

Simon Magus

SIMON MAGUS (alternatively, “Simon the Magician”; from the Greek word “Mágos,” signifying a wizard), a character who appears in the New Testament and also in the works of the Christian Fathers. In Acts 8: 5-24 he is portrayed as a famous sorcerer in Samaria who had been converted to Christianity by Philip. His personality has been the subject of considerable discussion. The conclusions to which the present writer has been led are mainly as follows: (1) that all we know of the original Simon Magus is contained in Acts; (2) that from very early times he has been confused with another Simon; (3) that the idea that Simon Magus is merely a distortion of Saint Paul is absurd.

As regards the story of Acts 8: 5-24, it might suffice to make a few remarks. First, it is interesting to note that Simon Magus was older than Romanized Christianity. The first missionary enterprise of the nascent Church brought it into contact with a magician who had for a long time amazed the people of Samaria with his sorceries (verse 11). This person gave himself out to be “some great one,” but the popular voice defined his claims by saying “this man is that power of God which is called Great.” Such a voice of the people cannot be imagined in Judaea, but Samaria was more open than Judaea to the influence of Greek ideas. Readers of Philo are familiar with the half-philosophical and half-mythological mode of thought by which the “powers of

God” are substantialized into independent personalities. There were powers of all sorts, powers of help and salvation and also powers of punishment (Philo Book 1, line 431). It was through these powers that the incorporeal world of thought was framed, which served as the archetype of this world of appearance. The various powers are sometimes summed up under the two heads of Royal and Beneficial, which correspond to the two names Lord and God. Which of them—if it is lawful at all to argue from Alexandria to Samaria—is to be identified with the one called “great” we have no means of deciding. Notwithstanding his own success as a magician Simon Magus was amazed in his turn at the superior power of Christianity. But he did not understand that this power was spoiled by self-seeking, and his offer of money to the Apostles, to enable him to confer the gift of the Holy Ghost, has branded his name for ever through the use of the word “simony.” He was, however, a baptized Christian, and accepted with meekness the rebuke of Peter. The last that we hear of him is his humble entreaty to the Apostles to pray for him. Had the writer of Acts known anything of his subsequent adventures, he might certainly have been expected to give some hint of them.

There is no reason for identifying the Simon Magus of Acts with the Simon, also a magician, who was a friend of Felix, and employed by him to tempt Drusilla away from her husband Azizus, the king of the Emesi. The name Simon was common, and so was the claim to magical powers. But the Simon per Josephus is expressly declared to have been a Jew and a native

of Cyprus (see Antiquities of the Jews, Book 20, Chapter 7, Section 2).

The Apostolic Fathers say nothing about Simon Magus, but with Justin Martyr (formerly Justin the Philosopher) we get startling developments. In his First Apology, written in A.D. 138 or 139, he tells us that one Simon, a Samaritan from a village called Gitta, or Gittae, performed such miracles by magic in Rome, during the reign of Claudius, that he was regarded as a god and honored with a statue “in the river Tiber, between the two bridges, having an inscription in Latin as follows: *Simoni Deo Sancto.*” “And almost all the Samaritans,” he goes on to say, “and a few among the other nations, acknowledge and adore him as the first God. And one Helen, who went about with him at that time, who before had had her stand in a brothel, they say was the first thought that was brought into being by him.” Justin goes on to speak, as from personal knowledge, of the feats of magic performed by Menander, another Samaritan and a disciple of Simon’s, who persuaded his followers that they would never die. After Menander Justin proceeds to speak of Marcion, who was still teaching at the time. The followers of Simon Magus, of Menander and of Marcion, he says, were all called Christians, but so also Epicureans and Stoics were alike called philosophers. He had himself composed a treatise against all the heresies that there had been, which he was willing to present to the imperial family. As Justin was himself a Samaritan it is natural that his fellow-countrymen should bulk largely in his eyes. Accordingly, we find him reverting to Simon and Menander in a later passage

of the same Apology, where he repeats that in the royal city of Rome, in the time of Claudius Caesar, Simon so astonished “the holy Senate” and the Roman people that he was worshipped as a god and honored with a statue, which Justin petitions to have it taken down. In the Second Apology also there is a passage which seems mutilated or misplaced, in which he declares himself to have “despised the impious and misleading teaching of the Simonians in his own nation.” In the Dialogue he prides himself on the independence and love of truth which he had displayed in the Apology. “For,” he says, “in writing to Caesar, I showed no regard even for any of my own nation, but said that they were deceived by trusting in a magician of their own race, Simon, whom they assert to be God, above all rule and authority and power” (see Ephesians 1:21). Such is the testimony of Justin.

