states that the earth is under a curse. And, a little more expansive than in V, where he had strictly forbidden himself anything that was not a pure description of the misfortune of the human race, he goes back here to the cause of the curse. He points to the one who has subjected the creature to vanity. But he designates him without naming him. The person who cursed the creature is "him", that is to say, the one of whom the Genesis accounts are full. And yet his responsibility to "him" is not openly denounced. It appears only behind the veil of a periphrase. The creature was subjected to vanity not of his own free will, but *dia ton hupotaxanta*. What does this formula mean? According to St. Thomas, it means that this happened "by virtue of God's disposition, who has so decided", or "by virtue of God's sentence". According to Estius (for whom the creature designates the whole world) the subjection takes place by God's order. As we can see, according to the most important theologians, it is indeed the God of Genesis, the Creator God, who is presented here as the cause of the slavery of creatures. But he is left in the dark, so much so that a good number of commentators have thought they could give another interpretation - a fanciful one - according to which it is sinful man who enslaved the creatures!

The Marcionite author is embarrassed when it comes to designating the Creator God, but not when describing the evil that the Creator God has done to the human race. He describes it, taking as a starting point the account of Genesis which he completes, and of which he gives a theological interpretation.

As a result of Adam's sin, God the creator condemned men to be mortal - this is in Genesis - and he also condemned them to be sinners - this is the Marcionite interpretation of the Genesis account. So all men are sinners. Is this in the sense that Augustine, who teaches that the child is born with a sin proper consisting of concupiscence, and who, precisely, relies on the epistle to

the Romans? No. Between Augustine and the Epistle to the Romans, there are undoubtedly links of kinship with regard to original sin, but there is also an essential difference which has to do with the diversity of concerns.

Augustine was led to his notion of original sin by his ardent desire to reconcile human misery with the justice of God, the one God he admitted. His reasoning was this: Physical evil in man can only be explained, under the government of a just God, as the punishment of a sin, a sin proper. Now children are unhappy before they have the use of reason; they are unhappy from the moment they enter the world. Therefore children, from the moment they enter the world, are guilty of a sin properly so called. And Augustine has done wonders of sophistry to find this sin properly so called, to prove it, to explain to us that God is confronted with sin, with a sin which resides in the soul of all children without him, the Creator, having anything to do with it, with a sin properly so called which he, the just God, is obliged by his justice to punish. He sank into an abyss of absurdities to save divine justice compromised by the misery of the human race (this observation applies to the theologians of the Roman Church who, if they have dropped, in the course of the centuries, a part of the Augustinian theories, have kept the notion of a sin staining the soul of the child from the moment of its entry into the world).

The Marcionite writer of Epistle to the Romans does not feel the embarrassment of Augustine, because he does not have the same concern. No doubt he too proposes to solve the problem of evil. But in order to find the solution, he began by putting beside the good God an evil God who has a monopoly on the government of the world. I don't need to say that he opened this way only at the price of a colossal counter-intelligence. But, once he entered, he was able to advance without encountering any obstacles.

Augustine's just God can only make children suffer if they are already tainted by a sin to which he, the creator God, is a stranger. The evil God of Epistle to the Romans does not have the same scruples. No consideration of justice prevents him from giving free rein to his instinct for cruelty. And this is what he does. He condemns to suffering, he condemns to death the children who are innocent. He condemns men to sin by giving them a carnal organism that will secrete sin mechanically. Equipped with this sin machine, men necessarily become sinners. But they had done nothing to receive the sad gift which the fantasy of the Creator God had graced them with. It may be said that the Epistle to the Romans teaches original sin; but not in the sense in which the Roman Church has understood it since Augustine.

The proof is that the dissertation IV, 25- VIII, 39 is interpolated in the middle of Paul's thesis on the promise made to Abraham and that - apart from some supplements which will be discussed later - it is of Marcionite origin. Knowing its origin, we also know its date. The dissertation of IV, 25-VIII, 39 on the redemptive death of Christ was written before the condemnation of Marcion, that is, around 140.

Censorship of pagans and bad

CHRISTIANS

The dissertation on the redemptive death of Christ is the most important and the most considerable of the pieces that have been interposed in the treatise on the promise made to Abraham. But it is not the first. Before it are two enclaves, one of which, which runs from I:18 to II:29, must be studied now.

It is an examination of the conscience of the Gentiles, a group of anonymous sinners and the Jews.

The Gentiles who knew God, who could not but know Him by His works, did not glorify Him. Instead, they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into images representing either man or animals. In doing so, they committed a great crime. To punish them for this, God gave them over to infamous passions.

Here are other men. They are not pagans, because they judge the turpitude of pagans severely and they believe that pagans are condemned to reprobation. But their conduct is no better than that of the pagans. They commit the same abominations, and they believe they can commit them with impunity. Where does this assurance come from? From the fact that they count on the goodness of God. Well, they are mistaken. God is indeed good, but his goodness consists in forgiving repentance. If the sinner does not repent, instead of a good God he will find a just God who will punish sin wherever he finds it, without distinction of persons.

Finally, here are the Jews. They put their trust in the Law. They do not keep it; they break it to the point of making the name of God blasphemed among the Gentiles. But they imagine that it does not matter and that they will be saved only because they have the Law, because they have circumcision. Well, they too are mistaken. Circumcision will be useful to them if they put the Law into practice. Otherwise it will be of no use to them.

This is the general meaning of this essay. Let us begin by saying that it is not by Paul. There are several proofs of this assertion.

The first is provided by the text II, 25, which tells us: "Circumcision is useful if you keep the Law". According to this oracle, it is advantageous to be circumcised as long as one observes the Mosaic law. But Paul goes to great lengths to prove that faith is everything, that circumcision is nothing and neither are the works of the Law. How could he have said here that circumcision, together with the observance of the Law, is useful?

It is explained to us that in II:25 the apostle considers circumcision with the value it once had, or even with the value it still has at the time he speaks. But the first of these two opinions misrepresents the text, which in no way claims to give a lesson in ancient history and to say what circumcision was worth in the past, but simply says what it is worth for the readers to whom it is addressed. As for the second opinion, it misses the point, which is how Paul could say simultaneously that circumcision is useless, that the works of the Law are equally useless, and that circumcision is useful when joined to the observance of the Mosaic Law. The truth is that the text II:25, which is in irreducible opposition to Paul's doctrine, cannot have Paul as its author.

He is not alone in this case. II:13 and II:26-29 must be added to it. These texts attribute salvation to the observance of the Law, contrary to Paul who proclaims the uselessness of "works", i.e. of the practice of the Law (IX, 32). They seem to agree better with Paul in their professed contempt for the circumcision of the flesh for which they substitute the circumcision of the heart. But the agreement is only apparent. Indeed, it is to faith exclusively that Paul sacrifices circumcision; and the circumcision of the heart, - if he knew this expression, - would be under his pen faith. For our texts, on the contrary, circumcision of the heart is the practice of the law. There is an antinomy between them and Paul.

But what can we say about the apostrophe to the Jews which goes from II, 17 to 24 and especially about the apostrophe to the anonymous man with which chapter II begins? After having spoken of pederasty and sapphism, the author exclaims: "Do you imagine, you who condemn those who do these things and who do them yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God?"

Today the exegetes do not know to whom these two algarades are addressed. But let's transport ourselves by thought to the Christians of Rome in the year 56, when they had just received the epistle to the Romans, the one we read in our bibles. And let us gather their impressions. There can be no doubt," they said, "that we are the ones who are called sodomites, and that our wives share this honor with us! Since the epistle was written for us, it is also for us that the package of insults contained in it was drawn up. The man who sends us these disgusting insults has never had to complain about us, since we do not know him and he does not know us. His impertinence is therefore inexcusable. It is even inexplicable, and one cannot understand why he would sully us in this way, he who, just now, was exaggeratingly praising our faith. To tell the truth, the insults he hurls at us are so bewildering that they provoke astonishment and not indignation."

The truth is that the invectives of II, 1 and II, 17, were inserted artificially and after the fact into the epistle to the Romans. If the Christians of Rome in the year 56 had read them, they could not but apply them with unspeakable astonishment. But these violent words remained unknown to them; the epistle which was given to them did not contain them; they were only added later.

