

the great possessions of life, that a man's life consisteth not of the abundance of things which he possesseth.

Not only for our own sake, but for the example we set, and for the sake of others, those of us who confess to a faith in God and in Christ dare not speak and act when trouble comes, as if that faith made not the slightest difference in the world. Where would the world be today, where would the church be today, if when trouble came upon them, those great souls of the past, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, had turned against their God and against their faith. Instead of that, they made the adverse winds drive them nearer to the shores of faith and hope. They were able to say, "Troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed."

In time Job was given deliverance out of all his troubles, although the path was not that which he mapped out for himself, or which was mapped out for him by his well-meaning, but often mistaken friends. During the storm, Job holds on to God. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him," is his only creed. But at length God Himself speaks. Job is permitted to behold the majesty and the goodness of God, and in that vision his thought, which hitherto had centered on himself and his vicissitudes, is transferred to God. Up to this time he had

wanted to argue and dispute with God, but now all that he wants to do is to repent, to worship, and to believe. "I have heard of thee with the hearing of the ear, but now mine eyes seeth thee; wherefore, I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." Hitherto his faith had been dependent upon the incidents of his own life. When the sun of prosperity shone upon him, the thermometer of his faith stood high; but when adversity came, it sank to the lowest depths. But now his faith is based not upon his own life or its incidents, but upon God. Instead of standing on its apex, the pyramid of his faith now stands upon its true, broad, and grand base, the infinite power and wisdom and love of God. Job has got free of the world, and nothing which might happen to him now could shake the tower of his faith.

This is a day for Christian men to show the faith that is in them. To a world whose stock of faith is exceedingly low, what could have a worse effect than the spectacle of Christian men giving up the Church, absenting themselves from divine service, or becoming bitter towards religion because of the difficulties through which they are passing, and worst of all, because they have lost that which Christ and the Scriptures tell us is of all things least valuable—money. One of the most noted of writers on industrial and financial conditions has recently said that the prosperity which the country enjoyed for so long a time

led people to neglect the Sunday School, the Church, abandon the family altar and turn Sunday into a pagan common holiday. Hence, when the change came and men no longer had easy employment or easy money, when employment and profits had both vanished, they had no spiritual resources upon which to fall back.

Two men were once discussing why it is that you cannot see the stars by day. The stars are still there, the distance is not greater by day than by night,—why then cannot these mighty lamps be seen by day? One man maintained that they could be seen if one went far enough down in a well. The other denied the proposition, but permitted himself to be lowered into the well. After he had been lowered a certain distance, he was asked if he could see the stars, and said, "No." Still further down, the same question was asked with the same answer. But when he had been lowered to a great depth, then, looking up towards the heavens, he said he was able to see the stars. Go down deep enough into a well and you can see the stars by day. So to those who are willing to cooperate with God, and will for themselves the things which He hath willed for them, the deep well of adversity and trouble is a place whence we can see the stars of the spiritual heavens and know that in all and above all and through all is God, and that God is love.

Notes on Biblical Exposition

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XVII. Consequences Versus Truth

"But when Cephas came to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was condemned. For before certain men came from James; he ate with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. And there dissembled together with him also the rest of the Jews; so that even Barnabas was carried away with their dissembling. But when I saw that they were not walking straight according to

the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all . . ." (Gal. 2:11-14a, in a literal translation).

A Vacillating Policy

IN the last number of CHRISTIANITY TODAY, we finished our exposition of Gal. 2:1-10, which passage, it will be remembered, presents the second of Paul's arguments in defence of his apostolic independence. The first argu-

ment (in Gal. 1:11-24) was that his conversion was not brought about by human persuasions or teaching but by the immediate act of Christ, and that even after his conversion he had not had the early or extended contact with the original apostles which the Judaizers' notion of his dependence upon them would require. His second argument (in Gal. 2:1-10) was that when he did discuss his gospel fully with the Jerusalem leaders they took his view, not the

Judaizers', about the matter and recognized that his gospel was the same gospel of Christ as the gospel which they preached, and that it had already been given to him, without their instrumentality, by divine commission. Now, in Gal. 2:11-21, Paul presents the third and last of his arguments for his apostolic independence. So independent was he, he says, that on one occasion he could even oppose the chief of the original apostles himself.

"But when Cephas came to Antioch," says Paul, "I withstood him to the face, because he was condemned." It is not necessary to ask *by whom* Peter "was condemned;" Paul means that his very act condemned him. When he says that he "was condemned," that is only a more forcible way of saying that he was worthy of condemnation.

