

## Hastings' Dictionary of the New Testament Simon Magus

**1. The NT account.**-Acts 8:9-24 gives the story of 'a certain man, Simon by name,' who 'used sorcery, and amazed the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one (λέγων εἶναί τινα ἑαυτὸν μέγαν): to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is that power of God which is called Great (ἡ δύναμις τοῦ θεοῦ ἡ καλουμένη μεγάλη)... But when they believed Philip preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. And Simon also himself believed: and being baptized, he continued with Philip; and beholding signs and great miracles wrought, he was amazed.'

The news of the movement in Samaria brought Peter and John from Jerusalem, and through their prayers and the laying on of their hands, the believers received the Holy Spirit. Seeing this, Simon offered the apostles money, saying, 'Give me also this power, that on whomscever I lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy silver perish with thee, because thou hast thought to obtain the gift of God with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right before God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray the Lord if perhaps the thought of thy heart shall be forgiven thee. For I see that thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. And Simon answered and said, Pray ye for me to the Lord, that none of the things which ye have spoken come upon me.'

These verses tell all that is known definitely about this particular Simon. But in subsequent Christian literature the name became very prominent. A Simon Magus was described as an arch-heretic who was the antagonist of Simon Peter. Accounts of his teaching are given in heresiological works. An elaborate legend became current about his conflict with the Apostle. In modern times fresh importance has attached to this legend because the Tübingen school have tried to show that the oldest accounts are those in which Simon Magus is represented as a caricature of the apostle Paul, and the opponent of the apostle Peter. This has been used as a basis for their reconstruction of early Church history from the point of view that Peter and Paul were in conflict, and that the Acts of the Apostles was a conciliatory compromise. The question of the identity of this legendary Simon Magus-the disguised Paul-with the Simon of Acts 8 can be discussed best after some inquiry into the legend and into the references to Simon in Patristic literature.

**2. The Simonian legend.**-There are two chief sources of this legend. (a) The Clementine Homilies and Recognitions. These are two forms of an early Christian romance, the Homilies in Greek, the Recognitions in Latin. They relate the story of Clement's search for truth until his reunion with the long-lost members of his family. According to the Homilies, in the course of his wanderings Clement met Peter at Caesarea in Palestine. The Apostle was to dispute next day with Simon of Gitta. The story of Simon is then related by two of his pupils: that his father's name was Antonius, his mother's Rachel; that he was a Samaritan of the village of Gitta, six miles from Samaria; that he was educated at Alexandria, and was skilled in the wisdom of the Greeks and in magic. Peter disputed with him for three days, after which Simon fled by night to Tyre. Peter followed him to Tyre and to Sidon and to Tripolis, whence Simon escaped to Syria. They met again in Laodicea, where the disputes were renewed. Simon managed to escape by changing the face of Faustus, Clement's father, and making it like his own. This device, however, led to Faustus exposing Simon's impostures. Meanwhile Simon reached Judaea.

In the Recognitions only one dispute is described-in Caesarea. But there is reference to a visit of Simon to Rome, where he is to be honoured with statues. It is probable that these versions are independent recastings of a common original. The question in doubt is whether the original story told only of a conflict between Simon and Peter in Syria, or whether it related an earlier conflict in Syria and a later one in Rome.

(b) The legendary Acts of Peter and Paul. These tell the story of contests between Simon and Peter; but they place the scene in Rome. There are two forms of the story. (a) The Gnostic Acts (*Actus Petri cum Simone*) tell that after Paul left Rome, a stir arose in the city about a Simon who worked miracles and called himself the Great Power of God. He came to the city flying in smoke, and created a great sensation. Therefore Peter was bidden by Christ to go to Rome. The Apostle found Simon installed in the house of a Roman senator, and he attacked the Magian as a ravaging wolf. When Simon refused him admittance, Peter sent a message by a dog, whose speech brought the traitor to the Apostle's feet. By the aid of further miracles Peter silenced Simon till a public controversy was arranged before all Rome. Peter raised the dead, and exposed Simon's attempts to work similar miracles. Simon then promised to fly to God. But in answer to Peter's prayers he fell, broke his thigh, and was taken to Terracina, where he died.

