

Paul's Letters

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Paul's Letters

By

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etc., etc.



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INTRODUCTION

If any one is looking for a critical exposition of Paul's Epistles he will not find it here. The Author's desire has been to show forth the main purpose of the Apostle in writing these wonderful letters, so far forth as would be likely to whet the appetite for a deeper study of them. God speed the little book to that end!

PREFACE

“LETTERS WEIGHTY AND POWERFUL.”

2 COR. 10:9

The conversion of Paul, his divine call to the apostolate and his separation to the special task of reducing the teachings of Christ to systematic form are one of the supreme evidences of God's providential care of his people. The preaching of Christ, for obvious reasons, was in popular terms; for the uses of succeeding ages (as theologians would say, for didactics and apologetics) it must be welded into logical unity. For this task who would be so well qualified as Saul of Tarsus, a graduate of the University of Jerusalem, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, versed in Rabbinical lore and in Greek philosophy, the most skillful dialectician of his time? God wanted him; and, when God wants a man, the man is forthcoming. God called him on the way down to Damascus, and the answer was immediate, “What wilt thou have me to do?” God showed him his task; and his Epistles are the result. The feeble voice of Paul was silenced centuries ago; but the letters

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that he wrote with his tremulous old hand, surviving the tooth of time and razure of oblivion, abide as fingerposts of the centuries pointing to Christ as the Way, the Truth and the Life.

It will be observed that the Epistles are not treated in the chronological order of their composition but as they occur in the Canon. The reasons for this are obvious and seem to overbalance whatever may be said against it.

It will also be observed that no attempt is made to treat the Epistles exegetically, but only to present such a broad outline as may incline the reader to go more deeply into them.

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“His letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak and his speech contemptible.” 2 Cor. 10:10.

Paul's Letters

I

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

THE GOSPEL IN A NUTSHELL

This Epistle was written from Corinth, A. D. 58; that is, more than a score of years after Paul's conversion. What had he been doing in the meantime? Not writing letters certainly; he had been too busily engaged in carrying on his evangelistic campaigns. He had now reached Corinth on his third missionary journey, and he had no doubt begun to feel the flagging of his physical strength. It may have been the consequent need of rest that gave him larger freedom with his pen. He had previously written only two inspired letters (First and Second Thessalonians); but from now on we shall find him, under the guidance of the Spirit, corresponding not infrequently with the churches and personal friends.

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The early history of the Roman Church is lost in obscurity. Possibly it was founded by those "strangers of Rome" who were present in Jerusalem at the Pentecostal effusion of the Spirit (Acts 2:10), who would naturally keep up their new-found religion on returning to their homes. In the reign of Claudius (A. D. 41-54) this church was so much in evidence that many of its members were expelled from the city for their loyalty to Christ. Among these were the two tentmakers, Aquila and Priscilla, who were settled in Corinth when this letter was written. It was from them, doubtless, that Paul had received much of his information concerning this persecuted flock.

It was now four years since he had set out on his third missionary journey, in which he had two objects in view. For one thing, he was acting as a sort of Field Secretary for the relief of the famine-stricken members of the mother church in Jerusalem. It must be remembered that Paul, the Jew, never lost his vital interest in the welfare of his countrymen; as the divinely commissioned Apostle to the Gentiles, he was still profoundly concerned for them. By making this appeal to the Gentiles

for the relief of suffering Jews, he hoped to unite both factions of the church. Love like this is the "one touch of nature" that "makes the whole world kin."

But this "drive" for famine relief was wholly subordinate to his prime purpose, namely, the preaching of the Gospel. For this he had been "sent" and "separated"; so that, whatever of so-called social service he might render on side lines, he could by no means nor in any measure be diverted for a moment from his commission "to seek and save the lost" by bringing them to a saving knowledge of the grace of God.

In this Epistle we have a comprehensive view of the whole doctrinal system of our religion. And here we happen upon a noteworthy fact, to wit, that Christianity is the only one of the so-called great religions of the world that is capable of being reduced to a system. No such thing as real unity is claimed for Islamism or Buddhism or Confucianism, their inconsistencies being freely admitted and excused in many ways. But the essential truths of Scripture hang together like the links of an endless chain, so that if one link be broken the whole falls asunder.

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INTRODUCTION; GOING TO ROME

CHAPTER 1: 1-17

The Epistle begins (as it ends) with Paul's familiar countersign, "Grace to you, and peace," and then sets forth the Apostle's desire and purpose to visit Rome. For years he had been directing his course that way. Twice he had set out with his face toward the Imperial City and been baffled; now, for the third time, he cherished the hope of reaching it.

This was for two reasons. One was that Rome was the center of the civilized world. If he could preach the Gospel from that coign of vantage it would sound forth to the uttermost parts of the earth. No man was ever more ambitious than Paul to extend his influence as far as possible; for he realized, as every Christian should, that in making the most of himself as an Ambassador of Christ he would be rendering the best possible service to his divine Lord.

The other reason was because the church in Rome had a very special interest for him. It was made up of Jews and Gentiles, and on that account appealed to him both as a loyal Jew

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and as the Apostle to the Gentiles. It was the very place to demonstrate the unifying power of Christian love.

But Rome was out of the question as yet. In the fulness of time he was to arrive there, but in a most unexpected way. He was destined to be led along the Appian Way in chains, to wear out the remainder of his life as a prisoner in Rome, and die at length beneath the shadow of its walls.

In the meantime, however, he was held at Corinth by a multiplicity of duties and must make the best of it. He determined therefore to write a letter to the Christians at Rome. It so happened that Phœbe, a deaconess of Cenchrea, the nearby seaport of Corinth, was about to visit Rome on a matter of personal business, and, in the absence of other postal facilities, the conveyance of the letter was entrusted to her.

THE KEYNOTE: JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

At the outset the writer avows himself to be a servant of Jesus Christ, "called to be an apostle and separated unto the Gospel of God"; and he closes this avowal with the ring-

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ing words, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, *The just shall live by faith.*"

In 1517 Luther, then a monk in the Convent at Erfurt, went to Rome in the hope of dispelling certain doubts which greatly troubled him. As he was climbing the Sancta Scala in Rome, telling his beads and murmuring Pater Nosters by way of penance, he seemed to hear a Voice saying, "The just shall live by faith!" He sprang to his feet a new man in Christ Jesus. Thenceforth he gave up merit-making and devoted himself to the preaching of this supreme truth. It was with these words, "The just shall live by faith," ringing through his brain and conscience that he presently nailed his ninety-five theses to the chapel door at Wittenberg and sent the thunders of the Reformation rolling around the world. He called this doctrine of justification by faith *articulum ecclesie stantis aut cadentis*; that is, "the postulate of a

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standing or falling church"; and so it has proved to be.

THE SINFULNESS OF SIN

CHAPTERS 1: 18-31; 2

In the remainder of the first two chapters Paul sets forth strongly the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

There are passages here that are not to be read publicly, but only in those trysting-places where a man is alone with God. It is a mistake to think that the whole Bible was intended to be read aloud, either in the sanctuary or at the family altar. One of the favorite criticisms of Robert Ingersoll against the Bible was that it contains many portions which his audience would blush to hear. This is quite true, and incidentally it reveals on the part of Ingersoll and like-minded people a dense ignorance of the whole plan and purpose of Revelation. The Bible was intended to touch human life at every single point in its circumference. In making its spiritual diagnosis it is not content with looking at the patient's tongue and counting his pulse, but goes down into the secret imaginations of his inmost heart and lays a merciless

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hand on certain sins which no man ever confesses to his fellow-men.

Paul, in this exposé of sin, mentions some of its worst developments. And he significantly adds that, at this point, there is "no difference": no difference between Jews and Gentiles; no difference between so-called moral and immoral men: for all are "concluded under sin." The word concluded means literally "shut up together," the picture being of all mankind in one prison and under the same sentence of spiritual death, which is eternal alienation from a holy God.

THE ADVANTAGE OF THE JEW

CHAPTERS 3-5

Paul then addresses his argument more particularly to his own countrymen. The fact that they were "children of Abraham," he says, would not save them; for salvation is never by inheritance. No more would the fact that they were scrupulously observant of the ceremonial law; "for by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified."

Well, then, "what advantage hath the Jew? Much every way: chiefly because that unto

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them were committed the oracles of God." By this it appears that the Jews were "chosen" to the special privilege and corresponding responsibility of preserving the Scriptures—in which were enshrined the prophecies of the coming Christ—and handing them down inviolate to succeeding ages. Their advantage was not in any hypothetical salvation on account of that privilege, but in the superior light of the Messianic hope. If justified at all they must be justified by faith in the Messiah; even as Abraham, seeing Christ afar off, "was justified by faith and not by works." This was the proverbial "Hope of Israel"; the hope that persisted along the red trail of prophecy down to Calvary, where it was quenched in the blood of him for whom they had so long been looking!

SIN VS. GRACE

CHAPTERS 6, 7

Then follows Paul's vindication of the doctrine of free grace as against the objection of the Antinomians, who said, "If we are justified without reference to our good works, why

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should we not go on to sin?" The mere suggestion is fraught with horror to the mind of the great apostle. Hear him: "How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein? *God forbid!* . . . For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." And he proceeds to show how the whole grapple of the Christian life is against sin. In himself he likens it to the struggle of a convict who has been chained to a corpse and thrown into the sea. "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And then comes the hopeful cry of victory, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

THE WONDERFUL EIGHTH OF ROMANS

This brings us to the eighth chapter. The Christian who can read this chapter without a thrill of exultation is "fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils." We were dead, but are alive again in Christ; we were in bondage, but are forever free! Was ever such a challenge as this: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth! Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died,

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yea, rather, that is risen again, . . . who also maketh intercession for us! Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Come death, come life, come angels, principalities, powers, things present, things to come, height, depth or any other creature; we are in Christ Jesus, wherefore nothing can separate us from the love of God! Of this inspired presentation of the vital union of the believer with his Lord we have a faint echo in Wesley's familiar words:

"This one thing I find:
We two are so joined,
*Christ can't go to heaven
And leave me behind.*"

THE CONVERSION OF THE JEWS

CHAPTERS 9-11

In the next three chapters we have a clear presentation of God's purpose with respect to the chosen people. For though this, the most "general" of all Paul's Epistles, was addressed to Rome as the outstanding figure in a universal church, not for an instant could Paul permit his heart to wander from his own country-

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men though they had cast him off. Hear him: "My heart's desire for Israel is that they might be saved." Blessed desire of Great-heart!

There is an accent of hope in his anguished cry, "Hath God cast away his people? God forbid!" For a time indeed—as he intimates—they are blind and in bondage, denying their own Messiah "whom kings and prophets longed to see and died without the sight"; but in the fulness of time the veil is to be removed from their eyes and they are to come flocking to Christ as doves to their windows. Then shall the mystery of God's gracious dealings with his people be made clear. In the meantime this must suffice: "How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out!" 11:33.

PRACTICAL EXHORTATIONS

CHAPTERS 12-15:12

Paul next dwells upon the importance of translating faith into the terms of common life. A creed on parchment is an insignificant thing; it has value only when it walks out on

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two feet and busies itself with two hands in the work of the kingdom of God. As food is a vain thing unless it be assimilated and transmuted into blood and sinew and bone, so is faith in Christ except it be changed into high purpose and efficiency; for thus it is written: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."

A PROPOSED JOURNEY INTO SPAIN

CHAPTER 15: 12-24

The essential part of his Epistle being disposed of, Paul makes known the world-wide scope of his mission. He purposes a journey even "into Spain"! The height of his ambition, so far as previously disclosed, had been to visit Rome; it now appears, however, that Rome was a mere way station in his itinerary. The world was his parish. The Master had enjoined him to "Go!" and go he would, and keep going until he had reached the "uttermost parts of the earth." For Spain was at the Pillars of Hercules, on the margin of the uncharted seas.

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CONCLUSION: SALUTATIONS

CHAPTER 16

The last chapter is given up to affectionate greetings and hopeful farewells; and here we have a sidelight into the sweet domesticity of the early church. Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love! There is no bond of consanguinity that can for a moment compare with the blood-covenant of the church. Believing Jews and Gentiles are one in him who loved us and gave himself for us.

There are two singular things to be noted in this chapter of greetings.

One of these is the parenthesis, "I, Tertius, who wrote this Epistle, salute you in the Lord." By this we are given to understand that Paul dictated this letter to an amanuensis, a fact probably due to the infirmities of increasing age. As he was sending these salutations to his Roman friends he may have been called aside for a moment; and just there and then was where Tertius, his secretary, took advantage of the opportunity of putting in this salutation of his own. It has made him immortal; for, indeed, this is everything that

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we know about him. Let us be glad, in passing, that Paul did not feel constrained to cut out the parenthesis of this humble man—who is here embalmed like a fly in amber—for it gives us a pleasant sidelight into the family relations of the early church.

The other singular thing in this closing chapter is the fact that it contains no reference to Peter. The papal doctrine of the primacy of Peter rests upon the assumption that the Roman Church was founded by him about A. D. 42, and that he continued to be Bishop there for a period of twenty-five years. If so, then, of course, he must have been at Rome when this Epistle was written. This leaves us in a quandary; for if that were so, it is unaccountable, to say the least, that Paul should not only make no mention of him in the entire course of this Epistle, but that in these final greetings he should not refer to him in any way.

It only remains for us to hear Paul saying to his amanuensis, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." Grace—grace—the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ:

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whenever you hear it you may know that Paul is somewhere on the premises or near by; for the *gratis* of salvation was his only boast; and Christ for him was first, last, midst and all in all.

II

FIRST CORINTHIANS

PRACTICAL RELIGION

The city of Corinth had been utterly destroyed in the time of the Peloponnesian War and remained in ruins until the time of Julius Cæsar. He rebuilt it because he saw that its situation, on a peninsula with a seaport on either side, afforded a coign of vantage for commercial pre-eminence, as indeed it subsequently proved when ships of the Seven Seas brought their cargoes to its markets. The city on being rebuilt was dedicated to Venus Aphrodite, the goddess of sensuality; and at the time of our narrative a thousand so-called "vestals" were set apart there for the celebration of her unspeakably impure rites.

Paul came to Corinth on his second missionary journey, A. D. 52, and remained there a year and a half. At that time the city had a threefold renown: first, as the seat of the

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far-famed Isthmian or Corinthian games; second, as a great commercial centre; and third, as the Vanity Fair of the world.

The church which Paul founded in Corinth was made up most largely of Greeks, who were doubly handicapped by heredity and environment. The impure blood of many generations was flowing in their veins and they were surrounded by a people wholly given to popular vices. It was to be expected, under such circumstances, that the new converts to Christ would find it no easy matter to adjust themselves to the stern requirements of the Christian life.