Certain Men From James

"For before certain men came from James," says Paul, "he ate with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision." In interpreting the phrase "from James," extreme views should be avoided. The phrase seems to mean more than that these men came from Jerusalem—as it would mean if "James" were merely used instead of "Jerusalem" because James was the head of the Jerusalem Church. But the opposite error is much more serious. It is a great mistake to jump to the conclusion, as some have done, that these men were sent by James with the express purpose of accomplishing what their coming did as a matter of fact temporarily accomplish—namely, the withdrawal of Peter and other Jewish Christians from table-companionship with Gentiles in the Antioch Church. Perhaps all that we can surmise is that these men had stood in some way closer to James than did the generality of the Jerusalem Church. But what their connection with him was, and whether they had any kind of commission from him at all when they went to Antioch—these questions can probably never be answered. It is important in such cases not to read too much between the lines.

We cannot even be perfectly sure that these men are blamed by the Apostle

Paul. Their coming to Antioch had an unfortunate effect, but whether they intended it to have that effect is by no means clear.

Separation From The Gentiles

After the coming of these men, Peter "withdrew and separated himself" from the table-companionship in which he had previously engaged with the Gentile members of the Antioch Church. The tense of the verbs may indicate that the process of withdrawal was a gradual one; possibly Peter at first merely made his table companionship with the Gentiles less frequent than it had been before; possibly we are meant to understand that he entered upon a policy of withdrawal rather than that there was any sudden or definite break.

He acted in this manner, Paul says, because he feared "those who were of the circumcision." This latter phrase might be taken as designating "those the starting-point of whose life was circumcision," "the advocates of circumcision;" but here it is perhaps better just to take it as meaning "Jews." Of course, the particular Jews who are meant are the men who came from James. Peter withdrew and separated himself because he feared to allow his table-companionship with Gentiles to continue in the presence of those Jews.

To understand such conduct on the part of Peter, it is necessary to envisage the situation somewhat more clearly than is sometimes done. At that time, the Church had not yet abandoned the work of offering the gospel to the Jewish people as such. The gospel was to be offered, as even Paul intimates (Rom. 1:16), "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." So at the conference described in Gal. 2:1-10 we need not suppose that Paul asked the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem to cease circumcising their children or to cease attendance upon the Temple. These things were not, indeed, regarded as being necessary to salvation either by the original apostles or by Paul, and the Gentile Christians were expressly exempted from them; but the Jerusalem Christians, for the time at least, continued to observe them. Any final abandonment of them on the part of the

whole Church was left to the further guidance of God.

Paul did not, therefore, demand that Peter or other Jewish Christians should relinquish, for the present at least, their Jewish manner of life, especially if (in accordance with Paul's principle of becoming all things to all men, I Cor. 9:19-22) it seemed necessary for the winning of the non-Christian Jews. But a strict Jewish manner of life involved, or was thought to involve, avoidance of table-companionship with Gentiles. If, therefore, Peter had never entered into such table-companionship, it is not altogether clear that Paul at that time would have urged him to do so.

The Order Of Events

At this point, however, a difficulty seems to arise. Was not the very purpose of the four prohibitions of the Apostolic Decree (Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25) to make table-companionship, as well as other kinds of companionship, possible between Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians in mixed churches? Was not the very notion of the Decree that the Gentile Christians were to avoid certain particularly abhorrent things, especially in the sphere of foods, in order to avoid giving offence to their Jewish brethren? Could the difficulty at Antioch, then, ever have arisen if the Apostolic Decree had been passed? Would not all that have been settled if the Decree was only observed?

Such considerations, especially when taken in connection with those mentioned when we were dealing with Gal. 2:1-10, have led some modern scholars to reject the identification of the meeting described in that passage with the Apostolic Council of Acts 15:1-29 and to adopt the identification with the "famine visit" of Acts 11:20; 12:25. The order of events, these scholars think, then becomes perfectly easy to understand. First, the leaders of the Jerusalem Church agreed with Paul in holding, against the Judaizers, that the Gentile Christians did not need to be circumcised, and gave to Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship (Gal. 2:1-10). But—say the advocates of this view—there were many things that were not settled at that time. It was not contemplated that Jewish

Christians should give up their Jewish manner of life. What, then, should be done in mixed churches where Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians lived together? How could the Jewish Christians possibly maintain their Jewish manner of life and at the same time hold companionship, especially table-companionship, with such Gentiles? These questions—so the hypothesis continues—gave rise to the trouble at Antioch. Peter at first solved the problem in the interests of the unity of the Church. He relinquished the strictness of his Jewish manner of life in order to hold table-companionship with his Gentile brethren. But then, fearing those who came from Jerusalem, he went back on his decision and withdrew from such table-companionship. Finally, however, the whole matter was settled—according to the hypothesis which we are now considering—by the Apostolic Council of Acts 15:1-29. That Council solved the problem of mixed churches by decreeing that the Gentile Christians, while not observing the whole ceremonial law, should refrain from certain particular things which would give the most poignant offence to their Jewish fellow citizens.