Here is chapter II convinced that it is an interpolation.

I now turn to the essay which begins at I:18 and goes to the end of chapter I. It puts paganism on trial; its moral trial. It shows that idolatry is the root of all vices and that the refuge of virtue is found in monotheism. And what is the purpose of this warlike literature? Its aim is apologetic. It proposes to bring to Christianity, the only refuge of virtue, those pagans whose moral sense is not completely obliterated; to retain in the Christian fold those ancient pagans who would be tempted to return to idols. It exercises the apostolate among men who are now pagans or who were once pagans.

To these only. It does not address itself to the Jews. She does not want to; she cannot. What hold would it have over them? Their virtue could not be shipwrecked in idolatry, since they have never worshipped idols and the worship of idols is even an object of horror for them. And to whomsoever would preach the Christian religion as the sole repository of monotheism, they would reply: "In order to worship one God we need not change our religion; we have only to remain what we are; for monotheism is the basis of our worship, and Christianity has no monopoly on it."

I have just set the scene for Jews who remained outside of Christianity. But Christian Jews would not care for our sermon either. For if they were tempted to abandon the religion of the Crucified One, it would obviously be to return to the worship of their childhood, not to worship idols. And against this temptation, the picture of the perversity of the idolaters could do nothing.

So the apologetic essay of I, 18-32 is addressed to pagans or to Christians of pagan origin. It is for them, and for them only, that it was written. Now we have acquired proof 1 that the epistle to the Romans was written for Christians of Jewish origin (Paul did not know them, but he had learned through intermediaries of the existence of a Jewish-Christian community in Rome). And we can see the consequence which follows from these premises. The dissertation of I, 18-32 is no more authentic than the pieces which make up chapter II. The whole piece that goes from I, 18 to II, 39 is an interpolation.

1. See above, p. 12

The dissertation I, 18-11, 29 is not by Paul. Let us try to see who it is from.

The God whom the pagans knew by his works, whom they did not glorify but whom they had the duty to glorify, is obviously the creator God. It was certainly not in Marcion that the pagans were reproached for their impiety with regard to the God of creation. The author of our essay is therefore a Catholic theologian who came after 150.

What is he doing here? First, let us look at his intentions. He proposes to give explanations in advance, intended to enlighten the dissertation of chapters v-vin on sin. In reality he contradicts it, he administers to the readers the counter-poison which will allow them to drink with impunity from the Marcionite cup. No doubt the pagans have been given over by God to their passions. But they have only themselves to blame, for this measure has been inflicted on them only as a reprisal. It is not God who started it, it is them. They went to war against the Creator, whom they

knew by his works, and refused to glorify him. God punished them. Let the pagans renounce their criminal ingratitude, and the punishment they suffer will be lifted.

Unnamed sinners and Jews know God and worship Him. They have not been delivered by God to their reprobate sense. They are therefore - even more than the pagans - capable of doing good and avoiding evil. The author of the essay is indeed of this opinion; for he says to the anonymous sinners, "Do you not know that the goodness of God invites you to repentance?" and to the Jews, "Circumcision will be useful to you if you keep the Law." He clearly assumes that sinners can be converted and that Jews are able to fulfill the prescriptions of the Law.

It remains for us to identify the sinners and the Jews with whom he is dealing.

The way he speaks of the observance of the Law (II, 13, 25, 29), one could think that he is promising salvation to the unbelieving Jews themselves, provided that they fulfill the prescriptions of the Mosaic Law. Let us be careful not to stop at this thought. The idea could not come to a Christian of the second century to admit to salvation Jews who were enemies of Christ. Our author refers to Jews who believe in the resurrection of Christ, who await his coming. And if he does not mention this circumstance, it is because it is self-evident. The Jews to whom he addresses himself have faith; they are what we call Judeo-Christians. They put their trust in circumcision; he tells them to put their trust in the practice of the Law. In the Dialogue, XLVII, written around 160, Justin mentions Judeo-Christians who persist in maintaining the observances of the Mosaic law, and he believes that these people will be saved provided they do not try to impose their way of life on Christians who have never followed it or who have abandoned it. Justin's mentality is similar to that of our author. The nuance that separates the one from the other is that they do not deal with exactly the same problem. But they both think the same thing.

The anonymous sinners (1-11) cannot be pagans since they condemn all pagans to damnation. They are therefore Christians, but bad Christians who indulge in the worst kind of turpitude. In spite of the indignity of their lives, they expect to be saved, they expect that the goodness of God will not confuse them with pagans, and that it will have special regard for them. On what title is their presumptuous hope founded? Is it on their origin, on the fact that they are Jews by birth and that they have circumcision? It is impossible to stop at this hypothesis, which has many supporters. If these bad Christians are of Jewish origin, the blows that the author tries to deal them here are useless gestures which do not reach them, since he does not attack them in their refuge which is circumcision. 11 will soon speak of the Judeo-Christians (17-29). Then he will know how to tell us that these men put their trust in circumcision; and to them he will know how to say that circumcision will be of no use to them as long as they live badly. The bad Christians of whom he speaks here are therefore Christians of pagan origin. And the title in which they put their trust, the one which, in their opinion, the goodness of God cannot fail to take into account, is their title of Christian.

Response to a slander against Catholics (III, 1-20)

Another enclave is found in III:1-20.

Here is what we read in verse 8: "And why then should we not do evil that good may come of it, as some who slander us say we do?"

So there is a rumor circulating that the author of this text and his co-religionists are teaching that one can do evil so that good may come of it. The rumor in question is a slander; but it is being peddled. Who are the slanderers? Who are the slanderers?

These are referred to as "some". They are mysterious characters whom the author - who is in the camp of the slandered - did not think it necessary to name clearly. And our thoughts immediately go to the Judaizers who hate Paul, who work to ruin his propaganda. It is they, no doubt, who, in order to better lose the apostle of the Gentiles, distort his teaching and make him say that one can do evil so that good may come of it. It is they whom Paul, knowing their power, does not dare to attack head-on and avoids naming.

But it is not long before insurmountable difficulties arise against this interpretation. The most shameless slander cannot be revealed if it does not find appearances that it exploits and abuses. One looks in vain for the appearances which the Judaizers would have abused in order to put on Paul's account the sophism according to which the end justifies the means. Paul, in his propaganda, makes a case for circumcision. How does he justify his conduct? He does not plead extenuating circumstances, he does not confess to having done evil so that good might come of it. On the contrary, he declares that he did good. He neglected circumcision because he despised it. This is well known to the Judaizers, and this is what makes the attitude of the apostle of the Gentiles particularly odious in their eyes. By attributing to him the sophism according to which the end justifies the means, they would mitigate his guilt, they would excuse his intentions. Let us be sure that they did not judge Paul with indulgence and that, if the apostle was accused of teaching that the end justifies the means, it was not from the camp of the Judaizers that the accusation came.

Is the slander the work of the unbelievers, either Jews or pagans? No. And first of all, why are these slanderers not referred to by their Jewish or Gentile names? Why do they remain hidden behind the word "some"? This discreet formula is used with regard to adversaries whom one wants to spare. What kind of consideration does Paul owe to the Jews or the Gentiles? We do not see it; and that is the first difficulty.

Here is another one. Between Christians and pagans, the question was to know if Jesus had been invested with a divine mission and if this mission had been confirmed by his resurrection. Between Christians and Jews, the problem of the resurrection of Jesus was also crucial; but alongside it was the problem of the prophecies which Christians believed they read in the Old Testament and which the Jews said they did not see. Moreover, the question of prophecies

entered the polemics between Christians and pagans at an early stage. And it can be said that the controversy, either with the pagans or with the Jews, revolved around the resurrection of Jesus and the prophecies concerning Jesus. Now, in this controversy, what place could the maxim according to which the lie of men brings out the truth of God occupy? We do not see it. Nor do we see, for that matter, what the response of the means justified by the end had to do with it. And then the cabalistic appearances of the maxim awaken our distrust. Really, in their disputes with the Jews and pagans, the Christians around the year 56 had something else to do than to throw charades at their heads. The pagans and the Jews, on the other hand, had much simpler and more conclusive objections to make to the Christians than the subtleties of casuistry.