In 1574, during the pontificate of Gregory the Thirteenth, a stone was dug up in the island of the Tiber bearing the inscription, “Semoni Sango Deo Sacrum Sex. Pompeius” (see Semo Sancus). This discovery has led many to suspect that Justin Martyr has somehow been hoaxed. The stone is not the only one of its kind, and it is a serious charge to bring against Justin to suppose him guilty of so silly a confusion as this. But if Justin Martyr was weak in history, it is not unreasonable to suppose that he may have confused the Simon of Acts with a heretical leader of the same name who lived much nearer to his own time, especially as this other Simon also had a great reputation for magic. A full century must have elapsed between the conversion of Simon Magus to Christianity and the earliest date possible

(which is the one that we have adopted) for the composition of Justin Martyr's First Apology. That work is assigned by Schmiedel and others to about A.D. 152. Justin Martyr could not have been mistaken as to the fact that the bulk of his countrymen were followers of a religious leader named Simon, whose disciple Menander he seems to speak of as an elder contemporary of his own. But having a mind void of historical perspective he identified this Simon with Simon Magus.

When once this identification has been made by Justin, it was taken for granted by almost all subsequent writers. The temptation to trace all heresy to one who had been condemned by Peter was too strong for the Fathers. Doctor George Salmon brought light into darkness by distinguishing between Simon of Gitta and the original Simon Magus. What has not perhaps been so clearly perceived is the consequence that all that is told about Helen refers to the later Simon.

With Hegesippus, who wrote during the episcopate of Eleutherus (A.D. 176-189), as with Justin, Simon heads the list of heretics, but there is no identification of him with Simon Magus; indeed, the context plainly excludes it.

During the same episcopate Irenaeus was appointed bishop of Lyons. In his work Against Heresies we hear for the first time of opposition on the part of Simon to the Apostles after his pretended conversion. His magic, we are told, procured him the

honor of a statue from the emperor Claudius. He was glorified by many as God, and he taught that it was he who appeared among the Jews as the Son, in Samaria as the Father and among other nations as the Holy Spirit. He was indeed the highest power, the Father, who is above all, but he consented to be called by whatever name men chose to give him. Irenaeus then goes on to tell how at Tyre Simon rescued Helen from prostitution, and took her about with him, saying that she was the first thought of his mind, the mother of all things, by whom in the beginning he had conceived the idea of making angels and arch-angels. For that this Thought, recognizing her father's will, had leapt forth from him, and descended to lower regions, and generated the angelic powers by whom this world was made. But after she had done so she was detained by them through ill-will, since they did not wish to be thought the offspring of any other being. For, as for himself, they knew nothing at all about him. But his Thought had been detained by the angelic powers which had been sent forth from her, and had been subjected by them to every indignity, so that she might not return on high to her own father, insomuch that she was even enclosed in a human body, and for age after age transmigrated into different female forms, as though from one vessel into another. For she had been also in that Helen who was the cause of the Trojan War. But while she passed from body to body, and consequently suffered perpetual indignity, she had at the last been prostituted in a brothel; she was "the lost sheep." Wherefore he himself had come to free her from her bonds, and to confer salvation upon men through knowledge of himself. For as the angels were mismanaging the

world, owing to their individual lust for rule, he had come to set things straight, and had descended under a changed form, likening himself to the Principalities and Powers through whom he passed, so that among men he appeared as a man, though he was not a man, and was thought to have suffered in Judaea, though he had not suffered. But the prophets had delivered their prophecies under the inspiration of the world-creating angels: wherefore those who had their hope in him and in Helen minded them no more, and, as being free, did what they pleased; for men were saved according to his grace, but not according to just works. For works were not just by nature, but only by convention, in accordance with the enactments of the world-creating Angels, who by precepts of this kind sought to bring men into slavery. Wherefore he promised that the world should be dissolved, and that those who were his should be freed from the dominion of the world-creators. Irenaeus concludes his account by saying that this Antinomian teaching had its logical consequence in his followers, who lived licentious lives and practiced every kind of magic. They also, he adds, worshipped images of Simon under the form of Zeus, and of Helen under that of Athena. They were called Simoniani, and were the introducers of “knowledge falsely so called.” In the next chapter Irenaeus speaks of Menander, who was also a Samaritan, as the successor of Simon, and as having, like him, attained to the highest pitch of magic. His doctrine is represented, as being the same as that of Simon, only that it was he this time who was the savior of the world.