The occasion of this letter was as follows: An important member of the Corinthian Church came to Ephesus (A. D. 57) on a visit, while Paul was ministering there, and brought news of spiritual declension among the Corinthian Christians which greatly distressed him. Not long after this he received a letter from certain members of that church which not only emphasized what he had already heard, but gave him still greater cause for anxiety; and presently a delegation of three of its members came with a formal request that Paul would

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advise them as to what was to be done. His desire was to go immediately to Corinth and attend to the matter, but circumstances in Ephesus were such that this was out of the question. The next best thing to do was to write a letter, which, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, he proceeded to do.

With this explanation of the circumstances under which the letter was written, we can easily surmise what its character was likely to be. There was no complaint as to the orthodoxy of the Corinthian Church. Its members were intellectually true to the doctrines of the Christian faith, but they failed to translate their faith into the practical terms of common life. A reference is made by Paul to this fact where he says, "As a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another (namely, Apollos, who succeeded him in the pastorate at Corinth) buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon, for other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now, if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man's work shall be made manifest; for the

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day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." The reference in this passage is to the well-remembered conflagration of Mummius which had destroyed all the combustible homes of the ancient city and left only those substantial buildings which had been built on good foundations.

It will be seen, therefore, why so little emphasis is put in this Epistle upon the doctrines of our Christian faith and so great an emphasis on the importance of living up to them. In the Epistle to the Romans, the circumstances being totally different, we have the great doctrinal symbol of the New Testament; but in this First Epistle to the Corinthians we have a monumental thesis on *Practical Religion*.

CHRISTIAN UNITY

CHAPTERS 1-4

The first four chapters after Paul's customary greeting, "Grace be unto you," are devoted to reproof and counsel with special reference to the schisms which were prevalent in the Corinthian church: "For it hath been

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declared unto me that there are contentions among you.”

There were four parties among them. First, those who called themselves Pauline, because they followed him as the founder of their church. Second, the Petrine party, who allied themselves with Peter (Cephas), these being probably converted Jews who had reason to think of Peter as more sympathetic with Jewish methods than the Apostle of the Gentiles was likely to be. Third, the Apollonian party, who lined up with Apollos as a man of persuasive eloquence and the former pastor of their church. And fourth, a party made up of such as preferred to call themselves simply Christians, possibly with an assumption of greater devotion to Christ, but probably involving also a renunciation of apostolic teaching. To all these Paul gives the same advice: “I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”

It is at this point that Paul thanks God that he had baptized none of them but Crispus, the

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master of the synagogue, and his old friend Gaius, "lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name." He also thanks God that he had taught no philosophy of his own, by which they might have been warranted in claiming to be his disciples rather than Christ's. On coming to Corinth five years previously, with his failure in Athens fresh in memory, he had resolved that he would never again preach the Gospel with wisdom of words lest the Cross of Christ should be made of none effect. Wherefore his teaching among them had been with simplicity, the substance of it being, as he says, "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."

PERSONAL PURITY

CHAPTERS 5-14

The next eight chapters are devoted to the correction of the particular evils which had been reported to him by the delegation from the Corinthian church.

To begin with, he takes up the matter of personal purity. There was one man there who had greatly scandalized the church by habitual indulgence in nameless vice. He in-

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structs them that such an one should be "delivered unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh." This meant, of course, that discipline should be administered by the officers of the church—a policy which has unfortunately fallen into disuse in our time. The offender was not merely to be suspended but to be excommunicated; that is, "delivered unto Satan" or utterly separated from the people of Christ, to the end that he might bring forth fruits meet to repentance and so be brought back to God.

Then follow certain instructions as to the sanctity of the marriage tie and other points relating to purity in personal life, all the Apostle's injunctions here and further on in the Epistle being based, as will be seen, on certain great principles which are as enduring as the moral law. In reading them we naturally come upon certain passages which are not to be read in public but in the secret place where the soul of a man is bared in the presence of God.

NON-CONFORMITY

The next point taken up by the Apostle is that of compromise with prevalent customs.

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Let it be remembered that most of the members of the Corinthian church were Greeks who had formerly taken part in the worship of Venus, and who after their conversion continued to be on familiar terms with their pagan friends. It would appear that some of these converts had gone so far as to attend the feasts given in honor of the unclean goddess. Of course, this could not be tolerated in those who were members of a Christian church; but one of the questions which the delegation had brought to Paul had to do with certain others who, while not actually attending the feasts, could see no harm in partaking of meats which had been laid upon the altars of Venus and thereafter sold in the shambles. What sin could there be in purchasing and partaking of those meats when they knew that "an idol was nothing in the world"?

It is just here that Paul makes his great argument as to refraining from that which is not wrong of itself but becomes so when it leads weak consciences astray. "Take heed," he says, "lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block to them that are weak." Suppose that one sitting at the

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table, having previously been a worshipper of Venus, and, not being able to perceive that her worship was mere superstition, were to be led back by the example of a stronger brother into his former method of life? The safer plan is, therefore, to abstain. At any rate, Paul himself will take no risks: "If meat make my brother to offend I will eat no flesh while the world standeth!" Here is the spirit of self-sacrifice at its best.

MODESTY

This is followed by the consideration of a certain matter which may seem of small moment to us, but had apparently given rise to scandal in connection with public worship. It seems that some of the women had attended church with their heads uncovered. What a molehill to dwell upon, in a letter like this! But Paul did not think so. The priestesses of Venus Aphrodite were wont to publish their shameful vocation by appearing at her great festivals with uncovered heads; this was the token of their calling. When Christian women appeared in public in similar guise what would naturally be thought of them? It was there-

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fore a matter of vital importance that they should avoid it.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

A matter of related but still greater moment was the abuse of the Lord's supper. There were some among the Christians of Corinth who had turned it into a revel not greatly differing from the hilarious feasts of Aphrodite. The rich were accustomed to bring with them the viands of the feast and to partake gluttonously, not without drunkenness on the part of some, while the poorer members of the church sat hungrily by. "What," cries Paul, "have ye not houses to eat and drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? I praise you not." Then follows a noble disquisition on the divine beauty and simplicity of the sacramental feast.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Still another abuse in public worship was due to the improper use of the *charismata*, or spiritual gifts, and particularly of the gift of tongues. It would appear that some of the members of the church, assuming themselves

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to be possessed of this miraculous gift, had been lifting up their voices in the public assemblies in a sort of gibberish which neither their hearers nor probably themselves were able to understand; and the result was utter confusion and disorder.

It may be noted, in passing, that the same "gift of tongues" has not infrequently been claimed and exercised with like results at different periods in the modern church, as for example among the followers of Edward Irving, whose later life was clouded by many delusions. There was a reason for the conferring of such miraculous gifts on the members of the infant church, precisely as there is a reason for the use of a scaffolding in the early stages of the erection of a building; but as the scaffolding is taken down when no longer needed, so with the *charismata*; they would hamper rather than help the progress of the modern church.

CHARITY

The counsel of Paul with respect to these spiritual gifts is interrupted by the wonderful Song of Charity (chapter 13), which he pro-

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nounces to be the greatest of all gifts. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity (love, R. V.), I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. . . . Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love."

THE RESURRECTION

CHAPTER 15

While the members of the Corinthian church stood foursquare as to the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith, there was one doctrine of prime importance which had been assailed by certain false teachers who had crept in among them; namely, the resurrection of the dead. In order to forestall any further inroads in this direction, Paul gives us a convincing argument as to life and immortality. It concludes with the challenge: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

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CONCLUSION

CHAPTER 16

The Epistle concludes with a chapter of greetings in which Paul again refers to the fact that he is collecting funds among the Gentiles for his famine-stricken friends in the mother church at Jerusalem and requests their generous contributions. The letter is sent by the hand of Timothy, for whom he asks the loving consideration of the Christians in Corinth. Finally, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong! Let all things be done with charity." And then, of course, his countersign, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen."

III

SECOND CORINTHIANS

A SELF-RESPECTING MAN

It will be remembered that Paul wrote his First Epistle to the Corinthians during his three years' pastorate at Ephesus. Not long after that he was attacked by a mob and obliged to flee for his life. This happened in the month of May, A. D. 57, while the great feast in honor of Diana was going on. By this time Paul had been long enough in Ephesus to make grave inroads on the traffic in little images of the goddess which were customarily sold at the feast. The shop-keepers and particularly the manufacturers of such wares, being naturally indignant on account of their losses, held a meeting at which Demetrius the silversmith made a fiery address, with the result that an uproar was raised in the city and a search was instituted for Paul, who, had he been found, would without doubt have been

summarily dealt with. After being kept under cover for a while by friends, he quietly left the city.

So it came to pass that this Second Epistle, which is a postscript to the First, was not written at Ephesus, but in some unknown place where Paul found shelter after his flight. He had set out with the evident intention of going to Corinth, in pursuance of a promise that, as soon as possible, he would visit the people there. He had advised them through Titus, the postman of his First letter, that they might expect him; and they had accordingly been preparing to receive him. He had enjoined Titus to return at the earliest possible moment with information as to how his previous letter was received; but up to the time of Paul's leaving Ephesus his messenger had not returned; and now that he had reached Macedonia there was still no news. He had waited for Titus at Troas in vain; and with an anxious heart he continued his evangelistic work in towns along the way.

News came at length, while he was somewhere among the Macedonian hills, and news of a most distressing sort. The church in

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Corinth was sadly divided; the majority of its members had received his reproofs in a proper spirit of humility; but there were trouble-makers who not only resented his interference with their worldly manner of life but went so far as to deny outright his apostolic authority. Others denounced him as a promise-breaker, affirming that he had never really intended to visit them, broadly hinting that he was a coward and afraid to confront them face to face with the severe charges of immorality which he had brought against them.

These were the circumstances under which he sat down, somewhere in Macedonia, to write this letter in self-defence. Was it worth while? Is it ever worth while for a man to vindicate himself? If so, it was doubly important for Paul to set himself right as an apostle of Christ. The validity of his apostolic teaching was at stake, not only as it concerned the church members of Corinth, but for all Christians who were to receive his writings as canonical and trustworthy through the coming ages.

It is important that we should know whether Paul was really an authorized and inspired

teacher of the doctrines of Christ. For in our time there is no lack of accusers, like those at Corinth, who look askance at Paul and speak slightingly of "Pauline theology," as if an invidious distinction were to be drawn between the trustworthiness of Christ and that of his apostles. They either forget or choose to ignore and practically deny the fact that the apostolic Scriptures were underwritten by Christ himself when he said not only, "He that heareth you heareth me," but conversely, "He that despiseth you despiseth me."

It is of supreme importance therefore that Paul should vindicate his standing as an apostle, particularly by reason of the fact that he, of all the apostles, was pre-eminently chosen to formulate and systematize the doctrines of the Christian faith.

In this Second Epistle to the Corinthians we have that vindication. It would be worth while if it contained no more than the passionate effort of an ordinary man to uphold his honor. But it is immeasurably more than that; it is the picture of one of the Lord's mighties standing for the defence of his ambassadorship, and therefore for the authority

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of the message which, as he steadfastly affirms, comes through his lips from the very throne of God.

A MAN OF HIS WORD

CHAPTERS 1, 2

In the first two chapters, Paul, after his customary salutation, assures his friends that no fault of his had prevented the fulfillment of his promise to visit them. "Man proposes but God disposes." The fact was that on his journey he had been prostrated by an attack of illness that threatened his very life. (2 Cor. 1: 8-12.) This was an excuse that would hold in any court of justice. In reply to those who accused him of being afraid to meet them face to face, he affirms that he had never so lived as to lay himself open to the charge of evasion or prevarication. "Our word toward you is not yea and nay; but as the promises of God in Christ are yea and amen, so have I always endeavored to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." It would be hard to find a nobler tribute to transparent candor. The water-carriers of Christ cannot carry

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water on both shoulders. As children of light their yea must be yea and their nay nay.

A VERITABLE APOSTLE

CHAPTERS 3-5

In these chapters Paul sets forth his credentials as an apostle. It is true he did not belong to the original Twelve. He admits that, as an apostle, he was "as one born out of due time." But in due time he did receive his commission; and it bore the sign-manual of Christ himself.

No one could be an apostle who had not seen Christ. No one could write Scripture who had not seen Christ. This was the fact which ultimately sealed the canon of the New Testament: only such books were included as were definitely known to have been written by men who had seen the living Christ. But Paul had seen him. On his way down to Damascus—"out of due season" indeed—he had looked upon him in "a light above the brightness of the sun." And he had received his apostolic commission in unmistakable terms that day.

But they demanded formal credentials. Perhaps they wanted letters of commendation

from the mother church in Jerusalem. Here was Paul going around among both Jews and Gentiles without a written line or syllable to authenticate his claims! What has he to say to that? "Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you? Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men." Hear that, ye who clamor for a place in "the apostolic succession." Where are your converts, the conquests of your faith, the living epistles that certify to the validity of your call? Stand up, all "unordained" evangelists whose crowns are shining full of stars, stand up in the presence of mitres and canonicals and let your works witness for you!

But that was not all: Paul claimed to have other credentials: "Always bearing about in the body," he says, "the dying of the Lord Jesus"; or, as he puts it in Galatians, "Let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks (*stigmata*) of the Lord Jesus." The scars of many scourgings were upon him. Who are these who call him charlatan? "Are they ministers of Christ? I more! In labors

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more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft!" (2 Cor. 11:23.) Let him be judged not only by what he had done, but by what he had suffered in the Master's name.

Were other credentials called for? We shall find them further on (2 Cor. 12): "I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord," says Paul. "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth); such an one caught up into Paradise, the third heaven, where he heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such an one will I glory."

Not less than twenty-nine times in this Epistle do we come upon that word. Paul seems to be boasting continually, yet not of himself, save as an ambassador of Christ. As such, it behooves him to contend for the integrity of his message. "I am become a fool in glorying," he says; "ye have compelled me; for I ought to have been commended of you. Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds."

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A FAITHFUL MINISTER

CHAPTERS 6, 7

In chapters six and seven he speaks for himself as the former pastor of the Corinthian church. And here his heart is in his throat. What severe tenderness! He reminds them how patiently and earnestly he had served them. (For a perfect picture of a faithful pastorate read 2 Cor. 6: 3-10.) And how had they recompensed him? "Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own affections. Our mouth is open unto you, O Corinthians, our heart is enlarged." They had lent a willing ear even to the unrighteous who accused him. "Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord. . . . Open your hearts to us; we wronged no man."