(β) The *Acta Petri et Pauli* gives another form of the story. Paul is the companion of Peter in Rome. The success of their preaching made the Jews stir up Simon against Peter. He convinced Nero of his claims, and Peter and Paul were summoned to appear before the Emperor. After long discussion, Simon undertook to fly from a high tower. Paul was distressed, and prayed. But Peter adjured the angels of Satan not to help Simon, who fell to the ground and died.

The Apostolic Constitutions contains the whole story of a conflict in Syria and a conflict in Rome. Probably this is a piecing together of two stories, originally independent. It does not settle the question whether the Clementines and the Petrine Acts depend upon independent documents, as G. Salmon thinks (DCB [Note: CB Dict. of Christian Biography.], article 'Simon Magus'), or whether they severally elaborate two parts of one common history-an Ebionite Acts of Peter-which is Lipsius' theory.

The substance of the story as it concerns Simon is that he travelled in Syria and as far as Rome, deceiving people by his magic and winning widespread adherence for his claims to Divine power; that he was opposed by Simon Peter, who exposed his deceit and brought to naught his efforts to impose on the people.

**3. The Simonian system.**-In addition to these legendary accounts of the contest between Simon Magus and Simon Peter, there are references to Simon in Patristic literature which give more trustworthy accounts of his life and teaching, (a) The earliest reference is in Justin Martyr's Apology (i. 26, 56). He says: 'After Christ's ascension into heaven the devils put forward certain men who said that they themselves were gods; and they were not only not persecuted by you, but even deemed worthy of honours. There was a Samaritan, Simon, a native of the village called Gitta, who in the reign of Claudius Caesar, and in your royal city of Rome, did mighty acts of magic, by virtue of the art of the devils operating in him. He was considered a god, and as a god was honoured by you with a statue, which statue was erected on the river Tiber, between the two bridges, and bore this inscription, in the language of Rome: "Simoni Deo Sancto," "To Simon the holy God."

And almost all the Samaritans, and a few even of other nations, worship him, and acknowledge him as the first god; and a woman, Helena, who went about with him at that time, and had formerly been a prostitute, they say is the first idea generated by him. And a man, Menander, also a Samaritan, of the town Capparetaea, a disciple of Simon, and inspired by devils, we know to have deceived many while he was in Antioch by his magical art' (26). In 56 is another reference: 'But the evil spirits were not satisfied with saying, before Christ's appearance, that those who were said to be sons or Jupiter were born of him; but after He had appeared and been born among men, and when they learned how He had been foretold by the prophets, and knew that He should be believed on and looked for by every nation, they again, as was said before, put forward other men, the Samaritans Simon and Menander, who did many mighty works by magic, and deceived many, and still keep them deceived. For even among yourselves, as we said before, Simon was in the royal city Rome in the reign of Claudius Caesar, and so greatly astonished the sacred senate and people of the Romans, that he was considered a god, and honoured, like the others whom you honour as gods, with a statue.' (b) Later Patristic literature seems to gather its accounts of Simon's teaching from some common ground-probably a lost treatise by Justin.

Simon is said to have taught that he was the highest power-the Supreme God Himself, who descended to the lower world because its rulers ruled it all. He passed through its regions, appearing in every form necessary for the restoration of the lost harmony. Among Jews he manifested himself as the Son, in Samaria as the Father, and among other nations as the Holy Spirit. Helena (whom he had purchased in a brothel in Tyre) was his πρώτη έννοια, mother of all, by whom he had called the angels and archangels into being. She had been laid under bonds by her own children, but after many transmigrations had been rescued at last by the Supreme God-Simon-who came down to deliver her and to bring salvation to all men through the knowledge of himself. He liberated the world and those who were his from the rule of those who had made the world. Those who had hope in him and in Helena might freely do as they would, for men were saved according to his grace and not according to good works.

Such a system is obviously an amalgam of paganism and Christianity. It contains a good deal that is common to almost all the forms of Gnostic myths, and it borrows some of its ideas and not a little of its phraseology from Christianity.