It is evident that the Samaritans were not to be outdone by the Jews, that Mount Gerizim was once more being set up against Jerusalem, and that a bold bid was being made by the hated Samaritans for a world-wide religion, which should embrace Pagans as well as Christians. But before such an amalgam of paganism and Christianity could be propounded, it is evident that Christianity must have been for some little time before the world, and that the system cannot possibly be traced back to Simon Magus. Is it not this early struggle between Jewish and Samaritan universalism, involving as it did a struggle of religion against magic, that is really symbolized under the wild traditions of the contest between Peter and Simon?

Tertullian is fond of alluding to Simon Magus. He says that he offered money for the Holy Spirit (*De fuga*, 12; *De anima*, 34), that he was cursed by the Apostles and expelled from the faith, that he consoled himself for the loss of the Spirit by the purchase of Helen of Tyre, that he was honored at Rome with a statue bearing the inscription "Sancti Dei," that the Simonianae *magiae disciplina*, had been condemned by Peter, and that, in his own day (Tertullian died in A.D. 220), the followers of Simon professed to raise the souls of prophets from the dead (*De anima*, 57). In a list of heretics Marcion, Valentine and Apelles are followed by Hebion and Simon, whom we may take as standing respectively for Jewish and Samaritan types of Christian heresy. But the important passage is the account of his doctrine in *De anima*, 34, which is evidently derived from the same source as that of Irenaeus. The pseudo-Tertullian in the

short treatise *Against all Heresies* lets us know that the being whom the Most High God came down to seek was Wisdom. This is important as bearing upon the connection between Simon and Valentinus. In the *Clementine Homilies* (Book Two, line 25) it is said that Simon called Helen “Sophia.”

We now come to the important testimony of Hippolytus (circa A.D. 218-222). In his *Refutatio omnium haeresium* he gives the same account as Irenaeus with certain slight differences, which indicate a common source rather than direct borrowing. The word used for the Thought of the first Father, which in Justin is “Sense,” and which the translator of Irenaeus renders by *conceptio* and Tertullian by *injectio*, is in Hippolytus “*epinoia*.” We are told that Simon allegorized the wooden horse and “Helen with the lamp,” and applied them to himself and his “*epinoia*.” Upon the story of “the lost sheep” Hippolytus comments as follows. “But the liar was enamored of this wench, whose name was Helen, and had bought her and had her to wife, and it was out of respect for his disciples that he invented this fairy-tale.” To this he adds a scathing indictment against the licentiousness of the Simonians. Hippolytus speaks in language similar to that of Irenaeus about the variety of magic arts practiced by the Simonians, and also of their having images of Simon and Helen under the forms of Zeus and Athena. But here he has a significant addition. “But if any one, on seeing the images either of Simon or Helen, shall call them by those names, he is cast out, as showing ignorance of the mysteries.” From this it is evident that the Simonians did not allow that they worshipped their

founders. Lipsius conjectured that the supposed worship of Simon and Helen was really that of Hercules-Melkart and Selene-Astarte. Baur before him made Simon = "Shemesh" (Sun). In the Clementine Recognitions Helen is called Luna (Book Two, lines 8-9), and in the Homilies she is mystically connected with the lunar month (Homilies, Book Two, line 23).

Hippolytus, like the rest, identified Simon of Gitta with Simon Magus. Reduced to despair, he says, by the curse laid upon him by Peter, he embarked on the career that has been described, "Until he came to Rome also and fell foul of the Apostles. Peter withstood him on many occasions. At last he came (here some words are missing) and began to teach sitting under a plane tree. When he was on the point of being shown up, he said, in order to gain time, that if he were buried alive he would rise again on the third day. So he bade that a tomb should be dug by his disciples and that he should be buried in it. Now they did what they were ordered, but he remained there until now: for he was not the Christ."

Prefixed to this account of Simon, which, except in its dramatic close, so nearly tallies with that of Irenaeus, is a description of a book of which he was the author. It is quoted under the title of The Declaration (6: 14, 18) or The Great Declaration (6:11). The longest extract from it is in 6:18, but others occur here and there, and, where not explicitly quoted, it still underlies the statements of Hippolytus. It is written in a mystical and pretentious style, but the philosophy of it, if allowance be made

for the allegorical method of the time, is by no means to be despised. As Hippolytus himself in more than one place points out, it is an earlier form of the Valentinian doctrine, but there are things in it which remind us of the Stoic physics, and much use is made of the Aristotelian distinction between energy and “dynamis.”