He acknowledges the severity of his former letter, but insists not only that the circumstances of the case required it but that results had fully justified it. For Titus, on his return from Corinth, had informed him of a notable betterment of life among the Christians there. Wherefore he says that though he had made them sorry with his letter he did not repent, but rather rejoiced that they were made sorry

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with a godly sorrow that needed not to be repented of.

THE COLLECTION

CHAPTERS 8, 9

In the next two chapters Paul appeals for a generous contribution in behalf of the famine-stricken members of the mother church in Jerusalem. The fact that these Christians of Corinth were mostly Gentiles would make such an offering significant of church unity and magnanimity. He ventures to stimulate their spirit of emulation by reminding them of the forwardness of the churches of Macedonia which had given generously in "deep poverty" and "in a great trial of affliction." He assures them that such beneficence can involve no loss, since giving to the poor is but lending to the Lord. And finally he puts them in remembrance of Christ as the unspeakable Gift of God.

SELF-RESPECT

CHAPTERS 10-13

In the remaining chapters Paul makes a clean job of his defence, taking up and dis-

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posing of everything that had been alleged against him.

Paul was under fire. There were those at Corinth who said, "His letters are indeed weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak and his speech is contemptible," which was presumably the reason why he, notwithstanding his promise, had failed to visit them. To this he replies, first, by accusing his accusers of grave presumption and, second, by emphasizing his purpose not only to come to Corinth but to "stretch himself" even to the regions beyond.

And then, as if swept away by righteous indignation on account of the wrongs inflicted upon him, he becomes, as he says, a very fool in boasting. (Read 2 Cor. 11:18-12:13.) At this point one cannot fail to recall the infidel Renan's description of Paul as "the ugly little Jew." But how that ugly little Jew towers aloft in defence of himself as a duly accredited ambassador of Christ! Nor is this the only occasion when he stood upon his official dignity. Once imprisoned at Philippi by magistrates who, having exceeded their authority, became frightened and ordered the jailer to

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let him go, he refused to be let go, saying, "They have beaten us openly, uncondemned, and now do they thrust us out privily? Nay, verily, but let them come themselves and fetch us out!" And come they did, "and brought them out and desired them to depart out of the city."

All honor to the man who knows his rights and knowing dares maintain! There is no room in practical Christianity for "'umbleness" like that of Uriah Heep. And certainly no ambassador is at liberty to endure silently an affront to the Government that commissions him.

Hear him again—this "ugly little Jew"—asserting his rights in the Prætorian palace at Cæsarea. He had been beaten about in one petty court after another until forbearance had ceased to be a virtue; so that when Fes-tus proposed that he consent to go up again to Jerusalem to be badgered by the rabbis, he answered, "If I have committed anything worthy of death I refuse not to die; but if there be none of these things whereof they accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Cæsar!" He thus fell back upon

his rights as a citizen of Rome. Again, I say, all honor to him!

No Christian is at liberty to dishonor himself. Christ himself was the manliest of men. To use the words of Milton, his was "that lofty lowliness of mind which is exalted by its own humiliation!" One who would truly follow Christ in this respect must be jealous not only for his own character but for his reputation also, in order that his influence may work to the uttermost for the good of his fellow-men.

In conclusion Paul reiterates his expectation of reaching Corinth in due time; and, in anticipation of his coming, exhorts his friends, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." Then his farewell, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen."

IV

THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

This Epistle was written about A. D. 58. It was occasioned by the fact that, while Paul was on his third missionary journey, news reached him that members of the church in Galatia were being persuaded by Judaizers to return again from the simplicity of the Gospel to the bondage of the Ceremonial Law.

SALUTATION

CHAPTER 1: 1-5

In his three years' ministry at Ephesus the Apostle was assisted by a noble band of workers, among whom were Gaius, Timothy, Tychicus and Trophimus, Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus and the ever-faithful tent-makers Aquila and Priscilla. The fact that these were informed as to the purpose of this letter and in full accord with it is intimated by their joining in the greeting, "Grace be to you and peace."

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REMONSTRANCE

CHAPTER 1: 6-12

It must have been something startling in the news from Galatia that moved Paul to exclaim, "I marvel!" It was, indeed; for it had been reported that the church members there were "removed unto another gospel." And the new gospel which they preferred to the Gospel of Christ was really "not another," but a transparent fraud, because it brought them no "good news" of salvation from sin.

In view of the many evasions and make-shifts and substitutes which in our day are offered for the old-time religion it may be well to emphasize the words of Paul in this connection: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, let him be anathema!"

A terrible judgment, this; which he justifies by saying that the Gospel which he preached was received by the direct "revelation of Jesus Christ" and not like those others "after man." If this means anything it means that those who profess to follow Christ are not at liberty to formulate their creed according to the teachings of any man or body of men

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whatsoever, but are under bonds to regard as final the authority of the oracles of God.

REVELATION VINDICATED

CHAPTERS 1:13-2

At this point the Apostle proceeds to show how the Gospel was revealed to him. At the time of his conversion, he says, he did not feel qualified at once to enter upon his ministry; but "conferring not with flesh and blood," not even going up to Jerusalem to advise with those who were Apostles before him, he "went away into Arabia" where among the solitudes he pursued a three-years theological course. Then, having received the divine title of B. D., he went up to Jerusalem, where he remained for fifteen days in conference with Peter and James, the pastor of the mother church. After that, for a period of eleven years, he carried on a sort of independent work among the neglected peoples of Syria and Cilicia. Meanwhile, he says, he was "unknown by face unto the churches of Judea," save as rumors came to them that "he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith." Then, after this apprenticeship of

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fourteen years, he did go up to Jerusalem "by revelation" to attend the Council which had been called to determine whether Gentile converts must enter the Church by complying with the Levitical rules and regulations or not; and then and there the career of Paul as an "ordained" minister began, as it is written that they gave him the right hand of fellowship that he should "go unto the heathen." As Peter had been set apart and ordained "to the apostleship of the circumcision," so Paul was now designated for special service among the Gentiles; and at the same time he was commissioned to solicit offerings from the Gentile converts for the relief of the famine-stricken Christians of Jerusalem. His work was now clearly marked out; and never for a moment thereafter did he swerve from it.

On one occasion, he says, he had been forced to take issue with Peter and "withstand him to the face." This was during the revival at Antioch A. D. 42. (Acts 15:22-26.) For a while Peter mingled with the Gentile converts there on terms of equality, but under the influence of certain members of the church in Jerusalem he "withdrew and separated him-

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self, fearing them which were of the circumcision." For this, says Paul, "he was to be blamed"; wherefore there occurred a temporary breach between the two apostles; but Paul had the right of it. Compromise in moral questions never pays. Peter, by endeavoring to carry water on both shoulders, was really consenting that the Gentiles must enter the Christian Church by the Jewish door. All praise to Paul—Jew that he was—for his vigorous defence of Gentile rights! Hear him: "A man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ." "I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain!" "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

WITCHCRAFT

CHAPTER 3

"O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?" A severe indictment, this, but amply

justified, as Paul proceeds to show, by the facts in the case. By lending an ear to those who taught salvation by deeds of the law, they had been as really bewitched as King Saul was at En-dor. And how groundlessly! For Christ had been "evidently set forth crucified" among them. Wherefore they were without excuse.

Those among them who were converted Jews professed to be children of Abraham; but even Abraham, as Paul shows, was not saved by works; he "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." This belief in God was based upon the Messianic promise, "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." (Gen. 12:3.) In other words, Abraham was a Christian and was saved by faith in the Saviour whom he saw afar off.

Not only so, the Ceremonial Law was so far from having of itself any saving power that it was merely "a schoolmaster to lead unto Christ," which is evident in the fact that all its rites and ceremonies, its oblations and ablutions, its ark and altars and sacrifices, pointed forward to him.

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“Not all the blood of beasts
On Jewish altars slain
Can give the guilty conscience peace
Or take away its stain;
But Christ, the heavenly Lamb,
Takes all our sins away,
A sacrifice of nobler name
And richer blood than they.”

By this it appears that the old-time worthies were saved precisely as we are—they by looking forward and we by looking backward to Christ. As there is only one God, so there is only one way of approach to him. “I am the way,” said Jesus; “no man cometh unto the Father but by me.” One God, one Gospel of salvation, “one Church above, beneath, though now divided by the stream, the narrow stream of death.” Thus are the ends of the earth and of history brought nigh together, even as Paul says, “There is neither Jew nor Greek; ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed.” Which is only another way of saying that all who have believed in Christ since the foundation of the world belong to the true Israel of God.

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AN ALLEGORY

CHAPTER 4

“It is written that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a free woman: which things are an allegory; for these are *the two covenants.*”

First, the Covenant of Works. “The Law is not of faith, but the man that doeth them shall live in them”; and, conversely, whosoever breaketh the Law shall die under it. “The wages of sin is death.” Sin, in the nature and necessity of the case, alienates from a holy God; and this is spiritual death. To be with God is heaven; to be anywhere away from God is hell.

The Law requires perfect obedience. One sin is enough to make an outlaw; as it is written, “Whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.” The moment a planet leaves its orbit by so much as an inch it becomes a wanderer in infinite space. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die”; that is, it shall part company with God.

And, alas, “there is none that doeth good, no, not one!” “The Scripture hath concluded

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(i. e., shut up together) all under sin." No longer free, but servants of sin! Children of the bondwoman! Aliens from the commonwealth of Israel! Exiles from the presence of a holy God!

And law deals only with justice. It knows no mercy. It makes no provision for pardon. It exacts its penalty to the uttermost farthing. Wherefore under the covenant of works the sinner is "without God and without hope in the world." What is to be done? Nothing, unless the omniscient and omnipotent God shall make bare his arm.

Second, the Covenant of Grace. In the fulness of time God does make bare his arm. He interposes in behalf of the hopeless race, as it is written, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." Thus those who were condemned under the old Covenant of Works are justified by faith under the new Covenant of Grace: as it is written, "For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh (i. e., our sinful flesh), God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh,

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and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us." (Romans 8:3.)

That is, *if we choose to have it so*. For every man must determine for himself whether he will live under the Covenant of Works or under the Covenant of Grace, whether he will be a child of the bondwoman or of the free-woman, whether he will accept the wages of sin which is death, or the gift of God which is eternal life.

This is where the Galatians were in danger of being led astray, of leaving Christ and returning to the bondage of the Jewish law. Nor has that danger passed. In our time Judaism is as much in evidence as ever. Men would rather be saved under the law than under grace. Grace and *gratis* are cognate words. Pride forbids our taking salvation "without money and without price." That word *gratis* offends the natural man. If it were possible that a pilgrimage of a thousand miles afoot on bread and water could earn a "title clear to mansions in the skies," the thoroughfare would be crowded. But that is impossible: good works have no atoning pow-

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er: there is no adaptation of the means to the end. Good behavior has no margin to apply beyond the passing hour.

Nor is there any expiatory value in punishment. Not all the fires of hell itself can burn out the record of past sin. The dead cannot bury its dead. Unless God interposes in his behalf, the bondwoman's child can never become an heir of God. The Cross is the one monument of grace. Its benefits are *gratis*, based on the sole condition of faith. "Who-soever will, let him come." To will to accept Christ and be saved through him is to cross the line from hell to heaven. To will to be saved by personal merit is to remain under the sentence of the law. And every one must say for himself which it shall be.

STANDBFASTNESS

CHAPTER 5

The argument thus far is unanswerable and its conclusion is inevitable: "Stand fast therefore!" In what? "In the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free." As against what? As against any "entanglement with the yoke of bondage"; the old yoke of Judaism, that is

—the hope of winning heaven by deeds of the law.

(1) The Judaizers in Corinth were saying that circumcision was necessary for entrance into the Church. Paul says, "If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing." The moment one consents that justification is by works instead of faith, he "falls from grace" and "becomes a debtor to do the whole law." There can be no compromise. The only condition affixed to full and complete salvation is faith, as Jesus said, "This is the work of God (i.e., the only work that commends us in the sight of God), that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." (John 6:29.)

(2) Wherefore, says Paul, yield not an inch. It is dangerous to palter with error: "a little leaven leaventh the whole lump." If we are saved *gratis*, then we are no longer under the yoke of legalism. Does this mean that as Christians we are absolved from obedience to the moral law? Not at all! Listen to Paul in another place (Romans 6:2): "How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein? God forbid!" But obedience is now lifted from the carnal plane of duty to the

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spiritual plane of love. If we are true followers of Christ, we keep the law "not for the hope of winning heaven or of escaping hell," but from a sense of gratitude to him who suffered on the Cross to deliver us from the shame and power and penalty of sin.

(3) Thus, says Paul, we are "called unto liberty." He is the freeman whom the truth makes free,

"Free from the law, O happy condition!
Jesus hath died and there is remission;
Cursed by the law, and bruised by the fall,
Christ hath redeemed us once for all."

Where then do good works come in? As the test and touchstone of faith, and as a preparation for service further on. Our title clear to heaven is assured solely by faith in Christ; but what sort of a heaven that will be is determined by our walk and conversation here and now. Some are saved like Lot "so as by fire," while others go "sweeping through the gates" with an abundant entrance into the Kingdom of God. (Read 1 Cor. 3:10-14.)

Our life here is merely an apprenticeship in which we learn how to do things in that heaven further on where "his servants do serve

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him." Alas for the *minimum* Christian who goes out into eternity like an unskilled workman; but "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever." Oh, yes, good works tell, tell forever; but not for salvation, which is only and always "the gift of God."

(4) Thus Paul arrives, naturally and logically, at the conflict between the flesh and the spirit, which is the great conflict of the Christian life. And here are the two categories: read them: "The *works* of the flesh" (verses 19-21), and "*the fruit* (i. e., the natural outgrowth) of the Spirit" (verses 22, 23.) In other words, the "good works" of a Christian are not such as are laboriously wrought in obedience to law but such as grow naturally out of a sense of gratitude to him who loved us and gave himself for us: that is to say, they are an expression of "the glorious liberty of the children of God."

CONCLUSION

CHAPTER 6

The Apostle has now accomplished his purpose in this Epistle, which was to show the

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vital importance of the doctrine of Justification by Faith.

It remains for him to say what shall be done with the Jewish propagandists who have been so sedulously advocating the false doctrine of justification by works. He has already intimated that they should be "cut off," i. e., subjected to church discipline; but he now declares that such discipline must only be administered "in the spirit of meekness" and with a view to their "restoration," since, when all is said and done, love is the fulfilling of the law.