**4. The historical value of the story.**-(a) One explanation of this tradition is that it is the legendary development of the story in Acts 8, under the influence of a continued conflict between Christianity and the Simonian Gnosis. The Tübingen school, however, explained it in a different way. According to Baur and his followers, the Ebionite Clementine literature contains a caricature of the apostle Paul. Instead of the Simon of the tradition being treated as a historical character, the name is to be interpreted as a term of reproach for Paul. Whenever Simon Magus is mentioned in ancient documents, Paul is meant.

The contest between Simon Magus and Simon Peter really represents the conflict between Paul and Peter. So the Simon of Acts 8 was no real character but only a presentation of Paul. Thus, Peter's refusal to give Simon Magus the power of the Holy Spirit is a covert account of the refusal of the elder Apostle to admit Paul's claims to rank with them, backed though the claim was by a gift of money for the poor saints in Jerusalem. Starting from this standpoint, Baur's school reconstructed the story of early Christianity with the conflict between Paul and Peter as the key.

The Acts of the Apostles was interpreted as a compromise, a book written in a conciliatory interest but resting upon Jewish Christian myths only partly understood. The journeys of Peter and his visit to Rome are merely an ecclesiastical tradition reflecting the journeys of Paul, and expressing the belief of the Church that the great Apostle, who had withstood the Simon-Paul everywhere else, must have followed up his victory in the capital.

This theory, ingeniously applied to Patristic and Clementine literature, and worked out with much skill, won many adherents for a time, despite the fact that it proved the presence of biased and fabricated history within primitive Christianity. But a reaction soon set in. In *Encyclopaedia Britannica* <sup>9</sup> (xxii. 79) A. Harnack wrote, 'On no other point are the proofs of the Tübingen school weaker than in this.' In *Encyclopaedia Britannica* <sup>11</sup> (xxv. 126) St. George Stock's conclusion is, 'The idea that Simon Magus is merely a distortion of St. Paul is absurd.'

It is not denied that the Clementine literature is marked by hostility to St. Paul. 'The Clementine writings were produced in Rome, early in the third century, by members of the Elkesaite sect.... One of the characteristics of these heretics was hostility to Paul, whom they refused to recognize as an apostle' (G. Salmon in *Smith-Wace, DCB* [Note: *CB Dict. of Christian Biography.*], London, 1877-87, iv. 687). But, though P. W. Schmiedel (in *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, article 'Simon Magus') defends a modified position of the Tübingen school, most modern scholars would probably accept St. George Stock's summing up in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* <sup>11</sup>: '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. St. 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 St. Paul in the Clementines. But to push the equation of St. Paul with Simon Magus further than we are forced to by the facts of the case is to lose sight of the real character of the Clementines as the counterblast of Jewish to Samaritan Gnosticism and to obscure the greatness of Simon of Gitta, who was really the father of all heresy.' As F. H. Chase puts it in discussing Lipsius' theory that the Simonian legend originated the story of Peter's visit to Rome: 'Lipsius' theory is really an off-shoot of the Tübingen theory of the apostolic age. The main trunk is now seen to be lifeless. The branch cannot but share its decay' (*Hasting's Dictionary of the Bible* (5 vols) iii. 777b). [Note: *Exp*, 8th ser., v. [1913] 348 n.]

(b) If the Tübingen theory be recognized as 'lifeless,' there are three questions of importance bearing on the historical value of the Simonian legend.

(1) Is the Simon of the legends a historical person? Salmon's answer may be accepted at once: 'It cannot reasonably be doubted that Simon of Gitta is a historical personage. The heretical sect which claimed him for its founder was regarded by Justin Martyr as most formidable.... He speaks of it as predominant in Samaria, and not unknown elsewhere; that is to say, probably, he had met members of the sect at Rome. The existence of the sect is testified by Hegesippus and Clement of Alexandria' (op. cit., p. 687 f.). There is nothing to throw doubt upon the definite statements of Justin Martyr about the Simon who is mentioned alongside of Menander and Marcion as the founder of a sect and the object of veneration.