A methodical investigation has provided us with proof that none of Paul's contemporaries could have been guilty of the charge of which Paul complains acting in the name of a community. We are led to conclude that the spokesman for the complainants is not Paul. Verses 7-8, which formulate the complaint, are apocryphal. Also apocryphal are verses 5-6 which prepare it. Apocrypha 9-20, which develops and explains it. The whole of 5-20 is foreign to Paul's writing.

Who is his author? He says that all men sin - for this is the meaning he gives to the oracle which declares all men to be liars - and he adds that the lie of men, that is to say, their sin, makes the justice of God burst forth, for this is the meaning he gives to the oracle which proclaims God to be truthful.

The opponents are indignant against a justice that uses human frailty as a pedestal, that creates sinful men in order to be able to punish them afterwards; and this morality that justifies the means by the end seems to them a parody of morality. This is how the accusation against Paul and his followers came about. The one who is targeted in the first place is the Creator God, to whom men owe their sinful bodies. And if it attacks Paul and his companions, it is only because Paul and his companions remain attached to this God.

51

Any further commentary is, I think, superfluous. Let us conclude. The slanderers are the Marcionites. Their victims are the Catholics who worship the Creator God, the God of the Old Testament. Their spokesman writes after 150. With vehemence mixed with indignation, this fictitious Paul declares that God is not unjust, that he does not justify the means by the end and that, of this aberration, he, Paul, is innocent, as are all his followers. We now have the key to the mysterious turn of phrase used to designate the opponents. Paul cannot call the Marcionites by their name, any more than he can call the slanderers "Catholics" as they were called around 150.

Jesus as a propitiatory victim

Yet another enclave. It goes from III, 21 to 26. The thought is this: "Sin has been universal. God has long tolerated it. He finally decided to show his justice by justifying men gravely by his grace, that is, by his goodness. The divine plan was realized by the work of redemption that Jesus Christ accomplished. Since all had sinned, Jesus Christ extended the benefit of redemption to all.

If Jesus came to redeem men from sin, we do not see, indeed, why he would not admit all men to benefit from redemption, since all have an equal need of it, being all immersed in sin. The opposite would be surprising. The reasoning we have just read is therefore in line with logic. Let us add that, from the verbal point of view, it is in order with the context thanks to the two words: "for all" which, in the text, serve as introducers. With the word "all" he seems to extend the previous sentence which speaks of the justice of God granted to "all" believers. And, by the particle "for", he seems to explain it. It seems to be a question followed by an answer: "Why is God's justice granted to all believers? Because all have sinned.

Everything is fine as long as we stay in the realm of words. It is not the same when we move on to the examination of ideas.

Let us read verse 23 again: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. I have said that this observation is consistent with logic. But the more satisfying it is, the more one is surprised at the extravagance accumulated in chapters iv, ix and x to establish that Ton can be a son of Abraham and share in his promise without having circumcision. Not that Ton should be surprised to see Paul building a thesis on preposterous arguments. Accustomed by his rabbinic upbringing to treating the Bible as a grimoire, he could hardly escape this result. And, in addition, his exegesis is no more ridiculous than that of our scholastics. What we can't understand is that he throws himself into sophistry, to redo a demonstration that he has already done once by following the method of common sense. When Paul explains that Ton can obtain the justice of God without being circumcised, how can he not see that he has already solved this problem in a few clear and decisive formulas? But the fact is: he has no memory of it. The laborious and lame thesis which drags itself along chapters iv, ix, x totally ignores the peremptory and concise solution formulated in III, 23. And of this ignorance only chronology is able to give us the explanation: the dissertation III, 23 does not belong to Paul's writing.

And I have not said everything about this little piece. I have attributed to it the same objective as to the great thesis of IV, IX, X. This is only partly true. No doubt on both sides there is a desire to prove that all can share in the benefit brought by Christ" But there the agreement ends. Paul's Christ was commissioned to fulfill the promise made to Abraham and to found the empire of the world. The death he suffered did not destroy his mission; it only delayed it. Christ will come and reign over the world. To his glory will be associated all the true children of Abraham, all those who are just before God and enjoy his favor. And to be righteous before God, only one condition is required: faith in the resurrection of Christ. In this program it is easy to see that there is no

room for sin and redemption. The text III, 21-26 takes us into a world that Paul does not suspect.

Where does this interpolation come from? Its content will tell us. These men who have all sinned are the same ones who in V, 12, 19, are presented to us as sinners. This God, by whose goodness sinful men are justified freely, is the same one who, in Y, 8, makes his love for men who are still sinners burst forth. This glory of God, of which sinners are deprived, is the same one which, in V, 3, is the object of the hope of men who have become Christians. Piece III, 21-26 - with the deduction of a few words which will be discussed shortly - has the same origin as chapter V: it is Marcionite. It sets forth the work of love done by God, the means by which God accomplished his work, and the reason why God intervened. The work accomplished is "redemption", the means consisted in establishing Jesus "propitiation", the motive was "the manifestation of divine justice".

God, the good God, saw that men were groaning under the yoke of the Creator: in a feeling of pity he decided to provide them with "redemption", that is, freedom from the cruel yoke that weighed on them. To achieve this result he established Christ Jesus as a "propitiatory victim", that is, as an agent of appeasement.

How did Christ become an agent of appeasement? By his death, in which Christians participate in baptism. Christ was put to death by the Creator. Now, Christians who are grafted onto Christ and are one with Christ share the condition of Christ who was put to death. They too die at the moment they are immersed in the baptismal bath. Having ceased to live, they necessarily cease to be the property of the Creator who gave them life. The latter can no longer have any power over them, since he has put them to death in the person of Christ. Moreover, having unloaded his wrath upon them, he must be appeased. Christ, by allowing himself to be put to death by the Creator, has satisfied the rage of this perverse being; he has been a propitiatory victim for him. At the same time, he was for Christians a liberator, a redeemer.

In the work of redemption carried out by Christ, but whose initiative belongs to God, God has shown us his love, but he has also "manifested his justice". Let us add that this justice has taken into account the rights of the Creator. The Creator was, in fact, the architect of his own downfall. It was he himself who, by putting Christians to death in the person of Christ, made himself incapable of exercising his empire over them any longer. His dispossession is therefore his own work.

Verse 25, which says that Jesus was made a propitiatory victim, adds: "through faith in his blood". What do these words mean? If we consider only logic, we must translate that Christ accomplished his propitiatory mission by the virtue of his blood. But the text says in full that Christ was made a propitiatory victim by faith in his blood. The orthodox and independent exegetes take great pains to reconcile logic with the text. They do not succeed.

We are faced with an interpolation whose thought is this: "No doubt Christ was established as a propitiatory victim; but only those benefit from the work accomplished by Christ who know that

Christ had blood, that his body was an organism drunk with blood like ours and not a phantom; in a word, Christ is a propitiatory victim by faith in his blood". The formula "by faith in his blood" is intended to combat the spiritual Christ. It is of Catholic origin 1.

1. The same origin must be attributed to 21 6 (the justice of God, attested by the law and the prophets).

57

The Spirit

In the essay on the redemptive death of Christ there is often mention of the spirit. This term is most commonly opposed to the flesh and refers to the soul of the Christian transformed by faith. However, here and there, it has another meaning and designates a divine personage. The notes will indicate the passages where this spectacle is presented to us. Two words only on VIII, 26-27.

This text tells us that "likewise" the Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness and that he intercedes with inarticulate sighs.

1° The particle "in the same way" announces a relationship of resemblance between what precedes and what follows. Now, what precedes is that we are saved in hope. The commentators admit that there is no similarity between salvation in hope and the Spirit who helps us. Let us conclude that the particle "likewise" misleads us since it indicates a link between 25 and 26 that does not exist.

2° We are told that the Spirit "intercedes" for us. Now, in VIII, 34, the same role of intercessor is attributed to Christ. We are therefore faced with two intercessors. This is too much. These two intercessors do not emanate from the same writing.

3° The Spirit intercedes with "inarticulate" sighs. There is in this term an enigma of which only Eusebius gives us the key (Hist, eccl., V, 16, 6-11). Speaking of the Montanists, the anonymous theologian from whom he quotes says that these exalted ones lost the conscience of their personality and uttered inarticulate cries. Our text has and can only have in view these montanist phenomena. It attributes them to the Spirit, it legitimizes the ecstatic transports of Montan and his disciples, it emanates from a supporter of the Montanist movement.