Then follows a singular farewell: "Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand." In fact, however, this Epistle of only six chapters is not a large one: but it was written in "large letters" (R. V.) as the half-blind Apostle would be likely to write; and, most significantly, it was written, not like the other Epistles by the hand of an amanuensis, but doubtless with much difficulty with the tremulous own hand of Paul. Thus does he certify to his deep concern for the welfare of his Galatian friends.

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But suppose he should be criticised for an undue presumption upon his apostolic functions? Listen to his *noli me tangere*: "Let no man trouble me; I bear about in my body the *stigmata* of the Lord Jesus!" His scars of service are his best credentials. And the same holds true of all who follow Christ.

Finally what? Grace, of course. "Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit."

V

THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

THE CHURCH

(As an introduction to this Epistle the student would do well to read Acts 19:1-10, in which an account is given of Paul's first visit to the Christians at Ephesus, A. D. 55; also Acts 20:17-38, where, four years later, he bids them farewell.)

This Epistle was written while Paul was a prisoner in the Prætorian camp at Rome, A. D. 64. While it was addressed in particular to the Christians at Ephesus it was really a round robin, intended for all the churches then and now.

Its theme is *The Church*, and it contains all ecclesiology in a nutshell. It portrays the Church as a living organism, made up of all in every age and of every name who are by faith vitally united with Christ. Not all whose

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names are written on the visible roster of the denominations are really members of this invisible organism; but only such as have their names written in the Lamb's book of life by reason of a living faith in him.

THE BODY OF CHRIST

CHAPTER I

The customary greeting of the Apostle, "Grace be to you," is immediately followed by a grateful recognition of that grace in Election, as the divine method of incorporating penitent sinners into the Church as members of the living body of Christ.

This election, says Paul, is "a mystery": wherefore he does not undertake to explain it. But there are some things, nevertheless, that we know and may confidently affirm concerning it. *First*, it is a fact. God would not be omniscient did he not foresee the future; and what God foresees is as certain to come to pass as if he foreordained it. *Second*, the doctrine of Election is not inconsistent with the freedom of the human will. God has foreknown from all eternity whether or no I will lift my hand a moment from now; but I know that I

can do as I please about it. *Third*, the important matter is not that I should pry into the why and wherefore of Election, which is one of the state secrets of the Almighty, but that I should make my own "calling and election sure" by accepting Christ, as Paul says, "for the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace."

The moment a sinner does that he becomes a new man in Christ Jesus, being incorporated into the invisible Church, which is his body, as a living member of it. This is "the mystery of his will." In pursuance of that mystery all things will ultimately be "gathered together in one in Christ, according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

This chapter ends with one of the most remarkable prayers ever offered (verses 15-23), which closes with a grateful and exultant tribute to God, who has thus in the exercise of his sovereign will put all things under the feet of his beloved Son and given him to be "the Head over all to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

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A LIVING BODY

CHAPTER 2

In this chapter Christians are enjoined to "remember" certain things. The *first* is that until the hour of their conversion they were "dead in trespasses and sins." This is no mere figure of speech. We know that a man is physically dead when his physical powers no longer function. He has eyes but they see not, ears but they hear not; his lips are dumb and his heart is still. In like manner a man is spiritually dead when his spiritual faculties are inoperative: when he cares nothing for life and immortality, nothing for God's Word and work, has lost "the gift of the knees" and is out of touch with God.

The *second* thing to "remember" is that conversion is a "quickenings" from the dead. It is a "gain-birth," as the fathers used to call it. The Christian is "a new man in Christ Jesus": he is "alive from the dead," being risen with Christ to newness of life. And this is his *de facto* initiation into the invisible Church. As Paul puts it, whereas "ye were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise," ye

are now "fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God."

The *third* thing here called to remembrance is that all this is not for personal merit but "that God might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us." We cannot take credit for the act of faith which unites us with Christ; "for by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is the gift of God.*"

In the last three verses of this chapter we have Paul's splendid description of the Church as a Temple. (1) Its corner-stone is Christ. (2) Its foundation is "the apostles and prophets," i. e., the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the veritable Word of God. (3) It "groweth." The word here is used only of organic growth; i. e., of a living thing. In one of Ruskin's Essays he speaks of architecture as "frozen music," but this is not true of the Church. Its members are "living stones, built up a spiritual house" (cf. 1 Peter 2:5), stones with eyes to see and hearts to pity and voices to sing "all hail the power of Jesus' name." (4) It groweth "unto a holy temple . . . for a habitation of God." This

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is the end and purpose of the Church, to be a center for the radiation of all the sweet influences of truth and righteousness and life.

AN ARTICULATED BODY

CHAPTER 3

At this point the Apostle unveils the fellowship of the mystery, presenting the Church as a family, constituted of many articulated members, into which the Gentiles are welcomed on an even footing with the Jews, as "fellow-heirs and partakers of the promises in Christ."

A sidelight is thus opened into the domestic life of the Church; a vision that carries us back to the supper-room in Jerusalem where Jesus spoke of "the Father's house"; and to "the church in the house" of the early Christians, and onward to heaven as our final home, whereof we sing,

"One family we dwell in him,
One Church above, beneath,
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death."

There is no tie of blood that can bind us so closely in kinship as does the blood of our Saviour. The death that breaks up all earth-

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ly homes can only reunite the several members of Christ.

It was a wonderful prayer that Paul offered in chapter 1; but observe how his soul mounts to loftier realms in the prayer which he now offers: "I bow my knees unto the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named," etc. (verses 14-21). Was there ever a "family prayer" like this? Was ever one that so mounted up as on eagle's wings to sweep the sunlit heavens with undazzled eyes? It ends its flight only in the immediate presence of him who sitteth on the great white throne—"that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God!"

ONE BODY

CHAPTER 4

He dwells here on the unity, diversity and co-operate efficiency of the Church.

First, its unity: "One Lord, one faith, one baptism," i. e., of the Spirit for growth in character and usefulness; "one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in you all."

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Second, its diversity. No two Christians are precisely alike, for "unto every one is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." The risen and reigning Christ is set forth as the measurer of divers gifts to his people, which they are enjoined to use without envying. Shall the hand say to the foot, "I have no need of thee"? (Read 1 Cor. 12.) The glory of the Church is this unity in diversity.

Men, like sheep, are made to segregate. "Birds of a feather flock together." Baptists, Methodists, Episcopalians and Presbyterians are where they belong. They differ and group themselves accordingly. No effort to combine them with iron clamps will succeed or ever should, because "God hath made them so." But underlying all their divergences is a vital bond of union in their mutual devotion to Christ and to the vital truths and principles that center in him. It is a wise proverb that "fences make good neighbors," providing they are not "spite fences": for "love is the fulfilling of the law."

Third, the important thing to be desired is not rigid uniformity, but mutual co-operation,

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in which all the differing members of the body of Christ shall agree to differ and keep sweet. Everything depends on the pervasive life of Christ, "from whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

In pursuance of these conditions the members of the church are exhorted (1) to "*put away* lying to their neighbor," (2) to "*put off*" the sinful habits of the carnal man, (3) and to "*put on* the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

A NUPTIAL BODY

CHAPTER 5

The apostle here suggests "a great mystery"; to wit, the relation of Christ to his Church as the Bridegroom to his bride. "And they twain shall be one flesh." A great mystery indeed! We are "flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone!" The same figure runs through Scripture from beginning to end.

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(See Solomon's Song; Hosea 2:16 and 19-20; Isaiah 54:5 and 62:5; Jeremiah 3:14; John 3:29; Rev. 21:2-9, etc.)

In view of this mystical union of the Church with Christ, its members are enjoined to purity of life. "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children," i. e., as children adopted into spiritual kinship with Christ the only-begotten Son. For "as the husband is head of the wife, even so Christ is the head of the Church"; and as husbands love their wives even so "Christ also loved the Church and gave himself for it." Why? "That he might sanctify and cleanse it."

It thus appears that the Church is not perfect as yet; but the time is coming when the Bridegroom shall lead his bride to the altar "without spot or blemish or any such thing." Not one in all the assembled multitude shall then be able to point a scornful finger at her. The Church will be arrayed in "fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of saints." Then the marriage supper of the Lamb. May we be there to partake of it!

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A MILITANT BODY

CHAPTER 6

It is written of Christ that he came not only to die for the ruined race and so to open the gates of heaven for all believers, but "to destroy the works of the devil," and thus make this world a better place to live in. "I am come," he said, "not to bring peace but a sword." This means the Holy War. The Church is presented as an army, in which all Christians are enlisted to fight against sin, against every form of sin, against the works of the devil in themselves and everywhere in this world of ours.

The countersign is *En devoir!* Ever on guard! And a divine armory is provided for the equipment of every follower of Christ. "Take unto you the whole armor of God;—girdle of truth, breastplate of righteousness, sandals of preparation, shield of faith, helmet of salvation (all hail, the white plume!) and (as your only weapon) the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God." Thus harnessed, we are enjoined to "stand" and "withstand," to defend ourselves and contend for the welfare of all.

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It thus appears that the Church is the universal "League to Enforce Peace." Wherefore the Apostle concludes this great Epistle with the words "Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith"; and one thing more, his indispensable sign-manual, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

VI

THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS

THE GREATER SALVATION

The story of the Philippian Church is fraught with romantic interest. It began in the year 53, when Paul on his second missionary journey had reached Troas, where he awaited the direction of the Holy Spirit as to his further progress. Nor did he wait in vain. In the night he saw a man of Macedonia beckoning and calling, "Come over and help us!" Paul was never "disobedient to the heavenly vision." He knew what this meant—on to Europe—on to Europe and the conquest of the world!

We can imagine him down at the dock in the early morning, inquiring for the first ship to cross the Hellespont. In company with Silas, Timothy and Luke he landed at Neapolis and immediately pushed on by the mountain road to Philippi, in quest of the man with outstretched hands. There was no synagogue

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in the city; but just outside there was a *proseucha* or "place where prayer was wont to be made." Finding a group of Jewish women assembled there, Paul preached to them with such effect that among others Lydia, a wealthy and influential purple-seller, was converted. She, strange to say, proved to be the "man of Macedonia." In the course of his brief campaign so many others were converted that when Paul was obliged to leave the city he left behind him a strong church, probably worshipping in the house of Lydia, and counting in its membership a slave girl, formerly a pythoness, and the jailer of Philippi with his whole family: so that, notwithstanding the hardships involved, Paul had reason to rejoice in many trophies of grace.

It was now 64 A. D. Eleven years had elapsed, eventful years. Paul was a prisoner in the Prætorian camp at Rome, nearing the end of his busy life. The memories of past sufferings and blessings came crowding thick and fast upon him. He saw again the beckoning hands of Macedonia. Hence this letter.

Observe its greetings: "I have you in my heart"; "I long after you"; "I thank my God

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upon every remembrance of you"; "In every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy"; "I am confident that he which hath begun a good work in you will perfect it"; and (of course) "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all."

Then another of Paul's wonderful prayers (verses 9-11) in which he asks (1) that these Philippian Christians may "abound in knowledge and common sense" (margin), (2) that they may "try the things that differ" (margin) and so discriminate between truth and error; (3) that they "may be sincere and without offence until the coming of Christ," and (4) that they "may be filled with the fruits of righteousness unto the glory and praise of God." What more could be desired?

And after that, throughout the whole of this brief Epistle, he dwells upon the Greater Salvation, i. e., the "good work" which the Lord had "begun" in them. Only begun, mark you. If any Christian imagines that the end of salvation is mere deliverance from the penalty of sin he is tremendously mistaken. The moment one accepts Christ as his Saviour he is truly and entirely saved from all danger

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of spiritual death; but if that were all it would merely induct him into the vestibule of a meager heaven. This is but the initial step of a journey whose end is perfection—perfection in character and perfect efficiency in the Lord's service.

THE MINISTRY OF SUFFERING

CHAPTER I

The first factor which enters into the problem of the Greater Salvation is suffering for Christ's sake. A church member who knows nothing of this has reason to suspect his calling. It is only those who have offered themselves to "the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ for righteousness' sake" who shall ultimately put on the crown of righteousness and reign with him.

(1) As for himself, says Paul, though his "bonds in Christ are manifest," they in common with everything else that has happened, "have fallen out unto the furtherance of the Gospel"; wherefore his friends in Philippi must not worry on his account. It is enough for him that Christ is being "magnified in his body, whether it be by life or by death."

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(2) As for themselves, he exhorts them to "be nothing terrified by their adversaries," because it "is given unto them, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him but also to suffer for his sake." Paul could think of no greater privilege than to "fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ," a privilege of which their persecutions were a manifest proof and token. For if they were duly "exercised thereby" they would find that in patient endurance they were moving on toward the ultimate attainment of perfection in the spiritual life.

We who are living in these piping times of peace can scarcely realize what all this meant to the Christians of those days: but it is as true now as ever that cross-bearing is an immeasurable factor in character-building, and that those who suffer with Christ shall also reign with him.

IMITATIO CHRISTI

CHAPTER 2

The second of the factors that enter into the attainment of the Greater Salvation is the imitation of Christ. "Let this mind be in

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you," says Paul, "which was also in Christ Jesus."

In explaining what he means by "the mind that was in Christ Jesus," the Apostle sets forth a great doctrine, called by the early fathers "The Kenosis," which is not sufficiently emphasized in our time (verses 5-11).

First, Christ was "in the form of God," a reference to his pre-existence "in the glory of the Father before the world was."

Second, though he was "equal with God" he did not think the "form" of his Godhead was to be so cherished as to prevent his working out salvation for the children of men.

Third, in order to accomplish his beneficent purpose in our behalf he became incarnate, laying aside his divine "form" and taking upon him "the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of sinful men," that so he might expiate our sins by becoming "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Fourth, by this temporary surrender of his divine glory he wrought out for himself an immeasurable triumph. When he returned again to "the glory which he had with the Father before the world was," what a welcome

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awaited him! "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and let the King of glory enter in!" The gates of heaven are ever thronged with a countless multitude who enter to sing the praises of him who hath redeemed them with his blood. These are "the fruit of the travail of his soul," of whom it was prophesied, "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand."

This, then, is the doctrine of the Kenosis, or "self-emptying" of Christ. This is the mind of self-denial that was in Christ Jesus; and this is the mind that must also be in those who profess to follow him.

And just here is where Paul strikes the keynote of the whole Epistle in these words: "*Wherefore work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you.*" It is obvious that he does not refer to mere salvation from the penalty of sin; for all along he has been strenuously insisting that a salvation of that sort is of grace and not by works. "Ye are saved by faith, and that not your own, it is the gift of God." A larger

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salvation is here designated, in which we co-operate with God. It begins at the moment when one accepts Christ and is "worked out" as he goes on thenceforward from grace to grace, from glory to glory, translating faith into the known terms of character and usefulness, until it ends in a salvation not "so as by fire," but with a triumphant and abundant entrance into the Kingdom of God.