There is less certainty about the details of his life. With regard to his birthplace-Gitta-Justin was a Samaritan and a good witness; and the statements of Hegesippus about his father and his mother, and his being trained at Alexandria, are quite possibly good tradition. Also the general ascription to him of magical powers probably reflects a claim he made. The persistent story of his journeys, coupled with the existence of Simonians outside Palestine, favours the view that he travelled, though considerable haziness hangs over the whole subject of his alleged visit to Rome.

(2) Is the Simon of Acts 8 a historical person? This question also may be answered unhesitatingly in the affirmative. 'The Simon of the Acts is also a real person' (Salmon, op. cit., p. 688). With the break-down of the Tübingen theory, and the re habilitation of Luke as a historian, all reasons for doubting the essential accuracy of the narrative in Acts have disappeared. That narrative relates to times of which Luke had no firsthand knowledge; therefore it may be coloured by later feeling. But Luke related it because it occurred, and because he had reasons for relating it. What those reasons were, and whether we know very much about Simon, can be discussed best when another question has been answered:

(3) Is Simon of Gitta the same as the Simon of Acts 8? This identity was generally assumed until Salmon questioned it in the article referred to above. He believes that Justin Martyr confused Simon of Gitta with Simon of Acts, and that the confusion has dominated all subsequent references to them. His chief argument is that the Simonian doctrine, being a variant of 2nd cent. Gnosticism, could not have been propounded by a Simon who lived in Samaria c. [Note: . circa, about.] a.d. 40. In support of his theory he adds: 'If Simon had been really the inventor of the Gnostic myths, it is not credible that they should pass into so many systems which did not care to retain any memory of his name. On the other hand, if this mythology had been in Simon's time already current, it is intelligible that he might make use of it in order to justify to his disciples his relations with a fallen woman.' Salmon thinks that 'the Simon described by Justin was not, as he supposed, the father of Gnosticism, but had found at the time of his teaching a Gnostic system already developed.

It follows, then, that Justin's Simon could not be identical with the contemporary of the Apostles; and the name Simon is so common a one, that the supposition of two Simons presents no difficulty.' His conclusion is that 'the Simon described by Justin was his elder only by a generation; that he was a Gnostic teacher who had gained some followers at Samaria; and that Justin rashly identified him with the magician told of in the Acts of the Apostles' (ib., p. 683). This conclusion is supported generally by St. George Stock in Encyclopaedia Britannica <sup>11</sup> (xxv. 126), who says that 'Dr. George Salmon brought light into darkness by distinguishing between Simon of Gitta and the original Simon Magus.' His conclusions are: '(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'; and he adds: '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?' (ib., p. 127). 'Justin Martyr was decidedly weak in history, and 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 ... for the composition of Justin Martyr's First Apology' (circa, about a.d. 152) (ib., p. 126). F. H. Chase also accepts this theory, saying, in reference to the Simonian legend, 'the most probable account of its genesis is that it grew out of a mistaken identity' (Hasting's Dictionary of the Bible (5 vols) iii. 778).

(c) Before this modification of the view held so long as to the identification of the two Simons can be accepted, regard must be had to the following points.

(1) Are the references of Justin Martyr historically explicable on the theory that Simon of Gitta was a 2nd cent. Gnostic? Even if Justin was decidedly 'weak in history' (Stock), he must have acted 'rashly,' as Salmon allows (loc. cit.), if he identified two men who lived nearly a century apart, in a public Apology in defence of Christianity. His reference to a statue to Simon in Rome is generally regarded as a mistake, because in 1574 the base of a statue was dug up in the island in the Tiber to which he refers, with the inscription 'Semoni Sanco Deo Fidio.'

It is supposed, therefore, that Justin mistook a statue dedicated to a Sabine deity for one erected to Simon. There is considerable force, however, in the plea of the editors of the 'Ante-Nicene Christian Library' that this is 'very slight evidence on which to reject so precise a statement as Justin here makes; a statement which he would scarcely have hazarded in an apology addressed to Rome, where every person had the means of ascertaining its accuracy. If, as is supposed, he made a mistake, it must have been at once exposed, and other writers would not have so frequently repeated the story as they have done' (Ante-Nicene Christian Library, ii. [1892] 29 n. [Note: .note.] ).