Starting from the assertion of Moses that God is “a devouring fire” (Deuteronomy 4:24), Simon combined therewith the philosophy of Heraclitus which made fire the first principle of all things. This first principle he denominated a “power without end,” and he declared it to dwell in the sons of men, beings born of flesh and blood. But fire was not the simple thing that the many imagined, and Simon distinguished between its hidden and its manifest qualities, maintaining, like Locke, that the former were the cause of the latter. Like the Stoics, he conceived of it as an intelligent being. From this ungenerated being sprang the generated world of which we know, whereof there were six roots, having each its inner and its outer side, and arranged in pairs (conjugations) as follows: mind and “epinoia” = heaven and earth; voice and name = sun and moon; calculus and “enthymisis” = “air” and water. These six roots are also called six powers. Commingled with them all was the great power, the “power without end.” This was that “which stands, which stood and yet shall stand.” It existed potentially in every child of man, and might be developed in each to its own immensity. The small might become great, the point be enlarged to infinity. This indivisible point which existed in the body, and of which none

but the spiritual knew, was the Kingdom of Heaven, and the grain of mustard-seed. But it rested with us to develop it, and it is this responsibility which is referred to in the words, "that we may not be condemned with the world" (First Corinthians 11:32). For if the image of the Standing One were not actualized in us, it would not survive the death of the body. "The axe," he said, "is nigh to the roots of the tree. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire" (Matthew 3:10).

The whole book is a queer mixture of Hellenism and Hebraism, in which the same method of allegory is applied to Homer and Hesiod as to Moses. There is a physiological interpretation of the Garden of Eden. The five books of Moses are made to represent the five senses. There is a mystical passage on the unity of all things, suggestive of "the hymn the Brahman sings." Its language seems to throw light on the story about Helen. "This," he says, "is one power, divided between above and below, self-generating, self-increasing, self-seeking, self-finding, being its own mother, its own father, its own sister, its own spouse, its own daughter, its own son, mother, father, an abstract unity, being the root of all things." That a learned man like Hippolytus should refer a work which contains quotations from the Epistles and Gospels to Simon Magus, who was probably older than Jesus Christ, shows the extent to which men can be blinded by religious bigotry.

Next in order comes Origen, who was ordained priest in A.D. 231. The most interesting point in his evidence relates to the

decline of the Samaritan attempt to establish a world religion. After speaking of Dositheus the Samaritan, who persuaded some of his countrymen that he was the Christ prophesied by Moses, he goes on to say: "Also Simon the Samaritan, a magician, wished to filch away some by his magic. And at the time indeed he succeeded in his deception, but now I suppose it is not possible to find 30 Simonians altogether in the world; and perhaps I have put the number higher than it really is. But in Palestine there are very few, and in the rest of the world, in which he wished to spread his own glory, his name is nowhere mentioned. If it is, this is due to the Acts of the Apostles. It is the Christians who say what is said about him, and it has become plain as daylight that Simon was nothing divine." Origen also mentions that some of the sect were called Heleniani.

The treatise of the pseudo-Cyprian *De Rebaptismate* is assigned by some to about A.D. 260. The writer says that on the strength of the words of John, that "we were to be baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire," the Simonians maintained that the orthodox baptism was a mere form, and that they had the real baptism, for, as soon as their neophytes went down into the water, a fire appeared on it. The writer does not dispute the fact, but is at a loss what to make of it. Was it a bit of jugglery, or a natural phenomenon, or a piece of self-deception, or an effect of magic? In advocacy of this baptism, we are told, there was composed by the same heretics a book which was inscribed the *Preaching of Paul*.

Arnobius (early in the third century) introduces us to a new phase of the Simon-legend. "They had seen," he says, "the car of Simon Magus blown away by the mouth of Peter and vanish at the name of Christ. They had seen, I say, him who trusted in false gods and was betrayed by those gods in their fear, brought headlong down by his own weight, lie with broken legs, and afterwards be carried to Brunda and, exhausted by suffering and shame, fling himself down once more from the gable of a lofty roof." The immediate sequel shows that belief in this story was confined to Christians.

Eusebius (about A.D. 264-340) follows Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, but he adds the statement, which is not derived from them, that Peter opposed Simon at Rome under the reign of Claudius. From Origen's statement one might have thought that the Simonians would have dwindled out altogether by the time of Eusebius. But they were still extant in his time, and there is no sect of whom he speaks in such unmeasured terms of vituperation. Eusebius's account of Menander is also based upon Justin and Irenaeus.

Saint Cyril of Jerusalem (A.D. 346) in the sixth of his Catechetical Lectures prefaces his history of the Manicheans by a brief account of earlier heresies. Simon Magus, he says, was the father of all heresy. After being cast out by the Apostles he came to Rome where, having joined to himself a profligate woman of the name of Helen, he gave out that it was he who appeared as the father on Mount Sinai, and afterwards, not in the flesh, but in

appearance as Jesus Christ, and, finally, as the Holy Ghost, according to the promise of Christ. His success at Rome was so great that the emperor Claudius erected a statue to him with the inscription *Simoni Deo Sancto*. The triumph of Simon Magus was terminated on the arrival of Peter and Paul at Rome. Simon Magus had given out that he was going to be translated to heaven, and was actually careering through the air in a chariot drawn by demons when Peter and Paul knelt down and prayed, and their prayers brought him to earth a mangled corpse.