We are encouraged to *work out* this great salvation, because God "worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure." We know what that "good pleasure" is: it is that we should make the most of ourselves by serving him and our fellow-men. In thus co-operating with his indwelling Spirit we may be confident of ultimately attaining unto complete sanctification; for "if God be for us, who can be against us?"

FIRST FINALLY

CHAPTER 3

"Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord." Why "finally"? Because in striking this exultant note the Apostle had reached a good stopping-place. We shall find another "final-

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ly" further on and one of vast importance; all of which intimates that Paul had reached such momentum that, like many an earnest preacher, he found two finally necessary for the "practical application" of his theme.

But why "rejoice"? What ground of rejoicing had these persecuted church members of Philippi? This in particular, that in much tribulation and by the patient imitation of Christ they were surely working out for themselves a salvation which would ultimately introduce them into the immediate presence of him at whose right hand are pleasures forevermore.

"Rejoice, ye pure in heart,
Rejoice, give thanks and sing;
Your glorious banner waves on high,
The Cross of Christ your King!
Still lift your standard high,
Still march in firm array!
As warriors, through the darkness toil
Till dawns the golden day!"

Now here is a wonderful thing. Unable to restrain himself, this worn-out, half-blind, crippled old soldier of the Cross gives way to his joy in such boasting as, under other cir-

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cumstances, would have been most unseemly (verses 4-14). But his boasting is neither here nor ever in himself: his birth as "a Hebrew of the Hebrews," his "righteousness as touching the Law," his zeal, culture, Roman citizenship—all these are less than nothing. "To know Christ and be found in him," this is his heavenly privilege, his river of joy, his irrepressible boast!

A boy again in Tarsus, he sits in the agora witnessing an Olympic race. The king stands by the golden milestone holding the laurel wreath. The athletes, stripped to the waist, with every muscle tense, are at the purple line. The signal is given; the runners are off! Behold how Paul imagines himself among them: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended (i. e., laid hands upon the prize); but this one thing I do: forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark (the milestone) for the prize (the laurel crown) of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus!"

And what is this "high calling of God in Christ Jesus"? What but the calling of God

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to come up higher? What but the calling of Christ our King to so run as to obtain the unfading crown of righteousness? What but the call of the Holy Spirit to co-operate with him in working out for ourselves that Greater Salvation which means not a scant "title clear to mansions in the skies" but the *service chevron* and promotion to the front rank of service in the Kingdom of God?

In pursuance of this injunction the Apostle warns the Christians of Philippi to be ever on guard against "dogs (i. e., carnal and masterless), evil workers, and the concision" (i. e., compromise with ceremonialism), and to have their "conversation" (i. e., manner of life) in heaven "from whence we look for the coming of Christ."

SECOND FINALLY

CHAPTER 4

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest (serious), whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be

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any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things.”

STOP, LOOK, AND LISTEN!

Our troubles and disappointments are most largely due to thoughtlessness. “I didn’t think” shuts the gates of heaven to a great multitude that no man can number. The sweet reasonableness of the Great Salvation commends it to all thoughtful men. Everybody would believe in Christ were it not that many refuse to look at him long enough to know him.

STAND FAST!

“Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved, so stand fast in the Lord.” Steadfastness is merely another way of spelling Standfastness. It is well to do well, but “patient continuance in well-doing” is what we need most of all. Wherefore let us run and not faint. The word of the Master is, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life.”

The Epistle closes with a grateful acknowledgment of the kindness of Paul’s Philippian friends in contributing “once and again” to

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his necessities. He wishes them to know, however, that the Lord is abundantly providing for him. Then the customary salutations, and last of all "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all," without which he can never conclude his messages of love.

VII

THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

THE CHRISTOCENTRIC EPISTLE

It was while Paul was still a prisoner in the Prætorian camp at Rome that Epaphras, the minister of the church at Colosse, came to visit him. It was a long journey from Colosse in the center of Asia Minor to Rome; and only an errand of grave importance could warrant it. So far as we know, Paul had never been at Colosse, and the church members there were strangers to him. Their pastor was troubled by certain dissensions among them, due to the presence of false teachers who had been "spoiling them through philosophy and vain deceit." Under these circumstances, who would be so likely to give him wise counsel as Paul the aged, with his vast experience and tact in the administration of church affairs? Epaphras found the old man in chains and bowed under many burdens, but busy as always, unconquerably cheerful and ready to

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entertain his visitor with all the resources of a most Christian heart and hospitable hand.

It chanced that before this visit was over a disciple named Tychicus was constrained to make a journey into the east via Colosse; and Paul took advantage of the opportunity to write this Epistle and forward it by him. It will be observed that, in the prefatory greeting, the apostle takes occasion to speak to the members of the Colossian Church of Epaphras, their absent pastor, as "a faithful minister of Christ," and again in his closing salutations as one "laboring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."

The letter opens with "Grace be unto you," which is followed by loving salutations, and then by another of Paul's wonderful prayers (verses 9-15). In this prayer for the church members of Colosse he asks three things in particular: *First*, for their "knowledge of God's will," that they might "walk worthy of him." *Second*, for strength "according to his glorious power" so that in their afflictions they might be "patient with joyfulness." And

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third, for gratitude by reason of their translation into "the Kingdom of his dear Son."

THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST

CHAPTER I

(1) As Creator. "All things in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, were created by him and for him" (verses 16, 17).

(2) As "Head of the Church which is his body": wherefore he, being "the first-born from the dead," is Elder Brother of all those who are quickened from the dead by a living faith in him (verses 18-20).

(3) As "Reconciler of all things unto himself." An earnest and forecast of his universal reign, when every knee shall bow before him, is given in the reconciliation of these Christians of Colosse, who "were sometime alienated and enemies by wicked works," but were now incorporated "into the body of his flesh," that they might ultimately be presented "holy and unblamable and unreprouable in his sight" (verses 21-23).

To declare this supremacy of Christ, says Paul, is "the end of his ministry" (verses 24-

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29). And by the same token, it must be the aim and purpose of every faithful minister.

This brings us to "the riches of the glory of the Mystery" (verses 27-29). What is the mystery here referred to? Nothing less than "Christ in you!" By this we are given to understand that the life of Christ as Head of the Church pervades the humblest of the members of his body. Here is a truth that goes deeper even than the intimation in the parable of the Vine and its branches. The will of Christ as Saviour of the world moves in us and "works mightily" through us! Blessed is the Christian who realizes this mystery, for so it comes to pass that the Kingdom of God is within us and "the hope of glory" before us.

THE SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST

CHAPTER 2

We have here a clear statement of the great doctrine of the *Pleroma*, or fulness of Christ.

(1) In him, says Paul, are "hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge": this against the false teaching not only of the Judaizers and Platonists of Colosse, but everywhere in these

last days. What a safeguard would be ours against all error were we willing to sit as disciples at the feet of our Master instead of listening at the false oracles of those who would "beguile us with enticing words."

(2) "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Observe the comprehensiveness of this statement: "all fulness"—"all the fulness of the Godhead"—"all the fulness of the Godhead bodily!" If every other affirmation of Scripture—and they are many and divers—with respect to the eternal and co-equal divineness of Christ were to be explained away, here is a challenge so clear, definite and conclusive that it can only be answered by an outspoken denial of the Scriptures as the Word of God.

(3) "In him ye are complete." For this let us substitute the quaint rendering of the Wycliffe version, "In hym ye ben fylled." What need of consulting pagan philosophy if "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" are offered in Christ? Or why go back to "the rudiments" of Jewish ceremonialism if, as Paul says, "ye are circumcised in Christ by the putting off of sin"? The prophetic pur-

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pose of the Levitical law, as "a shadow of things to come," was so perfectly fulfilled in Christ as its antitype that he absolutely "blotted out this handwriting of ordinances (i. e., the Ceremonial Law), nailing it to his cross" and so "taking it out of the way."

(4) Therefore, says Paul, "let no man beguile you" into any mode of thinking or believing which does not hold to Christ as "the Head, from which all the body is knit together, being nourished in its joints and bands, and thus increasing with the increase of God." In other words, Christ for the Christian is Alpha and Omega, the beginning of hope and the end of endeavor; first, last, midst and all in all.

OUR LIFE IN CHRIST

CHAPTER 3

"If ye be risen with Christ"—a mighty, comprehensive "if"! For the man who is not risen with Christ is still dead in trespasses and sins, inasmuch as he is still "concluded" under the law which says "The soul that sinneth it shall die." But faith in Christ links us so vitally with him that we triumph in his triumph

over death and hell. "Because he liveth we shall live also!" Or, to speak again with Wesley, "We two are so joined, he can't go to heaven and leave me behind." The believer—always assuming that his faith is heart-wise—is forever safe, because his "life is hid with Christ in God"—hid as a beleaguered garrison in an impregnable castle, so securely that the blazing gates of hell shall not prevail against him.

But the mighty "if" is followed by an equally mighty "therefore." If a man be truly risen with Christ it must follow, as the night the day, that his walk and conversation will show it. *First*, by a "putting off" of "the old man with his deeds" (verses 5-9). *Second*, by a "putting on" of "the new man who is renewed after the image of Christ" (verses 10-14). *Third*, by the indwelling and supreme control of the Word and peace of God (verses 15, 16); and *fourth*, by an outgoing of this indwelling life "in word and deed" (verses 17-25).

There is cold comfort for a melancholy Christian in this presentment of the case; since even our "teaching and admonition"

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must be with the joy of "singing in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." Alas, then, for those who "wear long faces, just as if their Maker, the Lord of glory, were an undertaker!" To look dyspeptic is ill becoming to one who is risen with Christ. It is a poor way of showing that his religion agrees with him. Wherefore "whatsoever we do"—whether it be to carry a banner or a burden—let us "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."

The remainder of this chapter is addressed to husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, with reference to the supreme duty of serving "not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God."

SALUTATIONS

CHAPTER 4

Nothing remains but to salute the brethren in the fellowship of this mystery.

(1) Tell them to "continue in prayer," not forgetting to "pray for me that I may speak

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the mystery of Christ and manifest it as I ought to."

(2) Tell them "to walk in wisdom toward them that are without" (i. e., the "friendly citizens"), seasoning their speech with salt, that they "may know how to answer every man."

(3) Say to Archippus, who brings you this letter, "Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received of the Lord, that thou fulfil it."

(4) Tychicus ("a beloved brother"), Onesimus (the runaway slave, "who is one of you"), Aristarchus ("my fellow prisoner"), Marcus (the same John Mark who once forsook us, Acts 13:13), Epaphras (your own "faithful minister," now visiting me), Luke ("the beloved physician"), Demas (not always reliable, 2 Tim. 4:10)—all these salute you.

(5) Salute not only the brethren in Colosse, but those in the neighboring town of Laodicea; and "cause that this letter be read likewise to them." To them? "How far yon little candle throws its beams!" The round-

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robin has crossed the Seven Seas and all the intervening centuries even down to us!

(6) "The salutation by the hand of me Paul." It is thus intimated that, while the doctrinal parts of this Epistle were dictated to an amanuensis, the greetings were in the handwriting of Paul himself: as if to illustrate the saying, "Now abide these three, faith, hope, love; but the greatest of these is love." In all the world there is no tie like "the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love."

And after that, nothing remains but to say, "Grace be with you?"

VIII

FIRST THESSALONIANS

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

The date of this letter is A. D. 52. It is the first of Paul's letters on record, having been written seventeen years after his conversion. No doubt he had written others previously, but this, like the other thirteen which are included in the canon of the Scriptures, was composed under the immediate direction of the Spirit of God.

It was written at Athens, under the following circumstances: When Paul set out from Antioch with Silas on his second missionary journey he crossed the Hellespont into Europe, preached at Philippi, where he was scourged and imprisoned; passed on to Thessalonica, where after three successful weeks he was driven out by a mob; proceeded to Berea, where further opposition awaited him, and had now reached Athens, where he was hoping to continue in peace. In order to assure himself as to the welfare of those recent-

ly converted he sent Timothy back to revisit them. The report appears to have been favorable except in the case of the Thessalonians, who were greatly disturbed by certain misapprehensions as to the Second Coming. They expected this to occur in the immediate future: indeed they were looking for it with the dawn of every day.

In this connection, they were fearful lest their deceased friends would have to sleep in their graves until the final resurrection, while they themselves at his coming were to be caught up into the air to meet him.

It was to correct such erroneous views that this letter was written. The necessity was pressing, because many of these recent converts had, in the enthusiasm of their new hope, given up all attention to secular affairs and put on ascension robes, so to speak, in anticipation of Christ's appearance. There was a hurry-call for action, and Paul, under the influence of the Spirit, was impelled to meet it.

A word, before we go any further, as to Thessalonica and its people. The city, formerly called Thermaë, had been restored and

greatly improved by Cassander, a general in the Macedonian army, after winning a battle there, 300 B. C., and had been renamed in honor of his wife, a sister of Alexander the Great. The place was from the beginning a famous resort for Jews. It ultimately became an important center of Christian influence, from which the Gospel "sounded forth" like a clarion to all the surrounding region. (Chap. 1:8.) In recent times Salonica has been the seat of important events in the World War. It has a population of about 100,000, one-third of whom are Jews.

OUTLINE

The skill of Paul as a dialectician will be observed in his method of gradual approach. He does not plunge at once into the business in hand—that is, the correction of mistakes as to the Second Coming—but, like an experienced barrister, or diplomatist, he advances other considerations, not unimportant in themselves, to prepare the way.

He begins with *the salutation* "Grace be unto you." This is the sign-manual of all Paul's letters. By "grace" he means the un-

merited favor of God in the gift of his only-begotten Son.

“Grace, ’tis a charming sound,
 Harmonious to the ear;
 Heaven with the echo shall resound,
 And all the earth shall hear.”

Our salvation is not of merit but of grace. The word is cognate with *gratis*. God is not a merchant, that he should sell heaven for a *quid pro quo*; and, if he were, what coin have we that could pass current between us? Good works? What are they to him? He is no merchant bartering with bankrupt men, but a King, the very King of kings, with a heart as generous as his inexhaustible exchequer, loving to give and giving right royally. “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; yea, come; buy wine and milk without money and without price!”

But alas, our natural pride revolts! We would fain be saved but not for nothing. Let us earn heaven by “deeds of the law,” by penance and ceremonial observance and long pilgrimages, anything rather than “without money and without price.” Yet on this point the Gospel is clear: we must be justified by

faith alone, which is simply a heartfelt acceptance of the unspeakable gift.