It has also to be considered whether Justin could repeat (chs. 26 and 56) such a flagrant error as bringing Simon to Rome in the reign of Claudius and ascribing public honours to him, if the man Simon was not a generation older than himself, as Salmon's theory suggests. Would such a tradition have grown up in the Roman community about a man who was almost their contemporary? And, if there was no tradition, was Justin likely to have made such a statement, even adding the plea, 'As for the statue, if you please destroy it' (56)? At any rate, would the story have been left unrefuted so that it could be accepted and repeated by later writers? If Simon of Gitta was a 2nd cent. Gnostic teacher, either he had not been in Rome, in which case it is difficult to understand why Justin's fallacious reference was not exposed, or he had been in Rome so recently as to make it difficult to understand why Justin pushed back the event for nearly a century.

(2) Further, it has to be noted that there is a real parallelism between the Simonian system and the slight account in Acts of the teaching of Simon Magus. The magical element is prominent in both. Simon in Samaria 'used sorcery, and amazed the people,' a trait very characteristic of the legendary Simon. Acts (Acts 8:10-11) says Simon gave out 'that himself was some great one: to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is that power of God which is called Great (ἡ δύναμις τοῦ θεοῦ ἢ καλουμένη μεγάλη).' And Simon is said to have been specially struck with the 'signs and great miracles' wrought by Philip (Acts 8:13). Now, in the Simonian system, Simon is said to have taught that he was the highest God, τὴν ὑπὲρ πάντα δύναμιν. He called himself ὁ ἑστῶς, ὁ στάς, ὁ στησόμενος, implying his pre-existence and his immortality.

It would seem, therefore, that if the two Simons are different, the 3rd cent. Simon taught doctrines whose elements were taught by the earlier Simon; also that both were distinguished for sorcery and for magical powers.

The amalgam of paganism and Christianity which was characteristic of Gnosticism, and which was specially obvious in the Simonian system, is readily explicable in the teaching of Simon Magus, who, according to the story in Acts, was brought into intimate contact with Christian teaching without becoming a genuine believer.

(3) Is it not possible to find a mediating theory? First of all, we must think of the Simon of Acts as a convert whose conversion was sincere as far as it went, but was very superficial. He is not represented as resenting Peter's rebuke. It abashed him, and made him penitent to the extent of asking humbly for the Apostle's prayers. There is no contest between Simon and Peter in Acts. But is it not likely that, when Simon was brought face to face with the deeper meanings of Christianity, he failed to respond? Instead of advancing in Christian knowledge, he seceded from a community with which his connexion had been anomalous.

This view is put forward also by W. M. Ramsay in *Expositor*, 8th ser., v. 348. Discussing the term 'believe,' he writes, 'The example of Simon Magus seems conclusive. Simon believed (Acts 8:13), and was baptized. Yet it is hard to suppose that he became in the final sense a Christian, although for the time he was a member of the Church. The language of Luke, on the whole, suggests the opposite. Simon, it is true, after baptism, "continued with Philip; and beholding signs and great wonders wrought, he was amazed" (ἐξίστατο). Yet no word is said to mitigate the final condemnation pronounced on him by Peter: "thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter; for thy heart is not right." He is described, not as repenting, but only as asking in fear of the future that Peter should pray for him.

It seems beyond question that Luke knew the reputation which Simon acquired, and that he regarded the subsequent history of Simon as the natural result of what occurred at the beginning of his connexion with the Christians.'

But it need not be supposed that when Simon broke with the Christians he renounced all he had learned. It is more probable that he carried some of the Christian ideas with him and that he wove these into a system of his own. This system did contain some of the germs of later Gnosticism. Thus he became the leader of a retrograde sect, perhaps nominally Christian and certainly using some of the Christian terminology, but in reality anti-Christian and exalting Simon himself to the central position which Christianity was giving to Jesus Christ. The separation between Simon and the Christians would probably be widened by the departure of Philip soon after the apostles left Samaria. Philip had been the agent of the Christian movement, and it is not unlikely that on his withdrawal many Samaritans might easily fall again under the spell of Simon, especially if he were offering himself as a Christian leader.