Verse 26, which is not linked to 25, is linked to 16 and 11 (see St Thomas and Est. ius). But these two verses also belong to the theology of the Spirit. The three texts 11, 16, 26 all describe the action of the Spirit, his future action which will consist in resurrecting the bodies of those in whom he dwells, his present action which consists in procuring for them divine filiation and "likewise" in helping their weakness by procuring for them the benefit of ecstasy and glossolalia.

All three follow each other over the context that carries them and that they upset. They constitute a lesson in Montanist theology cut into three slices.

The slices correspond to each other; but they do not agree with the background on which they are scattered and plastered, despite the precautions that have been taken to conceal the disagreement.

59

The chastened Jewish people will adhere

TO THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

The problem of the unbelief of the Jews, already discussed in IX, 1-13, and X, is again submitted for examination in XI and its appendix IX, 14-29.

In IX - confirmed by IV - the unbelief of the Jews leaves the divine promises untouched because these promises were made to the posterity of Abraham and only those belong to the posterity of Abraham who have faith in Christ Jesus; from this it follows that the unbelieving Jews do not belong to the posterity of Abraham and that the divine promises are not addressed to them.

In XI this expedient is left out. Not once is it said or even implied that faith alone gives the right to the title of child of Abraham. On the contrary, we read in verse 16: "If the firstfruits are holy, so is the mass of the Test; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. In this text, the firstfruits and the root refer to the patriarchs and the prophets; the mass and the branches refer to the Jewish people. The latter is linked to the patriarchs and prophets by a link identical to that which links the mass to the firstfruits, the branches to the root. When the firstfruits and the root are holy, so are the mass and the branches. Since the patriarchs and prophets were holy, it follows that the Jewish people are also holy. This is what verse 16 teaches; and verse 28, which expresses the same thought in another form, says, speaking of the Jews: "As for the election, they are loved because of their fathers.

In IX and IV, Paul said: "That which makes one of the seed of Abraham and a partaker of the promise given to him is faith in Christ Jesus. Here we read that the Jews are loved by God because of the patriarchs and prophets whose sons they are and that they benefit from the election granted to their fathers in the past. The opposition is absolute, irreducible; and since the thesis which is spread out in IV, IX is by Paul, the one which is presented to us in chapter XI is not by the great apostle.

Whose thesis is it, or in any case, when was it written? Let us reread the text: (1) "God has not rejected his people... (5) There is a remnant through the election of grace... (11) The Israelites

fell, but not so as to succumb; through their fall salvation reached the Gentiles. (12) Their fall was the wealth of the world and their fall the wealth of the Gentiles... (15) Their rejection was the reconciliation of the world... (21) If God did not spare branches that were by nature, he will not spare you either. (22) See then the goodness of God and his severity; severity for those who have fallen... (26) All Israel shall be saved..."

What do this remnant and this fall and this weakening and these branches torn from the trunk and this severity of God mean? The so-called explanations of the commentators explain nothing and confuse everything.

To understand something of this picture, we must translate: "The Jewish people has been terribly tested; thousands and thousands of its children have been slaughtered; it is very much reduced. But a remnant survives. God, who was severe to them, wants to preserve them. The Jewish people will be reborn, for (28) they are still loved because of their fathers and (29) the gifts of God are without repentance. The author has before his eyes immense ruins, either those brought about by the catastrophe of 70, or those which followed the revolt of Barkochba (132-135). He sees these ruins. But he has faith in the divine promises. He believes that the Jewish people will be reborn, that they will give themselves to Christ and that, having become Christians, they will be rewarded.

While waiting for this happy day, he adores the judgments that have hit Israel so hard. He adores them in the essay IX, 14-29. There we learn that God, master of the lives of men, is free to spare whom he will, to sacrifice whom he will. Those whom he allowed to be slaughtered were, because of their unbelief, "vessels of wrath formed for perdition". They all deserved to perish. God showed himself to be good by preserving among these unbelievers "a remnant" (27), in accordance with what he had announced by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah, by leaving "seed" (29) for the Jewish nation, which otherwise would have been destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah. This "remnant" and this "seed" bring us face to face with a catastrophe which almost engulfed the Jewish people. The essay IX, 14-29, like XI, was written either after 70 or after 135.

Verse 15, where God boasts of showing mercy to whom he wills, means: "I have let a multitude of Jews be slaughtered; I have preserved some of them from being slaughtered; I have done what I have willed and as I have willed. And the "vessels of wrath" of which 22 speaks refer to the Jews who perished in the general disaster.

The two essays of XI and IX, 14-29 were written either after the war of Titus or after the war of 132-135. Now that this point is acquired, let us try to specify more. The author, who has penetrated the counsels of Providence, knows that the ruin of the Jewish people is part of a plan drawn up in advance by God.

According to this plan, which consists of two parts, the ruin of the Jewish people is the means God used to convert the pagans to the faith. But, on the other hand, the conversion of the

Gentiles is the means to bring about the conversion of the Jewish people. Without the ruin of the Jewish people, salvation would not have been available to the Gentiles. But without the conversion of the Gentiles, the Jewish branches could not be reattached to the trunk from which they had been separated. Now, as the author writes, the first part of the divine plan has been accomplished, for (15) "the reconciliation of the world" has taken place and (30) the Gentiles have obtained mercy. The second part itself is being realized. Paul - the fictitious Paul who holds the pen - at the same time as he is the apostle of the Gentiles, he is also the apostle of the Jews. He tries to provoke in his brethren a holy jealousy of the Gentiles (14), that is to say, feelings of emulation under whose influence, following the example of the Gentiles, the sons of the patriarchs will also pass over to the Christian faith.

Paul, therefore, endeavors to bring the Jews, his brothers, to the Christian faith. And in this he is carrying out the divine plan. But against this divine plan, unexpected opponents have arisen who are none other than former Gentile converts. Yes, there are Christians who, because they have come from the ranks of paganism, boast at the expense of the Jews, claiming that the defection of the Jewish race is definitive and that the Christian faith owes nothing to the "root" (18), that is to say, to the patriarchs and the prophets.

Well, no. It is not so. It is not so. No doubt the Jews were treated harshly. But (23) "if they do not persist in unbelief, they too will be buried; for God can bury them again. Let these former pagans, instead of giving in to pride, fear for themselves; for (21) God, who did not spare the natural branches, will not spare them either, if they (22) do not remain in the faith. In any case, let them know (18) that they do not bear the root, but the root bears them.

64

This is the situation and this is what needs to be explained. It is a question of finding Christians who have separated the Christian faith from its root constituted by the patriarchs and the prophets, who have believed the Jews incapable of being "entrusted" to Christ, no doubt because of their attachment to the patriarchs and the prophets. This did not happen until Marcion separated the Christian faith from the Old Testament. Chapter XI (minus verses 7-10) and its appendix of IX:14-29 are pieces of anti-Marcionite polemic. They were written after 150. The author borrowed his comparison of graft from the Marcionite editor of chapter VI.

The weak and the strong. The troublemakers

From XIV,1 to XV,7 there is a dissertation on the relationship between the "weak" and the "strong". E'ie has caused great embarrassment to commentators who, today at least, link the oracle XVI, 17-20 to it. I will try to clarify it and its alleged appendix.

Let's start by looking for the "weak" who don't eat meat. Various answers have been given to this question, which it would take too long to discuss here and which have now been abandoned. I will only deal with the one that is in favor today. According to this explanation, weak Christians may be of pagan origin, but they may also be of Jewish origin. They forbid themselves the use of meat, not because they fear that the meat sold in the market has been consecrated to idols, but because they obey Orphic or Essene influences which have instilled in them feelings of aversion to the flesh. What is the value of this interpretation?

It has three serious flaws.

First, it fails to account for verse 5, which shows us the weak "enjoying one day more than another. Those who, under the influence of Orphic or Essene theories, considered meat to be impure must necessarily have forbidden themselves meat every day, not just on certain days.