As we proceed with Paul's letters we shall find this thought of salvation by grace pervading every one of them. "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified." "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh (i. e., our sinful flesh), God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." Wherefore salvation is free, its only condition being faith in Christ as our Saviour. It cannot be earned by anything we can do. "This is the work of God (i. e., the only work that can make us acceptable in his sight), that ye believe on him whom God hath sent." That is to say, we must be willing to be saved *gratis* or not at all.

THANKSGIVING

CHAPTER I

(1) Paul is grateful to God for their election and conversion, and for their "work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope."

The Gospel which Paul had preached to them had come "not only in word but in power, in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance." Of this they had given proof by "turning from idols to serve the living and true God."

(2) Nor was this all; not content with the assurance of their own salvation, they had "sounded abroad" the Gospel in all the surrounding country; and that despite "much affliction" or opposition and persecution on the part of Jews and others who differed with them.

By the time the members of the Thessalonian Church had listened to the reading of the letter thus far they would probably have conceived a rather more than fair opinion of themselves: but as it proceeds they would be likely to discover plenty of room for improvement. Paul is no novice in the art of persuasion. Was he not a disciple of Gamaliel, that famous advocate who was called "the Flower of the Law"?

REMEMBRANCE

CHAPTER 2

(1) He reminds them of his pastoral care; how he had gone in and out among them

night and day, "gently as a nurse," "charging and exhorting and comforting as a father doth his children"; and how, meanwhile, he had worked at his trade as a tentmaker so "that he might not be chargeable unto them." A good pastor, this man.

(2) He reminds them also of his preaching: how he had declared the truth as God had given him to see it, without fear or favor, "not of guile nor with flattering words, not as pleasing men but God." What better test of faithful preaching could there be?

(3) Moreover he reminds them to their credit how joyously they had received his message, "not as the word of men but, as it is in truth, the Word of God."

(4) And, better still, he reminds them how they had translated this hearing of the Gospel into the terms of common life; "suffering of their own countrymen" without resentment, and seeking to follow Christ and exemplify the truth as he taught it.

(5) For all this Paul congratulates both himself and them, saying, "Ye are our glory and joy."

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PASTORAL CONCERN

CHAPTER 3

He explains why he had sent Timothy to visit them.

(1) To begin with, his young friend was instructed to comfort them in their afflictions. It would appear that the Jews in Thessalonica were giving these Christians no peace. "We told you before," says Paul, "that ye should suffer tribulation, even as it has come to pass"; "but now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord." To stand fast, and "having done all to stand"—with what a martial sound that message rings, over and over again, from the brave lips of this veteran of the Holy War!

(2) His other purpose in sending Timothy, he says, was "to establish them concerning their faith." It is a great thing to be established in faith, to be able to lay one's hand on certain fundamentals and say, "These things I know!" There is no room for an if or a peradventure in the teaching of Christ. Put an if under the manger, the cross or the open sepulchre, and it will prove

as disastrous as a charge of dynamite. The only escape from the distress of doubt and uncertainty is in turning a deaf ear to the caviller, taking Christ at his word and resting in him.

SANCTIFICATION

CHAPTER 4

“This is the will of God, even your sanctification.”

(1) *Personal purity.* The besetting sin of the Thessalonians was sensuality. In accordance with Paul's custom he calls a spade a spade, dealing with marital infidelity and social promiscuity in unmeasured terms. Here is another of those portions of Scripture which was not intended to be read aloud in public assemblies or even at the family altar, but in the secret place, where all alone a man faces the searching eyes of God.

(2) *Brotherly love.* Not even in dealing with the most scandalous offenders against the law of personal purity must the Church forget the requirements of Christian charity: “for ye are taught to love one another: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more.”

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(3) *Attention to business.* The apostle is now approaching his main object, which is to persuade these Christians to take a sober and sensible view of religion, particularly with reference to the Second Coming of Christ. "Study to be quiet," he says; for they were so enthusiastically overwrought by their consuming interest in the Parousia that they were in danger of overlooking other important matters. It is well to be zealously affected in a good cause; but the zeal of these church members of Thessalonica had over-ripened into a veritable fanaticism which led them into a disregard of the common duties of life. "Do your own business," says Paul; "work with your own hands, walk honestly toward them that are without." It is time to call a halt when a man's interpretation of any Christian doctrine sets him at odds with the welfare of the workaday world about him.

(4) *Freedom from anxiety.* In thinking of the Resurrection of the Dead in relation to the Second Coming of Christ these Christians of Thessalonica had somehow arrived at the conclusion that while they were to be "caught up into the air to meet him," their dead were

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to sleep for an indefinite period; which involved a frightful separation! But Paul assures them that nothing of the sort awaited them. Their loved ones who had fallen asleep in Christ were "first to rise" and then those who remained were to be "caught up together with them," so that all would be "together with the Lord." Blessed reunion! Happy day!

AS TO THE TIMES AND SEASONS

CHAPTER 5

(1) The Lord himself had said with reference to his coming again, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." (Acts 1:7.) This should be sufficient for all who are inclined to a close mathematical interpretation of the prophecies bearing upon this event.

(2) But "ye yourselves know that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night"; that is, unexpectedly. When men are looking for it is the very time when it is unlikely to come to pass.

(3) Wherefore, to be watchful is the important matter. "Let us not sleep as do

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others, but let us watch and be sober." Watch! Watch! Watch and pray! "Blessed are all they that love his appearing!"

"I know not when—I only know the fact
That he is coming, and he bids me wait
In joyful expectation day by day.
Uncertainty does not one whit detract
From me the joy of watching at the gate;
It rather adds delight and buoyancy
To my fair hope—
That any night, or any day,
I quickly may be called away
To meet the Lord.

"But though I do not know the how or when,
I know my Lord, and 'tis for him I wait.
Long years the blessed hope of seeing him
Has been my joy. And though beyond my ken
The day and hour of the opening gate,
And many happenings to my mind are dim,
Yet this I know—
That any night, or any day,
I gently may be caught away
To meet the Lord."

All Christians are "millenarians"; but whether "pre" or "post" involves a futile and unseemly controversy. Let it suffice that Christ is coming, and that we watch and prayerfully wait for him; not as those who look out of the windows toward the east, but rather as servants with sickle in hand and

sleeves rolled back addressing ourselves to the harvesting of the fields of God.

He is coming, coming "even as he went into heaven," coming in the clouds of heaven and all the holy angels with him! Though the prophecies bearing upon this supreme event, like all other prophecies, involve not only a revelation but an adumbration (that is, a purposed dimness as to particulars, leaving room for the exercise of faith), nevertheless the fact itself is unveiled in clearest light. All such prophecies in their lack of perspective are like Japanese pictures: you will search them in vain for the foreshortening of details but always in the background behold Fujiyama, snow-crowned Fujiyama! So rings the word Maranatha through all the vague prophecies of Scripture. Maranatha! "The Lord cometh!" This is that "one supreme event to which the whole creation moves."

Amen: even so come, Lord Jesus! Roll swifter round, ye wheels of time, and bring the welcome day!

IX

SECOND THESSALONIANS

THE SECOND COMING (Continued)

Time. A. D. 52; Shortly after the former letter.

Place. Written from Athens.

Not long after the First Epistle had been despatched to Thessalonica it came to Paul's knowledge that *a spurious letter*, purporting to have been written by him (chap. 2:2) had enkindled a more passionate hope than ever among the Christians there for the immediate coming of Christ. He now writes briefly and in haste to disavow the erroneous views which, in that forged letter, had been attributed to him.

CONGRATULATIONS

CHAPTER I

He begins with his customary greeting "Grace unto you," and proceeds at once to assure them of his thankfulness for their growth in three Christian graces.

First: "Because your faith groweth exceedingly." A little faith if it "groweth" is better than a larger faith that simply holds its own. Here is the deeper significance of the mustard seed, not that it is "indeed the least of all seeds," but that it "groweth into a tree, so that the fowls of the air come and lodge in the branches of it." The church members of Thessalonica were entitled to the greater credit because their faith grew in spite of the fact that false teachers had insidiously crept in among them. It is by the upward look and a purposeful resistance to error that we become great believers. We are in no danger of drifting from our moorings so long as we have an anchor to windward, "an anchor sure and steadfast and taking hold of that which is within the veil."

Second: "Your love aboundeth toward each other." No doubt there were differences of opinion among these people, but they knew how to differ and keep sweet. There were grounds for mutual criticism, but they had learned that "charity suffereth long and is kind." They were not intent on pulling motes out of each other's eyes with hot pincers, but

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rather with that delicate touch of sympathy which transforms fault-finding into a heavenly grace and makes a whole Gospel of the proverb, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend."

Third: "Ye are patient in persecution and tribulation," which, says Paul, are permitted "that ye may be counted worthy of the Kingdom of God." If we must needs suffer, it is comforting to know that our sufferings are a part of the Father's gracious plan to fit us for glory further on. A woodchopper does not complain of the knots which he encounters, but wisely and consistently regards them as "all in the day's work." So must we: because we know that our adversity, whatever it may be, is included in the "all things" that "work together for good to them that love God."

So much for Paul's congratulations. He follows them with an earnest prayer for three things: *first*, "that our God would count you worthy of this calling"; *second*, that he would "fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness" (what a complexity of divine love is embraced in those words!); and *third*, that he

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would fulfil "the work of faith with power." Three great petitions; and, for ourselves, amen to them!

CORRECTION

CHAPTER 2

Here is where the forged letter comes in: "We beseech you, brethren, that ye be not soon shaken in mind or be troubled, neither by spirit nor by word nor by *letter as from us.*"

"Shaken" from what? From the truth with respect to the Parousia, as Paul had previously declared it.

"Troubled" about what? About the happy reunion with the scattered members of the family when Christ should come again to claim his own.

One sign is given as a safeguard against any possible misapprehension with respect to the great event, namely, "That day shall not come except there come a falling away first and that man of sin be revealed."

(1) As to the "falling away," no explanation is needed. It is always going on, due to false teaching in the very air. The propa-

ganda is carried on "by spirit and by word and by letter as from us." Books and newspapers are full of it, and there is no lack of pulpits to spread it. And alas, to those who lend a willing ear, "God sendeth strong delusion, that they should believe a lie!" Our only safety lies in steadfastness; that is, in steering by the Word of God. No man can take fire into his bosom without being burned by it.

(2) But what of "that man of sin"! This "mystery of iniquity doth already work," and he shall be "revealed in his time." There are certain marks, however, by which he may be recognized. To begin with, "he sitteth in the Temple of God." Moreover "he showeth himself that he is God"; by which we understand that he assumes divine authority by making himself the Court of Final Appeal in all problems of the spiritual life. Still further, "his coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders." By putting these marks together we have the very portrait of Antichrist as painted elsewhere by the Apostle John: "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus

is the Christ? He is Antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son." (See 1 John 2:18-22, also 2 John 7.)

It thus appears that any denial of the co-equality of Jesus with the Father or any assumption of authority which conflicts with his as set forth in the Scriptures is a direct emanation from the "mystery of iniquity" and, therefore, to be scrupulously repelled by all who would not be "given over to believe a lie."

"Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which ye have been taught." Traditions, forsooth! Are we not warned against "traditional religion" here and there and everywhere! But what is meant by "tradition" except that which is handed down; that is, from those who have gone before us? To be sure, it is a preposterous thing to accept any doctrine for the sole reason that our fathers believed it; but it is folly unspeakable to reject "the old-time religion" merely because of past approval. The best things in the world are old. Old air, old sunshine, old spring-water—who can improve upon them? In everything except "new

thought" (God save the mark!) the presumption is always in favor of experience. "Ring out the old, ring in the new"? Surely, if only we "ring out the false, ring in the true!"

The Germans have a proverb: "Take heed lest you throw out the baby with the bath-water." Many an adventurous captain has courted defeat by cutting off his army from its source of supplies. We are safe so long as we rest our ultimate faith in the binomial revelation, namely, the Incarnate and written Word of God. The moment a Christian abandons these, allured by the man of sin in any guise whatsoever, he is like a planet sweeping out of its orbit and lost in infinite space. Wherefore it behooves us to earnestly contend for the faith delivered to the saints once for all.

This chapter of the Epistle, so full of portentous warning and exhortation, closes with an assurance of Paul's confidence in the steadfastness of his Thessalonian friends: "We are bound to give thanks, brethren beloved, because God hath chosen you." Chosen them to what? Four great things: "Salva-

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tion, Sanctification, Belief of the Truth and the Obtaining of Glory." What more could be desired? Much more, as the following chapter will disclose to us.

MUTUAL PRAYER

CHAPTER 3

There is something pathetic in this "Brethren, pray for us." Why should these Thesalonians be praying for Paul in Athens? Ah, there was a tie between them stronger than the strongest tie of consanguinity! He was not only a fellow-Christian but a former pastor of these people, and, with the burden of all the churches upon him, he needed their sympathy and co-operation, even as Moses needed the upholding of his hands by Aaron and Hur in the valley of Rephidim. And he does not hesitate to mention the special prayers that they were desired to offer for him.

First, that the Word which he preached might "have free course and be glorified"; in other words, that his sermons might not be like water poured upon the ground, which

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cannot be gathered up again, but rather like good seed sown in good ground and bearing fruit abundantly in the salvation of souls to the glory of God.

Second, that he might be "delivered from unreasonable and wicked men" who were "without faith." By this we are given to understand that Paul knew himself to be a man of like infirmities with other men and that he was afraid of being allured from truth and righteousness by the wiles of wicked men. We all stand on slippery places. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

But Paul asks for nothing without an adequate return; he assures these friends that while they are praying for him he will also be praying for them; *first*, that their hearts may be directed "into the love of God"; and *second*, into the "patient waiting for Christ"; and he affirms his "confidence" in the result of this mutual intercession. Verily, "more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of!"

The rest of the Epistle is given to such practical exhortations as would naturally

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occur to a wise shepherd in caring for his flock. For one thing, they are urged to "withdraw themselves" from those who have been making trouble; and for another, to admonish these mischief-makers not unkindly but "as brethren." Still further they are enjoined to give up watching the skies for the Lord's return and attend to business; "for we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all."

The purpose of the Apostle, namely, to repair the damage wrought by the forged letter, is now accomplished and nothing remains but to pronounce his usual benediction, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all."

It is easy to imagine how this letter was received at Thessalonica, with what searchings of heart and reconsecration to duty and vows of "patient waiting for Christ."

It is related that on the morning of the historic "Dark Day" a member of the Legislature of Connecticut, then in session, moved to adjourn in view of the fact that the world was probably coming to an end, whereupon the presiding officer ordered the candles to be

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lit and business continued, saying: "If this really betokens the coming of Christ, he could not find us better employed than at our usual tasks." Good advice for us and for all who love his appearing.