There is no question but that this reconstruction of the order of events is in some respects very attractive. But there are also serious difficulties about it; and we do not think, in particular, that it is rendered necessary by Gal. 2:11-21. Even if the Apostolic Decree had already been passed before the time dealt with in this passage, still there may have been strict Jews in the Church who thought themselves required to avoid table-companionship with Gentiles even if the Gentiles observed the four prohibitions of the Decree, so that even after the Apostolic Council there was room for such a situation as that which this passage describes.

A Policy Of Concealment

"And," Paul continues, "there dissembled together with him [Peter] also the rest of the Jews, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their dissembling." The Greek word translated "dissembling" in this passage is the word from which our English word "hypocrisy" comes. But it does not

necessarily involve anything like such sharp condemnation as the English word does. The English word means "pretending to be better than one really is," while the Greek word means merely "playing a part," "making an incorrect impression," no matter in what particular way or with what particular motive the incorrect impression is made.

What Paul means is that Peter and Barnabas and the other Jewish Christians were concealing their real principles out of fear of those who had come from James. They had seen clearly that in the new era ushered in by the redeeming work of Christ it was God's will that already the strictness of the Mosaic Law (or of the current interpretation of its implications) should be relaxed to permit full fellowship between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians in mixed churches. They had ordered their lives accordingly. Yet now, in the presence of these men from Jerusalem, they were acting as though their principles were of a different kind. Their present conduct did not correctly express their convictions. To characterize such conduct, Paul uses a word of which there is no exact translation in English. It was certainly not "hypocrisy," and even "dissembling" is too strong.

The Danger Of "Splitting The Church"

Yet, despite such explanations, we can see clearly that the situation was serious enough. What poignancy of sorrow lies behind Paul's words: "Even Barnabas was carried away with their dissembling!" Barnabas, the man who had introduced Paul to the leaders of the Jerusalem Church (Acts 9:27), who had later (Acts 11:25) brought him from Tarsus into that very Gentile work at Antioch to which he was doing so much harm by his present conduct—even Barnabas was carried away by a miserable policy of concealment and compromise!

Moreover, the situation was not only painful but exceedingly delicate and dangerous. Paul had against him not only Barnabas and the entire Jewish Christian part of the Antioch Church, but also the chief of the Jerusalem apostles, the chief of the original Twelve who had

been chosen by the Lord Himself. Surely such a situation demanded the utmost caution; one false move, and the Church would be "split." No doubt such considerations might have been presented to Paul at Antioch, as they are presented to the evangelical minority in the Presbyterian Church of the present day. But Paul did not think much of them. He was not an adherent of the fashionable modern policy of unanimous reports; he did not believe in settling the affairs of the Church in secret committee chambers, and in concealing the underlying differences by pages of verbiage like that produced by the Commission of Fifteen appointed by our General Assembly of 1925. He would have nothing whatever to do with the policy of concealment and compromise. What he did do is presented in sharp, clear fashion in his own words. "But when I saw," he says, "that they were not walking straight according to the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas *in the presence of all . . .*" (italics not Paul's, but ours; but we doubt whether Paul would disagree with our use of them).

The Truth Of The Gospel

Why did Paul take such a dangerous step as that, and why do supposedly evangelical leaders refuse to take such steps today? The answer is given by the phrase, "according to the truth of the gospel." Peter's conduct was not in accordance with the gospel. That was enough for Paul. Regardless of consequences, he was obliged to speak out. He withstood Peter to his face; he rebuked him before them all.

The difference between Paul and many ostensibly evangelical leaders in the Presbyterian Church today may be put very briefly. These ostensibly evangelical leaders consider consequences; Paul considered truth.

There is no question which kind of conduct has the blessing of God. Under the present policy of concealment and compromise, evangelicalism is becoming weaker and weaker in the Presbyterian Church and in the other churches of today; under Paul's brave policy of withstanding to the face and of speaking out, the apostolic Church went on to conquer the world.