Secondly, it makes Paul's attitude incomprehensible. Why does the apostle not condemn those doctrines which tax as impurity goods placed by God at the disposal of men? Why does he not denounce them as the author of the pastoral letters will do later (I Ti., IV, 3)? Lagrange (L'Épître aux Romains, p. 338, 339), makes the following plea: "If these tendencies had existed in the Roman Church in such a systematic and deliberate form, neither their supporters would have been so hesitant, nor would Paul have been so indulgent. They were thus represented by a small floating mass which allowed itself to be intimidated... What must be held in any case is that the weak were not so much convinced ascetics... as timid individuals".

How could he not see that these observations were against him? If the weak were "hesitant", if they had nothing in common with "convinced ascetics", then it was easy to enlighten them. Why did Paul not enlighten them? Why did he not teach the truth to people who, not being blinded by prejudice, would have accepted it without difficulty? Lagrange's plea is therefore not a happy one. I would add that it lacks cohesion. We are told here that the weak were not "convinced ascetics". But a little further on, p. 339, I read that these weak people "passed from the scruples suggested to them to a freer practice without freeing themselves from doubt". Scruples are, by definition, the exaggerated fear of violating an obligation of conscience. Lagrange therefore contradicts himself when he presents the weak as people acting only out of timidity and without conviction. By his own admission, the weak had been seduced by bad preachers who had obliged them in conscience to abstain completely from meat. Moreover, Lagrange speaks to us, p. 339, of "theorists", of an "active party". Paul was faced with a conviction. Why did he not work to reform it?

If only the apostle had confined himself to leaving the weak to their own devices 1 But he goes much further. He instructs the strong to model their conduct on that of the weak. Interpreted according to the theory in favor today, verses 15:20-22 say in substance: "You who know that meats are not unclean are right. And those who abstain from them are weak. But know that these weaklings will be led into sin if they see you disregarding the practices they hold dear. So keep your conviction, but do not let it come out of your inner self. Conform your outward conduct to that of the weak and submit to the vegetarian diet.

Thus, around 56, there are Christians in Rome who, out of a sense of conscience, submit to the vegetarian diet. These weaklings are only a "small floating mass", they are not even "convinced ascetics". In any case, the majority of the Christian community in Rome has so far kept away from this extravagance. But from now on it will no longer be so. To avoid the scandal of the weak, the majority will have to conform their conduct to that of the "small floating mass". Naturally, it will act without conviction. But it is understood that the weak are not convinced either. In short, no one will believe in the necessity of abstinence; but all will act as if they did. And there you have Paul's attitude, with a clear motivation!

Thirdly, modern exegetes are unable to explain how the mentality of the "weak" was formed. We are told of Orphic or Essene influences. We are told that the Orphic religion contained, among other prescriptions, that of not eating what had had life. I agree. But it would be necessary to indicate the channel that brought the prescriptions of Orphic morality to the Christians of Rome in the year 56 (I leave aside the Essene theories, which are very mysterious and very suspect). The weak who thought they were committing a sin by eating meat only came to this conviction after hearing Orphic morality preached. Who preached it to them? "Timid", they were under the influence of men who trained them in ascetic practices without motivating them. Who were the men who trained them in this way?

Lagrange draws the answer from XVI, 17. Let us begin by getting to know this text. (I give Lagrange's translation): "I recommend to you, brothers, to beware of those who cause dissension and scandal, contrary to the teaching you have received, and avoid them; for such people are not in the service of our Lord Christ, but of their own belly, and by attractive speeches and enticing words they seduce the hearts of the simple". Now here are the observations that this verse suggests to Lagrange: "These opponents are jealous... There is no doubt that Paul is alluding to his ordinary opponents, the Judaizers, whom he has fought openly in the epistle to the Galatians, to whom he alludes in II Corinthians, X, 7; XI, 12, and whom he designates in almost the same terms as here to the Philippians, III, 18, 19.

So the Judaizers are working against Paul in Rome, and Paul knows it. But perhaps he does not know that the propaganda in favor of ascetic practices comes from them? So let us listen to Lagrange, p. 373: "If we were right to consider the weak of chapter XIV as simple faithful who let themselves be led, the leaders will undoubtedly be these same Judaizers. Perhaps they thought it wise to begin their maneuvers on the terrain of abstinence where it was easy to assume attitudes of devotion... The apostle's reproach that they were slaves to their bellies would prove that he was not fooled by these manners. Paul, as we can see, knows nothing.

How could he not denounce the "maneuvering" of the Judaizers? He, the bitter enemy of the Judaizers, how does he not stand in the way of their enterprise? Why does he not sound the alarm and say: "Beware, this vegetarian diet to which you are subjecting yourselves is in itself very harmful. But the people who are leading you have their own views. They want to lead you to Judaism, and if you let them, they will push you into it. Instead of denouncing the danger, he helps the Judaizers to succeed, he becomes their collaborator!

What does it matter that this collaboration was exercised in the order of things indifferent to faith? (observation of Lagrange who, as we know, claims that the weak were not convinced ascetics). He collaborated, that is to say, he did an impossible thing. This observation deprives Lagrange's theory of its last refuge and reduces it to nothing.

The proof is in the pudding that exegetes have failed to place chapter xiv of VEpile aux Romains in the context of Paul's life. None of their attempts stand up to scrutiny. We must look for something else. Let us look. First of all, let us look at verses XVI, 17, 18, in which we thought we would find a light that illuminates XIV.

In reality, this text brings us face to face with two enemy schools, one of which is denounced by the other; and itself is the manifesto of the denouncing school.

What are the grievances of this school? It accuses its rival of practicing a loose morality; from which we are authorized to conclude that it professes a rigorous morality. She also accuses her of giving a teaching contrary to the "received teaching"; let us read the teaching that the plaintiff distributes. She notes that her own disciples are solicited by the enemy, and she warns them against the propaganda organized around them. Let us be sure that she had the same appetite for conquest, and that she too sought to increase herself at the expense of her neighbor. Here is the spectacle that we have before our eyes. It goes without saying that nothing like this could have existed in Paul's time, since the Judaizers, the only Christian enemies Paul knew, had no business here. They were zealous for the yoke of the law and were not voluptuous men, "serving their bellies".

But let's go back to about 140. Then we find Christians of loose morals and others who, by contrast, display great austerity. These enemy brothers reproach each other for preaching a doctrine contrary to that which Christ came to bring to earth. And each of the two camps complains about the grumbling of the other. It is to this time that our text belongs. Here is what it means:

"Beware of the Catholics! They are trying to make defectors of you, to detach you from us and to enlist you in their clan. But their doctrine is not the right one, that is, the one you received from us. And then they lead a life of materialists. Their words, in accordance with their morals, flatter the evil instincts. But do not be seduced by them and keep them away from you. It goes without saying that this warm exhortation was written in the house of Marcion, and it is addressed to Marcion's flock.

72

The Easter Reformation

I return to the essay in chapter xiv. Now that we know that this piece can in no way emanate from Paul, our field of interpretation widens. Our horizon is no longer limited to the Judaizers. First of all, we are no longer condemned to maintain the homogeneity of the essay at all costs. If there are indisputable indications of double writing, we will no longer be obliged to close our eyes to avoid seeing them. And there is no lack of such evidence. One part of chapter xiv (from 1 to 12) preaches liberty and wants no one to wait for the liberty of others. The other part (from 13 to XV, 7) teaches that outward conduct should be regulated so as to avoid scandal. In fact, chapter xiv comprises two dissertations, each of which contains a thesis different from the other. The opposition of the theses and, consequently, their distinction, is not disputable. The difficulty is to identify them, to specify their objective.

Let us try, starting with the second thesis. It speaks of food, of scandal, of peace, of the kingdom of God. Food that must not be eaten, scandal that must be avoided, peace that must be restored, the kingdom of God that must not be lost. At one end of the conflict there is only food. But at the other end it is the kingdom of God itself that is at stake.

What is this kingdom of God which is not food and drink, but righteousness and pure joy in the Holy Spirit? Is it heaven, as many commentators think, and I think they are right? Is it only about the Christian life or about the Church? In any case, the kingdom of God is made up of "peace"; it consists in the state of peace, and it presupposes the practice of peace. And this peace, which is currently disturbed, on what condition will it be restored? It will only be achieved by avoiding scandal, by renouncing "grieving" the brethren, by ceasing to take food. The situation is serious. We can see it in the vehemence with which the author conjures up the disturbers of peace to put an end to their erring ways. However, let us notice that, in his fiery accents, the outrageous note is completely missing. The adversaries do not receive any of those insulting epithets which we so often meet elsewhere. Peace is deeply disturbed, and the author endeavors to re-establish it. But war is not yet declared. It is a matter for us to find a situation in the history of the Church that responds to this warning.