Now if Simon was a pervert who originated an apostate sect-an anti-Christian sect, though a sect claiming Christian connexion-is it not comprehensible that two results happened? (a) Simon became the arch-heretic in the eyes of the Christians, and tradition was sure to be busy with his name. (b) The sect he founded became absorbed in later Gnosticism, but also contributed something to it.

Gnosticism did not enter the 2nd cent, fully grown. A. C. Headlam (article 'Gnosticism' in Hasting's Dictionary of the Bible (5 vols) ii. 188) remarks that 'the developed Gnostic heresies of the 2nd cent, presuppose the NT,' and that 'the embryo Gnosticism of the NT takes its proper place in the history of religious development.' [Note: Vernon Bartlet, in Exp, 8th ser., v. 32, 33.]

May not Simon have been one of the forerunners of Gnosticism; not, perhaps, its father, as tradition has supposed, but one source of some of its ramifications? A. C. McGiffert refers to this: 'His effort to rival and surpass Jesus very likely began after his contact with the Christians which Luke records. His religious system was apparently a syncretism of Jewish and Oriental elements, and resembled very closely some forms of second century Gnosticism, if it did not indeed give rise to them' (A History of Christianity in the Apostolic Age, pp. 99-100). Without ascribing to Simon such prominence as is demanded by tradition, it is permissible to believe that he gave his name to a sect which became Gnostic but which retained a historical connexion with him, though its doctrines were modified largely in process of time.

In such circumstances we may find a historical basis for much of the Simonian tradition, whilst recognizing that tradition had been busy embellishing the story of Simon even long before the time of Justin Martyr. It may be assumed that he was born in the Samaritan village of Gitta; that he was a man of unusual attainments; that he received some training in Alexandrian philosophy; that he startled Samaria with his powers; that he was, for a time, nominally a Christian, but that he broke away from the Christian Church; that his knowledge of Christian truth was very shallow, and that he carried some Christian ideas over with him, but in confusion; and that his subsequent teaching was an amalgam of this crude Christian precipitate with Alexandrian speculation and with magic.

It is probable that he travelled, preaching his new doctrines, practising his magical arts, and winning for himself and for his teaching something of the devotion with which he was regarded in Samaria. Whether he ever exhibited his skill in Rome, we have no means of determining; but at all events he was brought to Rome by popular legend and was represented as winning an extraordinary success in the imperial city. His disciples became a sect which bore his name and which persisted long after the death of the original members. Simon's teaching contained some of the germs of 2nd cent.

Gnosticism, which it may have done something to evolve and with which the Simonian sect became impregnated, though it still retained many of its early magico-Christian elements. Beyond this it seems impossible to go. What was actually taught by Simon cannot now be distinguished from what was taught by his followers. The story of Helena may be a Simonian doctrine rather than a fact. It cannot be said whether Simon Magus and Simon Peter ever met again after their encounter in Samaria; the record of their conflict is probably the romance which tradition has woven round the name of one who was known to have been a Christian once but was rebuked by Peter for his ignorance of Christian truth and who became subsequently an apostate.

(4) Coming back to the story in Acts 8, there seems no reason for doubting its essential accuracy (see 4 (b) (2)).

(i.) Luke's account looks like history. There is no embellishment from the point of view of the Christian romancer. The story does not dilate upon the remarkable conversion, and it leaves Simon directly the purpose of the reference to him is fulfilled. The plain record is not embroidered; moreover, there is an almost tantalizing brevity, as in several of Luke's stories, which belong to the history of the Christian Church and were not written to satisfy curiosity.

(ii.) This does not deny that the story may be coloured somewhat by being seen through the haze of a considerable interval. Luke was writing about events of which he knew nothing at first hand. Perhaps he had met the Simonian sect outside Palestine, and there may have been already some magnifying of Simon's success in Samaria or some depreciation of his motives in Christian circles. At the same time, this 'impressionist' account of the incident would not justify such a criticism, e.g., as that of McGiffert: 'Luke's account of Simon's dealings with the apostles can hardly be accurate in all the details, for it rests upon the assumption that the Holy Spirit was given by the laying on of the apostles' hands' (op. cit., p. 100 n. [Note: . note.]). All that the account suggests is that in this case the gift of the Holy Spirit was connected with the laying on of hands—a suggestion quite in harmony with the general tenor of Acts.