Such is the form assumed by the legend of Simon Magus about the middle of the fourth century. It is interesting to note in it the first introduction of Paul on the scene, at least by name. The reader who is not familiar with the eccentricities of the Tübingen school will doubtless be surprised to learn that the Paul who thus quietly slips in at the close of the drama was himself all along the disguised villain of the plot, the very Simon Magus whom he comes to assist Peter in destroying.

Epiphanius (cerca A.D. 367) is a writer who has nothing but his learning to recommend him. It seems that there were some Simonians still in existence in his day, but he speaks of them as almost extinct. Gitta, he says, had sunk from a town into a village. He makes no mention of the Great Declaration, but as in several places he makes Simon speak in the first person, the inference is that he is quoting from it, though perhaps not verbatim. Take, for instance, the following passage: "But in each heaven I changed my form," says he, "in accordance with the

form of those who were in each heaven, that I might escape the notice of my angelic powers and come down to the Thought, who is none other than her who is also called Prounikos and Holy Ghost, through whom I created the angels, while the angels created the world and men.” And again, “And on her account,” he says, “did I come down; for this is that which is written in the Gospel ‘the lost sheep.’” Epiphanius further charges Simon with having tried to wrest the words of Saint Paul about the armor of God (Ephesians 6: 14-16) into agreement with his own identification of the “ennoia” with Athena. He tells us also that he gave barbaric names to the “principalities and powers,” and that he was the beginning of the Gnostics. The Law, according to him, was not of God, but of “the sinister power.”

The same was the case with the prophets, and it was death to believe in the Old Testament. Epiphanius clearly has before him the same written source as Hippolytus, which we know to have been the Great Declaration. The story of Helen is thus definitely shown to belong to the second Simon, and not at all to the first. Doctor Salmon pointed out that Simon was known as a writer to the author of the Clementine Recognitions (Book Two, line 38), and towards the close of the fourth century we find Saint Jerome quoting from him as such.

Two points must by this time have become clear: (1) that our knowledge of the original Simon Magus is confined to what we are told in the Acts, and (2) that from the earliest times he has been confused with another Simon. The initial error of Justin

was echoed by every subsequent writer, with the one exception of Hegesippus, who had perhaps not read him. There were, of course, obvious reasons for the confusion. Both Simons were Samaritans, both were magicians, and the second Simon claimed for himself what was claimed for the earlier Simon by the people, namely, that he was the great power of God. But, if the end in view with the Fathers had been the attainment of truth, instead of the branding of heretics, they could not possibly have accepted the Great Declaration, which contains, as we have seen, the story of Helen, with its references to the Gospels, as the work of Simon Magus. As regards the third point, the difficulty is to make clear to the ordinary mind why it should be treated at all. But as Schmiedel champions the Tübingen view in the *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, it cannot be overlooked.

Among the sources of the Simon-legend we have omitted the Clementine literature and a number of Apocryphal Martyria, Passiones and Actus. It is necessary to treat them separately in connection with the Tübingen view, which represents Paul as the original Simon. That view is based on these works of fiction, of uncertain date and authorship, which seem to have been worked over by several hands in the interest of diverse forms of belief. The romance of Clement of Rome exists at present in two forms, in Greek under the name of the Clementine Homilies and in a Latin translation by Rufinus, which is known as the *Recognitions* (see *Clementine Literature*). It is contended that the common source of these documents may be as early as the first century, and must have consisted in a polemic against Paul, emanating

from the Jewish side of Christianity. Paul being thus identified with Simon, it was argued that Simon's visit to Rome had no other basis than Paul's presence there, and, further, that the tradition of Peter's residence in Rome rests on the assumed necessity of his resisting the arch-enemy of Judaism there as elsewhere. Thus, the idea of Peter at Rome really originated with the Ebionites, but it was afterwards taken up by the Catholic Church, and then Paul was associated with Peter in opposition to Simon, who had originally been Paul himself in an earlier rendition of the lore or account.