1 XIV, 19. I believe that the verb should be put in the imperative as we read in the Vulgate; but the indicative which many moderns adopt gives the same result

We are obviously reduced to making conjectures. The most plausible seems to me to be that our dissertation has to do with the Easter reform which took place in the first half of the second century and which was later the cause of a quarrel between the Asians and Rome.

We are accustomed to seeing in it only a question of the day; but, in reality, it was also a question of fasting. This we know from Irenaeus who, in his letter to Victor (Eusebius, Hist. eccl., V, 24, 12) says: "This discussion is not only about the day, but also about the form of fasting. For some believe that they should fast only one day, others two, and others more." The quarrel was long. It was heated, since Victor came to separate the Asians from his communion. But this happened only in the last years of the second century. Until then, there was no rupture.

Our essay, which goes up to XV, 7, notes the differences in conduct to which the practice of fasting (accompanied by abstinence) gives rise, the troubles which resulted from it, and it tries to remedy this uneasiness. The author belongs to the party of the strong (XV, 1), the party of those who do not attach any importance to fasting. But he wants the strong to spare the weak, that is, those who fast. He asks them to conform to the discipline of the weak and to fast. He works to acclimatize the institution of the Easter fast, a recent institution to which the conservatives were opposed.

He does not concern himself with the day, no doubt because in his time and in his milieu, the day did not raise any difficulty. If, as is probable, he wrote to Rome, we may conclude that the Easter day accepted by all was Sunday; for we know from the letter of Irenaeus to Victor that, already under the pontificate of Anicet, the Roman Church celebrated Easter on Sunday. So at the time when XIV, 13 was written, the moving of the Paschal day was accomplished in Rome and was accepted by all.

1. Around 155, Polycarp found the custom of Easter Sunday in effect in Rome.

Fasting (along with abstinence) was practiced by many believers, who probably formed the majority. But it also had opponents, who considered themselves strong-minded and called fasters weak. The author, although belonging to the party of the strong, worked to silence the opposition.

The first essay, from 1 to 12, also finds differences about fasting and abstinence (the fasting not mentioned in 2 is included in the abstinence mentioned). But she also finds differences about what she calls the "day". She knows people who eat only vegetables. But she also knows some who prefer one day to another, who take one day into account, while others do not take any day into account. What is meant by this day?

Lagrange answers: "This difference is even more obscure than the previous one. While Paul will give his personal opinion on the point of food, he will not return to the distinction of days. I believe that those who prefer one day to another, who take into account the day, are those who want to celebrate the Passover only on Sunday; that is to say the innovators. Those who put all days on the same level are the conservatives for whom, in the celebration of the Passover, it is not necessary to take into account the day of the week, but only the 14th of Nisan, the day of the Jewish Passover.

From our point of view, they too prefer one day to another, since they fix the celebration of Passover on the 14th of Nisan. But the innovators, having upset tradition by starting from the principle that Sunday was the only day of the week qualified for the celebration of Passover, placed the controversy on the following ground: can Passover be celebrated on any day (of the week) or should the monopoly of this feast be reserved for one day (of the week)? 1

1. In fifty years, when Polycrates writes his letter to Victor (see below), he will say that he and the Asians remain attached to the traditional day, i.e. 14 Nisan; by that time the reform of 140 will be triumphant. The Asiatics, who had become a minority, would be in the same position as the innovators around 140.

At the time and in the environment in which this was written, the Sunday celebration of Passover began to function; but it did not have time to gain universal acceptance. No doubt the reform has its supporters, but tradition also has its own who celebrate the feast of 14 Nisan on whatever day of the week it falls. If our essay has, as is probable, a Roman origin, it can be placed around 140 since, around 155, when Polycarp visited the Roman Church, he found Easter Sunday in force. It would have preceded by about twenty years the dissertation of XIV, 13-XV, 7, which supposes the 14 nisan completely dethroned in Rome.

As a witness to the Sunday observance and to the quarterly observance, the author does not try to sacrifice one to the other: he claims freedom for both. He does not ask that the observance of fasting and abstinence be the general rule, as the author of the second essay will do later. What he wants is that we do not despise each other, that we do not condemn each other. His motto is: "Support one another; tolerate one another; let each do as he pleases".

Let's take a look at the big picture.

Until about 140, the Christian Passover was celebrated on the same day as the Jewish Passover, i.e. on 14 Nisan.

On that date, a group of faithful of the Church of Rome moved the feast to the following Sunday. The same group introduced a fast in preparation for the feast. This double reform is a cause of troubles. The innovators, who at the beginning were only a minority, condemned the refractory majority, probably accusing them (this detail is not given in the texts) of remaining stuck in the rut of Judaism. The majority mocked the innovators; they mocked their Sunday Passover and also their fasting (accompanied by abstinence); they called them "weak" spirits.

Then the apostle Paul promulgates, through the pen of a posthumous secretary, the ordinance of XIV, 1-12. Basically he is on the side of the conservatives, and he recognizes that the innovators are "weak". But he wants above all that peace reigns in the community. He decides that everyone is free to do as he pleases. Only we must stop suspecting, condemning and insulting each other.

Fifteen or twenty years later, the situation has changed. Easter Sunday has triumphed over 14 Nisan (we are still in Rome). The authority broke completely with the Judaic observance, as Anicet's reply to Polycarpus proves. The success of the fast was less complete. No doubt the majority of the faithful gradually yielded to this institution. But some conservatives, under the pretext that all food is equally pure before God, refused to submit to the new custom.

Then the apostle Paul issues a new ordinance (XIV, 13-XV, 7). This time again he thinks basically like the conservatives. Like them he is convinced that all foods are equal before God. But now that fasting (with abstinence) is practiced by the majority of the faithful, their separatist attitude is a cause of trouble because of the irritation it provokes. They may even lead some members of the majority to imitate their example. But these weak people, acting against their conscience, will sin. Therefore, in the name of peace, in the name of the good of souls, let the conservatives conform to the majority!

Both oracles bear the mark of the community leader concerned to maintain order and peace among his flock. If we assign them a Roman origin, we will say that they were written both, at a distance of about twenty years, by a bishop of Rome or with his connivance 1.

1. There is nothing to prevent us from admitting that it was the same bishop who, at an interval of twenty years, enacted or allowed to be enacted, under the name of Paul, two legislative measures which the circumstances seemed to him to require; in this case, we should think of Anicet.

The Easter reform was born outside these oracles, it developed without them; they only channeled it to prevent it from sowing ruins around it.

In order to know the work of the reformers, we need to know what the Christian Easter was like before the Easter reform. Do we know? Do we have any way of finding out? Let us look at the letter of Polycrates to Victor and the text of I Corinthians V, 7-8. Perhaps we will obtain some indications.

Polycrates says (Eusebius, V, 24, 2 and 6): "We celebrate the day scrupulously, adding nothing, subtracting nothing... My parents always celebrated the day when the people put away the leaven". And we read in I Corinthians V, 7-8: "You are the unleavened ones. For our paschal lamb, which was slain, is Christ. Therefore, let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and perversity, but with the unleavened bread of purity and truth".

Polycrates prides himself on celebrating the "day", that is, the day which tradition has fixed for the celebration of the Passover, the "fourteenth day", as he says further on. He takes pride in celebrating it "without adding anything to it, without taking anything away from it". What does he mean by these words? What he does not add is probably the fasting (accompanied by abstinence) which the reformers had instituted. What he does not subtract, or at least one of the things he does not subtract, is surely the use of unleavened bread; for he declares that he celebrates the Passover on the day when the people renounce fermented bread. Thus, among him, among the Asians who agree with him, the Christian Passover which is celebrated on the 14th of Nisan includes the abstention from fermented bread and the use of unleavened bread. And this Passover is the traditional Christian Passover, the one that the greatest bishops of Asia

have always celebrated, the one that Polycrates is determined to maintain in spite of the reformers who want to suppress it.