FIRST TIMOTHY

THE YOUNG MINISTER

In the year 53 Paul was stoned at Lystra. (Acts 14:6-20.) His ministry there, however, was not fruitless. His bleeding and miserable body was cared for by a Jewess named Eunice, and her son Timothy, who was destined to play a conspicuous part in the subsequent history of the Church. An extraordinary friendship sprang up between the Apostle and this "gentle boy of Lystra," whom he called his "own son in the faith."

In the year 65, i.e., twelve years after, this young man was settled as minister of the important church at Ephesus. It was a difficult field. The Christians there—"a feeble folk like the conies"—were overshadowed by the pomp and circumstance of "great Diana," whose temple was accounted one of the seven wonders of the world. But, worse than that, they were divided among themselves, owing

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to the influence of certain false teachers who had "crept in among them."

In the years that intervened between Timothy's conversion and the writing of this letter, many things happened. Paul had passed through all sorts of vicissitudes, including a weary imprisonment at Cæsarea, and subsequently in the Prætorian camp at Rome.

At the time of this writing he had left Rome, after an acquittal or release of some sort, and, despite his age and oft infirmities, had apparently set out upon another missionary tour in the hope of even reaching Spain. It was somewhere on this journey—a journey which was presently to come to a tragic end—that Paul, with a heart longing for home and fellowship, sat down to write this letter to his young successor in the pastorate of the Ephesian church.

A PASTORAL CHARGE

AS TO PREACHING

CHAPTER 1

It would appear that certain ones in Ephesus were trying to persuade the young

minister to turn aside from the Gospel unto "fables and endless genealogies, which," says Paul, "minister questions rather than godly edifying." Fables, speculations, religion by inheritance, "science falsely so called," philosophy, politics — these beckoned to Timothy no more alluringly than they do to the young minister in our time: wherefore, this Pastoral Charge of the great Apostle is quite abreast of the age.

The point of his charge is, Preach the Word. He would have Timothy hew to the line and not be "swerved aside"—aside from what? From the Word, which, as he says, consists in brief of a presentation of the justice and love of God.

(1) *God's justice* is set forth in his Law (verses 8-10). But inasmuch as by the Law all alike are "concluded under sin," the preacher must move his pulpit over from Sinai to Calvary; as it is written, "The Law is our schoolmaster to lead us to Christ."

(2) *God's love* is set forth in the sacrifice of Christ. "The end of the commandment is love" (verse 5). Was ever love like that of the spotless Son of God, who gave himself for

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us? To exalt that sacrifice is the prime business of every minister; as Jesus said, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." What other magnet do we need? Why turn aside to adventitious attractions when Christ so clearly promises to do the "drawing" for us?

The pith of the whole matter is in the "faithful saying" which the Pastor Emeritus of the Ephesian Church here prescribes to his young successor as the subject matter of all worth-while sermons, namely, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

AS TO PUBLIC WORSHIP

CHAPTER 2

One of the most important parts of the service of the sanctuary is the minister's prayer. It is, indeed, not his prayer, but that of the whole congregation speaking through him. It behooves him therefore to keep a guard upon his lips; and it behooves the people to follow him with one accord as he "lifts up holy hands unto God."

In this official prayer mention is to be made of "kings and all in authority, that we may

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lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." But suppose some Nero is on the throne? All the more reason for us to be praying that he may turn from his wicked ways.

We observe here an important injunction as to the behavior of the Ephesian women at these public services. They were to present themselves "in modest' apparel," and while the services were going on they were enjoined to keep silence, deferring to the male members of the church. There was a special reason for this in the fact that the unclean profession of the priestesses of Diana was advertised by their gay apparel and loud behavior. In like circumstances the same counsel must needs be given in these days.

AS TO CHURCH GOVERNMENT

CHAPTER 3

We are here advised with respect to official positions in the church: of which two are mentioned, and only two, namely, bishops and deacons. (Phil. 1:1.)

(1) *Bishops*. The word here is *episcopos*, meaning overseer. which is used interchange-

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ably with *presbuteros*, or elder. (See Acts 20:17, 28, etc.) There were two kinds of elders, viz., (a) teaching elders or preachers, and (b) ruling elders, whose special function was to govern in spiritual affairs. (1 Tim. 5:17; 1 Pet. 5:1-4, etc.) The qualifications for the bishopric in both the teaching and ruling class are here given in detail (verses 1-7).

(2) *Deacons*. The business of the deacons was, in general terms, to look after the temporal affairs of the church and, more particularly, to see that adequate provision was made for the poor. (Acts 6:1-6.) The qualifications for the diaconate are also given in detail (verses 8-10).

(3) *Their Wives* (verse 11). Here is something to make a note of. It is safe to say that nowadays, even in the choice of a minister, too little attention is given to the minister's right hand and right eye, to wit, his wife. And when it comes to the election of ruling elders and deacons, few questions are asked concerning their better halves. This, Paul gives us to understand, was not so in

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the early church. Query: is not the old way the better way?

This chapter ends with a closing hymn: Subject, *The Mystery of Godliness*.

“Great is the mystery of godliness:
God was manifest in the flesh (John 1:14),
Justified in the Spirit (Matt. 3:16),
Seen of angels (Luke 2:13, etc.),
Preached unto the Gentiles (Eph. 3:1-9),
Believed on in the world (Rom. 16:25-27),
Received up into glory” (Acts 1:9).

AS TO PERSONAL CHARACTER

CHAPTER 4

The young minister is here reminded of the importance of illustrating his preaching in his walk and conversation. The “seducing spirits” of Ephesus were all the while beckoning him away from a consistent Christian life. “Take heed to thyself,” says Paul; “Exercise thyself unto godliness”; “Be thou an example of the believers”; “Let no man despise thy youth.” The “charges” delivered at the installation of young ministers in our time are practically all based on this ancient

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charge of Paul to Timothy: and they echo this wholesome advice as to the translation of doctrine into life.

AS TO THE CURE OF SOULS

CHAPTER 5

There is no more difficult art than that of fault-finding; and it devolves on every faithful minister to master it. For discipline, though practically abandoned in our time, is as necessary as ever to the peace and order and well-being of the church. Timothy is here advised: *first*, as to the proper method of dealing with the older and younger men (verse 1); *second*, with the older and younger women (verse 2); *third*, with the widows (4-16). Here the problem becomes more complex: for, owing to social conditions in pagan communities, there were countless "grass widows" who, as dependents and oftentimes lewd outcasts, were only too glad to take advantage of the "deacons' fund" even at the expense of a spurious confession of faith. This will explain the importance of careful discrimination between those who

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were "widows indeed" and those who were "wanton, wandering about from house to house" as "tattlers" and "busybodies, speaking things which they ought not." *Fourth*, as to the supervision to be exercised by elders of both the teaching and the ruling class (verses 17-20).

This brochure on Discipline ends with a solemn injunction as to impartiality. In the administration of order in church affairs the bishop, i.e., minister, is to be no respecter of persons. He must remember that all alike are imperfect, the difference being largely in the measure of prudent concealment. Some men wear their hearts on their sleeves, so that their sins go trumpeting before them to judgment; while others are not found out until their sins unheralded rise up to condemn them.

(At this point a brief parenthesis is introduced with reference to Timothy's scrupulosity in refusing to take wine even in the form of a medicine. Paul suggests that he would do well to let the physician prescribe for him.)

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AS TO SERVICE IN GENERAL

CHAPTER 6

(1) There were both masters and servants in the Ephesian church; or, as we would say nowadays, both employers and employes. The apostle here proposes the Christian solution—and the only ultimate solution—of the problem of Capital and Labor, namely, a mutual attitude of brotherhood, or, in other words, of mutual service. “Live and let live” is but a paraphrase of the Golden Rule of Christ. As he came “not to be ministered unto, but to minister,” so must his followers serve one another in a spirit of fraternal love.

(2) This shuts out the desire of gain as the ruling motive of service. Not money, but the love of money, is indeed “a root of all evil.” On the other hand, however, “godliness with contentment is great gain.” To serve in the spirit of Christ is its own reward. No doubt Timothy could have earned a better salary than he was getting in the pastorate of the Ephesian church, but the Lord’s “penny at evening”—a penny bearing the

image of the King with the superscription, "Well done, good and faithful servant"—would compensate him abundantly for all the sacrifices and hardships of his ministerial life.

(3) Therefore, "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust." No doubt there were times when the young minister was tempted to wish for a larger parish with a better salary, but his foster father in Christ urges him to "abide still at Ephesus," and be loyal to the solemn trust which had been reposed in him.

And then this most impressive and exemplary "Charge to the Pastor" closes with the best of benedictions in the familiar words, "Grace be with thee. Amen."

XI

SECOND TIMOTHY

THE APOSTLE'S FAREWELL

You will remember that Paul wrote his first letter to Timothy after his first imprisonment at Rome, while on a missionary journey. He was presently rearrested and brought back. He was now (A. D. 66) in the Mammertine jail awaiting his summons to death. These were the circumstances under which this second letter was written to his "beloved son."

The underground jail in which the old missionary spent his closing days is still shown and is as well identified as any of the antiquities of the Imperial City. A door has been made for the convenience of visitors, but Paul was probably let down through the circular opening which still remains in the ceiling. It is a noisome place. In the wall is a rusted ring to which, the attendant tells you with all confidence, the prisoner was chained.

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There in lonely submission to his Master's will he awaited the footfall of his executioner; and by the dim light through the roof of his dungeon he wrote this last farewell.

There are only four chapters, and each has its keynote. That of the first chapter is *Remember*. Here Paul revives his memories of the old home at Lystra, when his wounds had been bandaged and cared for by Mother Eunice and Grandmother Lois and where Timothy had espoused the faith.

(1) He enjoins Timothy to "stir up the gift that is in him." What that gift was he does not say, but presumably it was one of those *charismata* or spiritual gifts with which the Lord's people were equipped for service. (See Eph. 4:4-16.) Whatever a Christian's gift may be, it behooves him to stir it up continually, lest the fire die down into the dull embers of spiritual apathy.

(2) He exhorts him to guard "that good thing which was committed unto thee, through the Holy Spirit which dwelleth in us." This trust was the Gospel, of which every Christian is a steward, under bonds to dispense it to the glory of God.

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The keynote of the second chapter is "*Be strong.*" It is pathetic to hear this old man, small of stature and of feeble physique, dwelling so strenuously on the importance of being strong. He could not be an athlete, but Timothy must be. He could not be a soldier, but Timothy must fight for mastery. He himself could only be patient now. "Be not ashamed of my sufferings, for in them I do fill up the measure of the sufferings of Christ. As for thyself, however, be strong; be a wise contender in the games, that thou mayest win the crown; be a good soldier of Jesus Christ; be an able workman, needing not to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth!"

It is easy to be a *minimum* Christian, but *maximum* is Paul's word to Timothy. It is easy to stand in the market place with folded hands waiting for a job; but when the Master comes this way pointing to the yellow harvest and saying, "Come thou and reap with me," the quality of our Christian life depends on how we answer him.

The keynote of the third chapter is *Continue*. "For grievous times shall come" when

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men shall have "a form of godliness while denying the power thereof; from such turn away."

(1) Continue in "the power of godliness." What is that? It is the opposite of "the form" of godliness. It is a Christian profession translated into character and usefulness. It is a name written not only on a church roster but in the Lamb's book of life for faithfulness. It is religion as a business and not as an avocation for odd moments. It is a dynamic for service and not a mere sentiment for tears and prayers.

(2) Continue in "the knowledge of the truth." And here is where the Scriptures come in. "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God

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may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (3:14-17.)

The young man is here advised that there are professing Christians in his parish who are "ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth," because they have no ultimate standard of truth except that of their "inner consciousness" as against the ultimate and trustworthy authority of Scripture. There are such people in every parish, who never rest in any postulate long enough to say, "This I know," but are forever going back to rediscuss the rudiments, which they should have settled long ago.

The keynote of the fourth chapter is *Preach*. Preach what? "Preach the Word." Why? Because "the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry." (4:3-5.)

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By this it appears that Timothy was to give the people not what they craved but what they needed, namely, the Word of God. On this is conditioned the success of all preaching. It was not Timothy's word that the people needed, but God's Word. Here is the promise: "My word (not yours) shall not return unto me void, but shall accomplish that which I please and prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it."

In closing, Paul entreats Timothy to come to him with all haste, because, save for faithful Luke, he is alone and lonely. The winter is drawing on, the dungeon is cold: "When thou comest, bring with thee the cloak which I left at Troas."

And then farewell. "I am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day."
(4:6-8.)

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“Servant of God, well done,
Rest from thy loved employ:
The battle fought, the victory won,
Enter thy Master's joy.
The voice at midnight came;
He started up to hear;
A mortal arrow pierced his frame;
He fell, but felt no fear.

At midnight came the cry,
‘To meet thy God prepare!’
He woke, and caught his Captain's eye;
Then, strong in faith and prayer,
His spirit with a bound
Left its encumbering clay;
His tent, at sunrise, on the ground,
A darkened ruin lay.

The pains of death are past,
Labor and sorrow cease,
And, life's long warfare closed at last,
His soul is found in peace.
Soldier of Christ, well done,
Praise be thy new employ;
And, while eternal ages run,
Rest in thy Saviour's joy.”

XII

THE EPISTLE TO TITUS

THE PASTOR OF A HARD PARISH

In the year 66 Paul was summoned before Nero and, strange to say, acquitted and set free. He refers to it briefly as follows: "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me. I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me and strengthened me: that by me the preaching might be fully known and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion." (2 Tim. 4:16, 17.)

On being released from custody he immediately set about preparing for another missionary journey. We have no means of knowing who were chosen to be his companions on this journey, except that among them was Titus, a young Gentile, and probably one of the first converted under Paul. It is quite possible that at the outset the

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missionary group made for Spain, in fulfilment of one of Paul's long-cherished dreams. (Romans 15:24-28.)

On returning from Spain they would naturally sail eastward through the Mediterranean and certainly touch at the island of Crete for supplies. Crete (Candia) was then an important place, as it has ever since continued to be. It was only a hundred and forty miles long and one quarter as wide, but the density of its population may be inferred from the fact that Virgil called it "the island of a hundred cities." The Cretans were notorious for their sensual vices; but when Paul and his companions landed they found not a few Christians among them. It may be that the Gospel had been introduced by certain Cretans who are mentioned as having been present in Jerusalem, thirty odd years before, at the Pentecostal effusion of the Spirit. (Acts 2:11.) In any case there were Christians on the island who needed care; and Paul was not the man to neglect them.