Now it must be conceded that the Clementine Homilies evidence hostility to Paul. Prefixed to them is a supposed letter from Peter to James, in which Peter is made to write as follows:

“For some of the converts from the Gentiles have rejected the preaching through me in accordance with the law, having accepted a certain lawless and babbling doctrine of the enemy. And this some people have attempted while I am still alive, by various interpretations to transform my words, unto the overthrow of the law; as though I also thought thus, but did not preach it openly: which be far from me! For to do so is to act against the law of God as spoken through Moses, the eternal duration of which is borne witness to by our Lord. Since He said thus: ‘Heaven and earth shall pass away: one jot or one tittle shall not pass away from the law.’ Now this He said that all might be fulfilled. But they, professing somehow to know my mind, attempt to expound the words they heard from me more

wisely than I who spoke them, telling those who are instructed by them that this is my meaning, which I never thought of. But if they venture on such falsehoods while I am still alive, how much more when I am gone will those who come after me dare to do so!"

It would be futile to maintain that that passage is not aimed at Paul. It does not identify Paul with Simon Magus, but it serves to reveal an animus which would render the identification easy. In the Seventeenth Homily the identification is effected. Simon is there made to maintain that he has a better knowledge of the mind of Jesus than the disciples, who had seen and conversed with Him in person. His reason for this strange assertion is that visions are superior to waking reality, as divine is superior to human. Peter has much to say in reply to this, but the passage which mainly concerns us is as follows:

"But can any one be educated for teaching by vision? And if you shall say, 'It is possible,' why did the Teacher remain and converse with waking men for a whole year? And how can we believe you even as to the fact that he appeared to you? And how can he have appeared to you seeing that your sentiments are opposed to his teaching? But if you were seen and taught by him for a single hour, and so became an apostle, then preach his words, expound his meaning, love his apostles, fight not with me who had converse with him. For it is against a solid rock, the foundation-stone of the Church, that you have opposed yourself in opposing me. If you were not an adversary, you would not be

slandering me and reviling the preaching that is given through me, in order that, as I heard myself in person from the Lord, when I speak I may not be believed, as though forsooth it were I who was condemned and I who was reprobate. Or, if you call me 'condemned,' you are accusing God who revealed the Christ to me, and are inveighing against Him who called me blessed on the ground of the revelation. But if indeed you truly wish to work along with the truth, learn first from us what we learnt from Him, and when you have become a disciple of truth, become our fellow-workman."

Here we have the advantage, rare in ecclesiastical history, of hearing the other side. The above is unmistakably the voice of those early Christians who hated Paul, or at all events an echo of that voice. But how late an echo it would be hazardous to decide. Schmiedel asks, "How should Paul ever come to be in the second, or, as far as the Clementine Homilies and Recognitions are concerned, even in the third or fourth century, the object of so fanatical a hatred? It is a psychological impossibility." Yet the love and hatred aroused by strong characters is not confined to their life-time. There is not the slightest reason why there should not have been people in the third or fourth century who would have been glad to lampoon Paul. The introduction of Pauline features, however, into the representation of Simon Magus is merely incidental. The portrait as a whole is not in the least like Paul, and could not even have been intended for a caricature of him.

There are other features in the portrait which remind us strongly of Marcion. For the first thing which we learn from the Homilies about Simon's opinions is that he denied that God was just. By "God" he meant the Creator. But he undertakes to prove from Scripture that there is a higher God, who really possesses the perfections which are falsely ascribed to the lower. On these grounds Peter complains that, when he was setting out for the Gentiles to convert them from their worship of many gods upon earth, the Evil Power had sent Simon before him to make them believe that there were many gods in heaven. Peter throughout is represented as defending the monarchy of God against Simon's attacks on it.

If we knew more, we might detect other historical characters concealed under the mask of Simon. Just as whatever Plato approves is put into the mouth of Socrates, so whatever the author of the Homilies condemns is put into the mouth of Simon Magus. But while thus seeking for hidden meanings, are we not in danger of missing what lies on the surface, namely, that the Simon Magus of the Clementine romance is a portrait of Simon of Gitta, after he had been confused with the Simon of Acts? The mention of Helen in the Clementines stamps them as later than the Great Declaration, in which, to all appearance, her story originates. Indeed, the Clementine romance may most fitly be regarded as an answer to the Great Declaration, the answer of Jewish Gnosticism to the more Hellenized Gnosticism of Samaria. Let us look at the Homilies in this light, and see how far

what they have to tell us about Simon accords with conclusions which we have already reached.

Simon, we are informed, was a Samaritan, and a native of Gitta, a village situated at a distance of 6 stadia (about 4 miles) from the city. The name of his father was Antonius, that of his mother Rachel. He studied Greek literature in Alexandria, and, having in addition to this great power in magic, was so puffed up by his attainments that he wished to be considered a highest power, higher even than the God who created the world. And sometimes he “darkly hinted” that he himself was Christ, calling himself the Standing One. Which name he used to indicate that he would stand for ever, and had no cause in him for bodily decay. He did not believe that the God who created the world was the highest, nor that the dead would rise. He denied Jerusalem, and introduced Mount Gerizim in its stead. In place of the real Christ of the Christians he proclaimed himself; and the Law he allegorized in accordance with his own preconceptions. He did indeed preach righteousness and judgment to come: but this was merely a bait for the unwary.