(iii.) Why did Luke insert the story? Salmon's laconic comment is, 'we need not ascribe to Luke any more recondite motive for relating the incident, than that he believed that it had occurred' (op. cit., p. 688). This answers the charge that the incident is unhistorical. But it fails to take into account the modern estimate of Luke's methods as a historian. Two motives may be suggested.

(a) Is not a sufficient reason Luke's well-known plan of describing the first meeting between Christianity and rival systems? In Acts 13:6-12 there is a careful account of the meeting between Paul the Christian and Elymas the sorcerer; Acts 16:16-19 tells of the maid having the spirit of divination whom St. Paul delivered; Acts 17:16-31 relates Paul's first argument with the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers in Athens; Acts 19:13-20 describes Paul's success in conflict with the pagan dabblers in the black article

Does not Acts 8:9-24 tell the story of the earliest meeting between Christianity and a rival system? Simon Magus represented the magic of that time. When the gospel was brought to Samaria, thus making its first essay on non-Jewish soil, it was discovered to be mightier than the magic which exercised such a powerful influence over the contemporary world. It was a notable triumph for the young Christian faith that, on the first trial of strength with the world's magic, the gospel not only lured the multitudes from the magician but even won the admiration of the magician himself, and at least his temporary adherence.

(b) If we may accept the existence in Luke's time of a Simonian sect owing anything to this Simon Magus, would not another motive urge Luke to tell the story? Evidently the Simonian heresy always had a Christian tinge. This made it more dangerous to Christians than a gnosis which did not affect any Christian influence. Luke therefore would be anxious to disclose the true circumstances that accounted for the origin of the sect—circumstances highly discreditable to Simon. If the story in Acts tells exactly what happened, it was natural for the Church historian to relate it in order to guard Christians against Simonian errors, and to warn members of the sect against the mistake they were making in following such a leader as Simon instead of accepting the orthodox Christian faith.

It only remains to add that the influence of Simon Magus lingers in two directions. (1) The practice of presenting any person to an ecclesiastical benefice for money, gift, or reward is an offence against the law of the Church, known as 'simony.' An example of the offence occurs as early as the 3rd century. It was prohibited by many Councils, but it became well rooted in the mediaeval Church. Dante refers to it (*Inferno*, xix. 1).

(2) 'Doctor Faustus' of popular literature preserves several traits of the ancient magian. The story is reminiscent of the Simonian legend in several points. In Simon Magus himself there may be a suggestion of Mephistopheles.

Literature.-The three most complete articles on Simon Magus in English are in Hasting's Dictionary of the Bible (5 vols) (A. C. Headlam), in DCB <sup>[Note: CB Dict. of Christian Biography.]</sup> (G. Salmon), in Encyclopaedia Britannica <sup>11</sup> (St. George Stock). A. Harnack's art <sup>[Note: rt article.]</sup> in Encyclopaedia Britannica <sup>9</sup> should also be consulted. See also F. H. Chase, article 'Peter (Simon)' in Hasting's Dictionary of the Bible (5 vols) , esp. pp. 773-775 for account of Gnostic Acts of the Clementine literature, and pp. 777-779 for discussion of Peter's visit to Rome and the Simonian legend. P. W. Schmiedel, article 'Simon Magus' in Encyclopaedia Biblica , gives the modern modified form of the Tübingen theory. There is a brief summing up of several of the questions involved in note on Acts 8:9 by R. J. Knowling in Expositor's Greek Testament , 'Acts,' London, 1900. J. B. Lightfoot discusses the Ebionite and anti-Pauline spirit of the Clementine literature in his essay on 'St. Paul and the Three' appended to St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians<sup>9</sup>, London, 1887, pp. 324-330; see also p. 61; W. M. Ramsay, Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the NT, London, 1915.