Now, the Jewish Passover was also celebrated on the 14th of Nisan; it also included the use of unleavened bread instead of fermented bread, which was forbidden. Hence it follows that the primitive Christian Passover agreed with the Jewish Passover on at least two points: it had the same date, and also the same concern to avoid fermented bread.

82

This is what Polycrates teaches us. Let us now question the text of I Corinthians, V, 7-8. It does not come from the conservative party. On the contrary, it is the response of the reformers. In order to understand it well, we must complete it with the objections to which it answers.

"During the Passover we must eat only unleavened bread; such is the tradition from which we are not permitted to depart. - The unleavened are the Christians, they are you. - We must kill and eat the paschal lamb. - Our paschal lamb, for us Christians, is Christ. So stop killing a lamb and eating it as the Jews do. Commemorate the immolation of Christ: this is what the rite of the paschal lamb is for Christians. - Not only should we not eat fermented bread during Passover, but we should not even keep the old leaven around us. - "All right. Let's get rid of the old leaven. But the old leaven is the leaven of iniquity. Let us celebrate the feast with the unleavened bread of purity.

Note the presence of the Paschal lamb in this dialogue. The conservatives probably brought the text of Exodus XII:21, and their objection was this: "God himself prescribed the sacrifice and eating of the paschal lamb, for it is written in Exodus (the text of the LXX): 'Slaughter the paschal lamb. The reformers answered with the same text of YExodus, slightly modified (substitution of the aorist for the imperative): "The Paschal lamb has been slain" (it is this answer that allows us to think that the adversaries were referring to YExodus). Only they were explaining that the paschal lamb of the Christians, ours, was Christ, and that this lamb, having already been slain, did not need to be slain again.

But for the moment, we are less interested in the answer than in the objection. It proves that the conservatives sacrificed the Passover lamb on the evening of 14 Nisan and then ate it. It is undoubtedly to the paschal lamb that Polycrates had in mind above all when he declared that he did not want to "take anything away" from the "day". And since the rite of the paschal lamb was the basis of the Jewish passover, one must conclude that the early Christian passover was in all respects consistent with the Jewish passover.

This archaic passover remained in force in Asia throughout the second century; it is not known when it disappeared. In Rome the reformers succeeded in abolishing it around 150; fasting, with the difficulties it encountered, was a secondary issue.

Who were these reformers? We are in a position to appreciate their work, now that we know the early Christian Passover. The result of their reform was to expel from the Church the Judaic rite which it had retained until the time of their intervention. Before them the Christian Passover was simply the Jewish Passover. After them it was something else, it had a different character. That is the result. Was it sought; was it wanted? Who could believe the contrary? Who will believe that men cut the Judaic ties of the Church without knowing what they were doing? Let us say, then, that the Christian Passover reformers acted with knowledge. In their enterprise of dejudaization they were guided by a motive which could only have been hatred. These destroyers of the Jewish-Christian Passover were enemies of Judaism.

On the other hand, they practiced asceticism, mortification, since it was they who, at the same time as they founded the Christian Passover, affixed to it a preparatory fast. It is no longer a question for us of finding men in the first half of the second century who were both enemies of Judaism and ascetics.

We have known these men for a long time: they are the Marcionites. The Easter reform is the work of the Marcionite school. It entered the Roman Church before Marcion was condemned, that is, before 144. The two essays of XIV-XV. 7 deal with the problems which this reformation raised in the Roman Church; they have no connection with the struggles which the Asians had to sustain later on this subject against Rome.

85

The Greetings

The greetings in chapter XVI are divided into two groups. In one (3-16) are the greetings sent by Paul himself. The other (21-23) includes the greetings sent by Paul's companions. To this group can be added the recommendation of Phoebe by Paul (1-2).

I see no difficulty in considering as integral parts of the epistle to the Romans the greetings sent by Paul's companions: Timothy, Lucius, Jason, Tertius, Gaius, Erastus (21-23). Paul could have asked his companions for their signatures in order to present himself to the Romans surrounded by an escort in which was Gaius, the main character of the Church of Corinth, since his house was the meeting place of the community. So 21-23 belong to Epistle to the Romans. The same must be said of Paul's recommendation of Phoebe (1-2), which is easily explained by assuming that this woman carried the epistle to its recipients.

The same cannot be said of 3-16, which contains the list of persons named and greeted by Paul. In the foreground are Priscilla and Aquila who had been in Ephesus a few months earlier. We are told that they were able to return to Rome in the meantime, from where they had been

expelled by the edict of Claudius. This is true. But how would Paul know that they were gathering a Christian assembly in their home (5)?

After Priscilla and Aquila, twenty-three people are named, not to mention four groups mentioned collectively. And in the presence of this copious list, the reader wonders how Paul could know so many Christians in a city where he had never been. It is explained to us that these Romans are Greeks or Asians - among whom are some Jews - whom Paul knew either in Corinth, Thessalonica or elsewhere, and who then went to live in Rome. But this explanation does not cover all cases.

Let us take, for example, "those of Aristobulus" or "those of Narcissus". These were slaves who were unable to emigrate except with their masters. Now, only the common people had to emigrate, the rich did not emigrate. If, at the time when the letter to the Romans is written, Aristobulus and Narcissus reside in Rome, they are established there since a long time. And we do not see how Paul knew their Christian slaves, nor even how he could have known these two characters.

In other cases, the hypothesis of an emigration, without being absolutely impossible, is implausible. Let us take "Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brothers who are with them". Here we are obviously in the presence of men who live together ¹. Or rather they were living together when Paul met them either in Greece or in Asia. Then, one day, they all left together for Rome.

1. Lagrange writes, "It seems that these five formed a group, since others were especially with them, lesser known."

Is this collective emigration likely? In any case, how does Paul know that, since their arrival in Rome, these companions are not separated and still live together? The same observation applies to "Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympus and all the saints who are at home", with the aggravating circumstance that here there are women.

In short, at the time he wrote the epistle to the Romans, Paul could only have known of the Christian community in Rome who had recently left Greece or Asia; and of the lives of these emigrants he could know nothing since their departure for the imperial city. Now, in fact, he greets people who were not able to emigrate; he knows moreover what several of these people became since their supposed emigration. From these premises it follows that the greetings contained in 3-16 are not addressed to Christians actually living in Rome.

88

Let us not conclude that these greetings are not authentic. They are the work of Paul, for what purpose would a forger have fabricated them? They are addressed to a community in which he had lived, of which he knew all the members, and which he had recently left. What was this community?

Aquila and Priscilla were prominent members, since an assembly was held in their house. Now we know from Acts, XVIII, that this group, after a temporary stay in Corinth, had settled in Ephesus. Epaenetus was one of them, and he was the first man to be won to Christianity in the province of Asia; and the most important city in Asia was Ephesus. We are thus led to believe that the greetings of XVI, 3-16 are addressed to the Church of Ephesus, where Paul had stayed for a long time.

And one necessarily wonders how this piece came to be stranded where it is. Before answering this question, let us pause before the imperative "greet". To whom is this mandate addressed? Who is to execute it ?

The only possible solution is to say that the imperative "greet" is addressed to those who are going away from Paul to Ephesus. Paul has recently left the Christian community in Ephesus. In the city where he is now, some of the faithful are preparing to leave for Ephesus. He recommends that they greet the Christians in that city. And, to give more importance to his recommendation, he wrote it down, naming the people who should be greeted.

89

When they arrived in Ephesus, the travelers presented themselves to the Christian community of that city and showed the above-mentioned sheet of paper, which proved to the Ephesians that Paul had not forgotten them. The Church of Ephesus keeps this memory as a letter.

Later, when, under the Marcionite impulse, Pauline literature (authentic and fictitious) is promoted, the "letter" to the Ephesians is collected. But since this leaf is too banal to constitute an epistle, it is appended to the epistle to the Romans.

The mystery you during the ETERNAL times 1

1. This chapter had long been completed when I found the same conclusions in Harnack's book, Marcion, das Evangelium vom fremden Goll, p. 146.

It remains for me to speak of the text XVI, 25-26, which mentions "the mystery hidden in eternal times but now revealed by the prophetic Scriptures, according to the order of the eternal God, notified to all nations so that they may adhere to the faith."