So far we have had nothing that is inconsistent with Simon of Gitta, and little but what we are already familiar with in connection either with him or his disciple Menander. But in what follows the identification of this Simon with the Simon of Acts has led the novelist to give play to his fancy. It may be well to premise that in the view of the writer of the Homilies, “All things are double one against another.” “As first night, then day, and

first ignorance, then knowledge, and first sickness, then healing, so the things of error come first in life, and then the truth supervenes upon them, as the physician upon the sickness." In this way every good thing has its evil forerunner.

According to the Homilies, the manner of his entering on his career of impiety was as follows. There was one John, a Hemerobaptist, who was the forerunner of our Lord Jesus in accordance with the law of parity; and as the Lord had twelve Apostles, bearing the number of the twelve solar months, so had he thirty leading men, making up the monthly tale of the moon. One of these thirty leading men was a woman called Helen. Now, as a woman is only half a man, in this way the number thirty was left incomplete, as it is in the moon's course. Of these thirty disciples of John the first and most renowned was Simon. But on the death of the master he was away in Egypt for the practice of magic, and one Dositheus, by spreading a false report of Simon's death, succeeded in installing himself as head of the sect. Simon on coming back thought it better to dissemble, and, pretending friendship for Dositheus, accepted the second place. Soon, however, he began to hint to the thirty that Dositheus was not as well acquainted as he might be with the doctrines of the school. Dositheus was so enraged at these suggestions, which were calculated to undermine his position as the Standing One, that he struck at Simon with his staff. But the staff went clean through the body of Simon as though it had been vapor. Whereat Dositheus was so amazed that he said to him, "Art thou the Standing One? And am I to worship thee?" When Simon said, "I

am,” Dositheus, knowing that he himself was not, fell down and worshipped him. Then he retired into the number of the twenty-nine leaders, and not long afterwards died.

The above is doubtless pure fiction. But Dositheus the Samaritan is a real person. He is mentioned by Hegesippus as the founder of a sect, and spoken of by the pseudo-Tertullian as a heretic from Judaism, not from Christianity, “who first dared to reject the prophets as not having spoken in the Holy Ghost.” After this we return to the comparatively solid ground of Simon of Gitta. For the narrative goes on to say that Simon took Helen about with him, saying that she had come down into the world from the highest heavens, and was mistress, inasmuch as she was the all-mother being and wisdom. It was for her sake, he said, that the Greeks and Barbarians fought, deluding themselves with an image of truth, for the real being was then present with the First God. By such specious allegories and Grecian fables Simon deceived many, while at the same time he astounded them by his magic. A description is given of how he made a familiar spirit for himself by conjuring the soul out of a boy and keeping his image in his bedroom, and many instances of his feats of magic are given.

The Samaritans were evidently strong in magic. In all the accounts given us of Simon of Gitta magic is a marked feature, as also in the case of his pupil Menander. We cannot, therefore, agree with Doctor Salmon’s remark that the only reason why Justin attributed magic to Simon of Gitta was because of his

identifying him with Simon Magus. Rather Simon Magus and his sorceries would have been forgotten had not his reputation been reinforced in the popular mind by that of his successor.

Whether Simon of Gitta ever exhibited his skill in Rome we have no means of determining, but at all events the compound Simon, resulting from the fusion of him with his predecessor, is brought to Rome by popular legend, and represented as enjoying great influence with Nero. One of his feats at Rome is to have himself beheaded and to rise again on the third day. It was really a ram that was beheaded, but he contrived by his magic to make people think that it was himself. The Clementines leave room for this development. In the Epistle of Clement to James prefixed to the Homilies Peter is spoken of as the light of the West, and as having met with a violent death in Rome; and in Homilies, Book 1, line 16, Peter invites Clement to share his travels and listen to the words of truth which he is about to preach from town to town, “even unto Rome itself.”

It would be superfluous to criticize the Tübingen view under a form in which it has already been abandoned. We may, therefore, confine our attention to the latest exposition of it by Schmiedel in the *Encyclopaedia Biblica*. In the narrative of Acts Schmiedel finds much to surprise him. He thinks, for instance, that verse 10 of chapter 8 must be interpolated, and that in the process “*irpoo-tixov*” was borrowed from verse 11. But there is no inconsistency between the two verses. Verse 10 merely states that the people gave heed to the magician, verse 11 adds why.

All the complicated speculations about a redactor which follow are swept away by the simple assumption that the text is sound.