The "mystery" referred to here refers to the appearance of the Son of God, his coming to earth, his sojourn among men, followed by his return to heaven after the completion of the work of salvation.

This mystery was "hidden", that is, no communication was made to men about it. By whom had the mystery been "hidden"? By the one who alone could manifest it, that is, by God Himself.

Then, after having kept it silent for "eternal times", God decided to reveal it. The mystery is therefore "unveiled now". How was it unveiled? By the coming of Christ who made himself known to men, who made his Father known to them, who brought them salvation, who then ascended into heaven. Until now, the mystery has been hidden, but now it has been revealed.

What do the "prophetic Scriptures" have to do with this? They have "notified" the Christian mystery. How have they notified it?

They prophesied the main events of Jesus' life, especially his passion and resurrection. By prophesying them they proved that Jesus' career had unfolded according to the decrees of Providence. At the same time they demonstrated that Jesus had a divine mission. And thus they "notified" the Christian mystery 1.

1. It goes without saying that these Scriptures all belong to the Old Testament and that it would be childish to think that they refer to one or more New Testament writings.

Thus the Old Testament prophesied the Christian mystery and, having prophesied it, "notified" it. But here a formidable question arises. If the mystery was prophesied by the Old Testament, how has it been "hidden" until "now"? And how can it be explained that it is only "revealed" now? The question is insoluble.

No reconciliation is possible between the mystery "notified" by the prophetic Scriptures and the mystery "unveiled now" after having been "hidden during eternal time". The mystery notified - that is to say, prophesied, for this is the meaning of the word - by the Old Testament was not revealed "now", that is, at the time of Christ. The mystery revealed "now" was not prophesied by the books of the Old Testament. The two thoughts contradict each other and the text in which they are juxtaposed is incoherent. The question is to find an explanation for this incoherence. Two hypotheses are possible: negligence and retouching.

Negligence has left undeniable traces in the Pauline epistles. But here we are not in the presence of a laborious argumentation in which the author would have lost his way and would have been reduced to rambling. We have before us two very clear assertions which exclude each other. Negligence cannot be held responsible for this accident. It can only be attributed to a retouching.

Two authors collaborated on XVI, 25-26. One of them formulated his theory of the promulgation of the Christian mystery in this place, without thinking about it. The other, who came later, full of respect for this text which he attributed to the apostle Paul, but worried about the doctrine which seemed to be spread out in it, felt obliged in conscience to introduce a gloss. A gloss which, in

his mind, was only explanatory, but which, in reality, changed everything. It is only a question of knowing where the alteration is.

One must obviously look for it where the doctrine is formulated which finally prevailed and to which the price of orthodoxy fell, because an interpolation held to be heretical could not have been accepted. Now, what has prevailed, what has been marked with the indelible seal of orthodoxy, is the theory of the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. It is, therefore, easy to fix the relative age of the two redactions which constitute our text.

The first occupant is the mystery "thou in eternal time" and "now revealed". Where did it come from? By whom was it brought here? Before the middle of the second century we see a doctrine appearing according to which Christ was virtuous in revealing truths which, until he did so, had been completely unknown to men. This doctrine is that of Marcion. 1. Text XVI, 25-26 is a Marcionite oracle corrected later by a Catholic.

1. See H. Delafosse, *Le quatrième Evangile*, p. 31.

93

Overview

Paul, who has serious problems with the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, has learned that the Jewish colony in Rome contains a group of Christians. He writes to these unknown brothers, hoping to win their sympathy and to obtain their support against his adversaries.

Knowing that to achieve a goal one must take the means, he flatters the Romans, and he complacently mentions the collection he has organized in favor of the "saints" of Jerusalem.

Of course, he cannot fail to mention the dispute he has with these "saints". They claim that in order to participate in the promise made to Abraham, one must be a son of Abraham, in the literal sense, that is to say, a descendant of this patriarch by way of generation. He recognizes that only the children of Abraham will share in the promise given to this great patriarch by God, but he considers that the right to be a child of Abraham is based on faith in the resurrection of Christ and not on carnal generation. This proves, needless to say, that he alone is right, and that his opponents are completely mistaken about the conditions required for participation in the promises made to Abraham.

Let us note in this connection that the promise made to Abraham, its object as well as its existence, is outside the conflict. On both sides there is agreement that the common father of the Israelites was granted a divine promise; on both sides there is also agreement about its object. The conflict begins only when it comes to specifying the conditions required to participate in the blessing promised to Abraham. And because these conditions alone have

provoked the dispute, Paul is concerned only with them and almost forgets to inform us about the object of the promise.

Fortunately, his forgetfulness is not complete. He tells us that God promised Abraham the empire of the world. At the same time, he tells us that Christ, who is to fulfill this promise, has the mission to crush the enemies of God and to establish on earth the kingdom of Israel, the true Israel, of which all those who believe in his resurrection will be members. This is the essence of Paul's letter, which ends with Phoebe's recommendation, to which are attached the greetings sent by Paul's entourage.

The letter to the Romans remained in this state for about eighty years. In about 140 the Maronites took it over and gave an enlarged edition in which the following thoughts were included: "As a result of the sin of the first man, all men were sinners, so much so that their body was a body of sin, a machine for sinning. Being sinners they were subject to death and enemies of God. But God loved men even when they were his enemies; and he resolved to rescue them from their misery. To accomplish this purpose he sent his Son to earth in the likeness of our sinful flesh. This Son underwent a likeness of death; but he rose again full of life. And this is what happens now. Through baptism the Christian is grafted onto Christ, he participates in Christ's death, in Christ's resurrection. He dies; therefore he pays the tribute he owed as a sinner to death; he is no longer subject to death since he has paid his debt to it. He resurrects, but in a new life, in a life that has nothing in common with the one that the body of sin gave him. It is up to him to keep this life faithfully, to remember that his body of sin is dead and to no longer be its slave. If he follows this line of conduct, he will one day be delivered from his body, and then he will obtain divine sonship, that sonship which is the object of the sighs of the creature subjected to vanity by the will of him who subjected it."

Enriched with this high theology, the letter to the Romans is no longer addressed to the Jewish Christians of Rome, but to Christians of pagan origin. To show the importance of its teachings, it presents them as the brand new revelation of a mystery hidden from all eternity; and this note is its conclusion, a conclusion more worthy of a dogmatic lesson than the vulgar greetings which primitively ended it.

Let us add that his Christ is the supreme God who came himself on earth to deliver men. Why then is he called the Son of God? Out of respect for tradition. For a long time, Jesus was commonly called the Son of God. The Marcionite school could not object to the universal usage. It therefore maintained the received name. Only, it maintained it only at the price of an inextricable difficulty. The Christ of tradition, a mere mortal like us, but invested by God with the mission of raising up the kingdom of Israel, was, according to some, the Son of God in the same way as the Machabean prince to whom God declares in Psalm II: "You are my son". For others, he owed his filiation to his divine conception. Both of these interpretations made sense to the mentality of the time. But how could we understand that the supreme God became Son of God by coming to earth? With its supreme God, Son of God, the Marcionite school introduced into theology an enigma which would precipitate the doctors into an abyss of galimatias or into inane

childishness. Its solution was that the Son of God was constituted by the ethereal body with which God had clothed himself to come to earth.

The Marcionite edition, with a powerful stroke of the wing, transported the letter to the Romans into the heavenly regions, and, from a political manifesto, made a treatise of edification and piety. On the other hand, it carefully spared the prejudices of common opinion and discreetly left in the shadows the evil God whose misdeeds it displayed. It penetrated the Catholic liturgy.

It was only a few years later, after Marcionism had been condemned, that the danger of some of its texts became apparent and that explanations seemed necessary.

The catholic edition took on this task of clarification, which it accomplished by means of glosses thrown here and there into the text without any concern for the cohesion of ideas. If it was done in one go, this work of interpretation was only one of its multiple objectives, since it is from it that emanate the Montanist texts, the dissertations on the corruption of the pagans, on the Judeo-Christians, on the bad Catholics, on the Passover, on the respect due to the magistrates.

But it is probable that the Catholic edition, such as we have it today, is the result of several successive redactions. The first would have had no other aim than to gloss the Marcionite edition in order to neutralize it. The essays and the Montanist contribution would belong to one or two later editions.