With Schmiedel's contention that there are passages in the Clementines which are aimed at Paul, we entirely agree. But this interesting discovery so dazzled the eyes of Baur and his followers that after it they saw Paul everywhere. In the Clementines Simon by his magic imposes his own personal appearance upon Faustus, the father of Clement. This he does for his own ends, but Peter seeing his opportunity adroitly makes Faustus go to Antioch, and in the person of Simon make a public recantation of his aspersions on Peter, giving as a reason that he had been soundly scourged by angels during the preceding night. Now here, we are told, there is a malicious allusion to the "messenger of Satan to buffet me" of Second Corinthians 12:6. We do not think that this conjecture will commend itself to the unprejudiced, especially in view of the fact that scourging by angels is a well-known piece of supernatural machinery (see Second Maccabees 3:26). Yet Schmiedel speaks of this as "a well ascertained case in which an utterance of Paul regarding himself is spitefully twisted to his discredit." There is more plausibility in connecting Simon's assumed knowledge of things above the heavens (Recognitions, Book Two, line 65) with Saint Paul's claim to have been "caught up even to the third heaven" (Second Corinthians 12:2). But the passage is much more appropriate to Simon of Gitta. From the height in which he claimed to dwell even the third heaven would have seemed quite the lower regions. The question of meat

offered to idols was a burning one, in every sense of the term, long after Paul's day. We need not, therefore, see a reference to the Apostle's laxity on this crucial point in the story that Simon Magus had entertained the people of Antioch on a sacrificial ox, and so subjected them to the evil influence of demons. The non-necessity of martyrdom is mentioned as a feature of early Gnosticism.

The miracles which Saint Paul claims for himself in Second Corinthians 12:12, Romans 15:19, must doubtless have led to his being regarded as a magician by those who did not accept him as divinely commissioned; but, as we have seen throughout, magic was the salient feature about the Samaritan Messiah, who is the real enemy aimed at in the Clementine literature. The opening of doors of their own accord no more connects Simon Magus with Paul than with Peter. We need not, therefore, see in Recognitions, Book Two, line 9 a reference to Acts 16:26. As to the use of bad language, people in the second century were glad to avail themselves of such missiles as false apostles, which had been manufactured for them in the first century (Second Corinthians 11:13). That the *homo quidam inimicus* of the Recognitions (Book One, line 70) is intended for Paul is plain, but then, as Schmiedel points out in a note, he is not identified with Simon. "Even the style of Paul," Schmiedel assures us, "is plainly imitated in a mocking way." The reference is to the recantation, which is like the rest of the treatise and quite unlike Paul, but Schmiedel's familiarity with Paul's writings enables him to collect phrases therefrom which occur also in the Homilies.

When the Tübingen School turn their attention to the Apocryphal Acts and Martyrdoms, the image of Paul still obsesses their mental gaze. There is indeed one passage which may plausibly be adduced in favor of their contention. In the Martyrdom of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul (chapter 45), Paul is made to put this question: "If then circumcision is a good thing, why did you, Simon, deliver up circumcised men and compel them to be condemned and put to death?" We must let the Tübingen School have this passage for what it is worth, only remarking that it was not on the ground of circumcision that Paul persecuted the Church, and that it is impossible to extract history out of these fictions. We certainly cannot subscribe to the conjecture of Lipsius that "the story of the seeming beheading of Simon has at its root malicious misrepresentations of the beheading of Paul." The climax of absurdity seems to be reached when we are informed that the story of Simon offering money to the Apostles for the gift of the Holy Ghost arose out of Jewish-Christian scandal about Paul's "collection for the Saints" (First Corinthians 16:1). Yet Schmiedel follows Lipsius "in his latest treatment of the subject" in recognizing "a Samaritan charmer named Simon as historical." But the part which he played in history is thus taken away from him. He was there, it seems, but he did not do what he is said to have done. Only the author of Acts, wishing to obviate the reproach against Paul of offering money to the Apostles, attributed the like conduct to Simon.

In conclusion, there are of course some grounds for the Tübingen view, but they are wholly inadequate to bear the structure that has been raised upon them. Saint Paul was a hard hitter, and Jewish Christians, who still clung to James and Peter as the only true pillars of the Church, are not likely to have cherished any love for his memory. This is enough to account for the hostility displayed against Saint Paul in the Clementine Literature. But to push the conflation of Saint Paul with Simon Magus further than we are forced to is to lose sight of the real character of the Clementines as the counterblast of Torah traditions to Samaritan Gnosticism, and to obscure the fame of Simon of Gitta, who was really the father of some heresy, and who may be misattributed as the Simon the Magician of the Book of Acts.