It was decided that Titus should remain and take charge of this difficult parish. His unswerving loyalty to the faith and tactful-

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ness in meeting difficult situations, as at the Council in Jerusalem and on other occasions (see Gal. 2:3-5, also 2 Cor. 12:18), were in evidence as qualifications for the place. It was not Paul's purpose, however, to leave him there permanently, but only until some other suitable man could be sent to relieve him. (Titus 3:12.)

So the ship sailed on. It was Paul's plan to winter in Nicopolis and then resume his itinerary. Meanwhile Titus remained alone in Crete; and while there he received this letter, the Epistle to Titus, containing instructions as to his work.

AS TO THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CRETAN CHURCH

CHAPTER I

“For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.”

It was no small task to “set in order” the affairs of Christians in a hundred cities and bind them together in due form under ordained elders. It is safe to say that these believers, having been so long without com-

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petent teachers and leaders, had the loosest sort of notions as to the duties and responsibilities of the Christian life.

And consider their surroundings. The people of the island were proverbially vicious. To begin with, they were indolent, or, to use Paul's homely phrase, "slow bellies." Many of them were wreckers; having no means of gaining a livelihood but by luring vessels to ruin on the rocky coasts and plundering them.

And they were known everywhere for their untruthfulness. "The Cretans," says Paul, quoting from Epimenides, one of their own teachers, "are always liars." This is a vice common to all Oriental peoples, who are habitually secretive and averse to making a clean breast of anything; but the Cretans were accorded a singular pre-eminence in this particular.

Their third notorious vice was sensuality. Paul speaks of them as "evil beasts," which is usually regarded as having reference to gluttony; but gluttony does not cover the case. They were addicted to other and baser

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indulgences of the flesh, which must be left to the imagination rather than spoken of.

Now these were the people among whom a handful of Christians, without the guidance of teachers or the support of organization, had been trying for years to maintain their spiritual life. Surely Titus had a difficult task before him.

THE YOUNG MINISTER IS FURTHER ENJOINED TO
LOOK TO THE ORTHODOXY OF
HIS PARISHIONERS

CHAPTER 2

“Speak thou the things which become sound doctrine.” A literal translation of the word orthodoxy is “straight teaching,” which was what the Cretans needed. It goes without saying that, after so long neglect, they had fallen into many errors of belief. We are inclined to over-emphasize the prevalence of heresy in the churches of our time; the fact being that the early Christians—before the historic creeds or symbols of belief were formulated—had to be constantly recalled from doctrinal aberrations to the necessity of standing by the faith once for all delivered to the saints. It would be strange, indeed, con-

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sidering their environment, had the Cretans needed no special correction and no "straight teaching" as to the fundamental doctrines that center in Christ.

This injunction of Paul is logically followed by another, to wit: that Titus shall see to it that his parishioners "adorn the doctrine"; which means, of course, that they live up to it. For "faith without works is dead"; in other words, it is no faith at all. Orthodoxy saves nobody unless it is translated into the terms of daily life. Straight teaching must, therefore, be followed up by the inculcation of straight living.

At this point the Apostle becomes very specific, advising the aged men and women, then the young men and women, and then the slaves as to how they can best show themselves "patterns of good works"; and his advice is based upon the fact that Christ had died for us "that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, *zealous of good works.*"

Those who think that the Apostle James was at odds with the Apostle Paul as to the necessity of good works in the scheme of sal-

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vation will do well to stop, look and listen a while.

THE DUTY OF OBEDIENCE IS HERE ENJOINED,
FIRST TO CHRIST, AND THEN TO THE
POWERS THAT BE

CHAPTER 3

It was necessary to remind these people, belonging to a lawless community, that as Christians they must be in subjection to magistrates because, however inefficient those magistrates might be as executives of law and order, they were "ordained by God."

The young minister having been thus duly enjoined to "exhort and rebuke," the rest of the brief Epistle is taken up with affectionate greetings, and it closes, of course, with the benediction, "Grace be unto you."

How Titus succeeded in his hard parish we have no means of knowing: but we may rest assured that he did his best, leaning hard on God. In the centuries that have intervened between then and now the island has not lacked for Christian witnesses. It has long been under the political domination of the Turks, but the religion of the false prophet has never gained a substantial foothold there.

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The prevailing form of worship has always been that of the Greek Church; and inasmuch as the island has recently been restored to Greece by the arbitrament of war, there is reason to hope for better days.

It is related that while Dr. Guthrie was minister in the Cowgate at Edinburgh, he was visited by his friend, Dr. Chalmers, whose parish was of a very different sort. One night as they stood together on one of the bridges over the ravine which divides the old city from the new, looking down upon "the Cowgate" with its surging throng of submerged souls, Dr. Guthrie turned to his friend and said with tears in his voice, "O Chalmers, this is my golden field! See them, the dear reckless people, whom the Lord has given me to win for him!"

So must Titus have thought of his Cretan parish. It was his golden field! But the probability is that his pastorate was a brief one. It was Paul's purpose to send Artemas or Tychicus to relieve him as soon as possible; and then he wrote to Titus: "Be diligent to come unto me to Nicopolis, for I have determined there to winter."

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It is a true saying, Man proposes, but God disposes. Paul planned, after wintering at Nicopolis, to resume his missionary journey, taking Titus with him. But instead of wintering in Nicopolis, he summered in heaven. He was rearrested and carried back to Rome, where, at his second trial, sentence of death was passed upon him. Somewhere outside the walls the tired missionary bowed his head to the axe, closed his dim old eyes and, a moment later, opened them in the Kingdom of God.

XIII

THE EPISTLE TO PHILEMON

“THE POLITE EPISTLE”

Keynote: “For Love’s Sake”

As a rule the letters of Paul are distinguished for strength rather than for rhetorical finish. In this one, however, he betrays the scholarly culture which he had received in the University of Jerusalem, where he sat at the feet of Gamaliel, “the Flower of the Law.”

It is the only letter addressed by Paul to a layman. His other Epistles were either general, parochial or pastoral; but here he writes to a private friend; and for this reason the letter affords an interesting sidelight into the writer’s personal life and character.

And it was written with Paul’s own hand. In other cases he made use of an amanuensis, which was necessary not only by reason of his age and infirmities, but because he was a pris-

oner in chains. Here, however, the writing is his very own. It is safe to say the lines were uncertain and the characters rude; but what would we not give to see that tremulous autograph: "I, Paul, with mine own hand. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit"!

The letter is chiefly remarkable, however, for its broad spirit of humanity. It touches on one of the greatest of social questions and in doing so lays a mighty emphasis on the brotherhood of man. Nowhere else does the great Apostle so uncover his breast as in this little letter addressed to Philemon as his spiritual son.

It carries us back to the year 56, when Paul was sojourning in Ephesus. He preached there for a period of two years, making his headquarters in the lecture room of Tyrannus. Meanwhile he extended his ministry by frequent itineraries among the outlying towns.

One of these towns was Colosse. There he made the acquaintance of a weaver whose name was Philemon. It was natural that Paul, who made his living by the kindred

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trade of tentmaking, should cultivate friendly relations with him. In due time, almost as a matter of course, this weaver was converted to Christ. His wife, Apphia, and his son, Archippus, were also baptized; and presently we hear of "the church in the house of Philemon," which was destined to play an important part in subsequent events. In this house Paul was accustomed to hold divine service, with the family and neighbors gathered about him. The slaves of Philemon, of whom he probably had a considerable number engaged in his shop and warehouse, were present at these services.

So it happened that Onesimus, one of these slaves, heard the Gospel. His heart, no doubt embittered by his bondage, was poor soil for the good seed. He could not forget the distant home, from which he had probably been carried away in some Roman raid. The injustice of his bonds rankled within him. He was at odds with fate, with his master, and with God.

All this was seven years before the writing of this letter. In the meantime many things have happened. Paul had gone hither and

yon on his missionary journeys, crossing the deserts and climbing the mountains to preach the Gospel of Christ. He had endured "perils of robbers, perils of his own countrymen, perils by the heathen, perils in the city, perils in the wilderness and perils in the sea." He had known "weariness and painfulness, hunger and thirst, fastings and cold and nakedness." He had been stoned more than once and had suffered shipwreck. Five times he had received forty stripes save one. He had tasted prison fare in many cities. He had passed two dreary years in the Castle at Cæsarea; after which, falling back on his rights as a Roman citizen, he had made his appeal to Cæsar. Reaching Rome at length, through many vicissitudes, he was taken to the Prætorian camp and kept as a prisoner of importance with guards chained to his wrists. He was, however, allowed a certain measure of freedom, being permitted to dwell in his own hired house and receive his friends. His preaching at this time was fruitful in many conversions, among whom were some of the attendants in Cæsar's palace. The hired

house of Paul was the resort of many seekers after truth.

One day a wretched man in rags and tatters came to visit him. He was worn and emaciated, with a hunted look in his eyes. It was the slave Onesimus, who had heard the Gospel in the house of Philemon so long ago. Paul received him, won his confidence and brought him to the saving knowledge of Christ. Then came his confession: he had escaped from Colosse and made his way through danger and difficulty to Rome, a thousand miles away! It sounds like the stories we used to hear of negroes fleeing through the Dismal Swamp with bloodhounds baying behind them. The runaway had hoped, no doubt, to lose himself among the throngs of Rome; for there is no wilderness like a great city. But conscience pursued him. He confessed to Paul that he was not only a fugitive but a thief. He had robbed his master. How could he become a Christian with that awful shadow over him? The advice of Paul was that he should at once return to his master and give himself up.

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These were the circumstances under which this letter was written. Onesimus himself was charged with its safe transmission to Colosse, and he was a voluntary postman. "Haste, post, haste!" Imagine the meeting of this runaway slave and his master!

The letter is very brief, consisting of a single chapter only twenty-five verses long; but what a *multum in parvo!*

Greeting (verses 1-3) from Paul and Timothy, his "brother," to Philemon, his wife Apphia and son Archippus (see Col. 4:17), together with the church in their house, "Grace to you, and peace."

Introduction (4-9). The request which Paul is about to make of Philemon demands the exercise of consummate tact. Observe now the tact and tactics of this clever dialectician: he does not plunge abruptly *in medias res*, but puts Philemon in remembrance of his indebtedness to Paul for having conveyed to him "every good thing which was in him" by the faith of the unspeakable riches of Jesus Christ; "wherefore," says the writer, "though I might enjoin thee, yet for love's sake, I rather beseech thee."

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The Business in Hand (10-22). It is easy to imagine the scene: Philemon in his doorway at Colosse, facing his former slave, who awaits with anxiety a decision that means everything to him. The master reads, "I beseech thee for my son Onesimus." He knows what that means; for he is himself one of Paul's large family of spiritual sons. Is this runaway slave of his, now trembling at his threshold, indeed a brother in Christ? Then, truly, their relations are changed. And this is what Paul now proceeds to show in a threefold request.

First (10-14), he bespeaks a welcome for Onesimus: "Thou, therefore, receive him as mine own heart."

Second (15-17), he asks Philemon to receive this runaway bondman as a fellow-worker in spiritual things: "If thou count me therefore a *partner*, receive him as myself," i.e., no longer as a menial, but as a brother beloved and as a profit-sharer in the service of Christ. Here verily is the true Christian spirit; for in this fellowship there is neither Jew nor Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all and in all.

Third (18, 19), he asks that Onesimus may be forgiven of whatever wrong or injury he may have done his master. This includes the money that he had stolen from him. "If he oweth thee aught," says Paul, "put that on mine account. I, Paul, have so written with mine own hand; I will repay it." This sounds like a promissory note; and considering the financial status of Paul, it could scarcely be expected that he would ever pay it. He reminds Philemon, however, that he has a running account with him and that he proposes to draw on it, "Albeit, I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self." He engages, however, that Onesimus shall make all possible restitution, saying, "He who was in time past unprofitable shall now be profitable unto thee." *

*A letter written by Pliny to his friend Sabinianus, in behalf of a runaway slave, is referred to as furnishing a singular parallel to this Epistle of Paul. In that letter, which is here given, it will be observed that, notwithstanding its beautiful spirit, there is no mention of equality or brotherly love. "Pliny to Sabinianus, greeting: Your freedman, whom you lately mentioned to me with displeasure, has been with me, and threw himself at my feet with as much submission as he could have done at yours. He earnestly requested me, with many tears, and even with all the eloquence of silent sorrow, to intercede for him; in short, he convinced me by his whole behavior that he sincerely repents of his fault. I am persuaded he is thoroughly

So runs the philosophy of the Gospel. Down go the artificial walls of caste! How hard it is for us to realize this. We are slow to admit that blood is thicker than water; and that in the atoning blood of Christ a kinship is created which bridges the gulf between prince and peasant, between master and man, between the stately housewife and Cinderella at her kitchen fire.

The remainder of this brief Epistle is taken up with salutations and the benediction, "The

reformed, because he seems deeply sensible of his guilt. I know you are angry with him, and I know it is not without reason; but clemency can never exert itself more laudably than when there is the most cause for resentment. You once had an affection for this man, and, I hope, will have again; in the meanwhile, let me only prevail with you to pardon him. If he should incur your displeasure hereafter, you will have so much the stronger plea in excuse for your anger as you show yourself the more exorable to him now. Concede something to his youth, to his tears and to your own natural mildness of temper; do not make him uneasy any longer, and I will add, too, do not make yourself so; for a man of your benevolence of heart cannot be angry without feeling great uneasiness. I am afraid, were I to join my entreaties with his, I should seem rather to compel than request you to forgive him. Yet I will not scruple even to unite mine with his; and in so much the stronger terms, as I have very sharply and severely reprov'd him, positively threatening never to interpose again in his behalf. But though it was proper to say this to him, in order to make him more fearful of offending, I do not say so to you. I may, perhaps, again have occasion to entreat you upon his account, and again obtain your forgiveness; supposing, I mean, his fault should be such as may become me to intercede and you to pardon. Farewell."

grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit."

Let us accompany Onesimus on his return to Colosse with this letter in hand. He presents himself at his owner's door—for the last time at the *back* door. Observe the masterful look in Philemon's face. He is thinking, perhaps, of the bastinado; and in common justice the runaway thief deserves it. But as Philemon reads, his countenance changes; the angry wrinkles are smoothed out; a warm hand is extended: "Welcome, Onesimus, my brother in Christ."

So ends the story, like the "Mystery of Edwin Drood," with a long dash. But tradition furnishes the sequel; it says that Onesimus became a faithful toiler in the shop of Philemon, that he lived a consistent Christian life, that in later years he became pastor of the Colossian church, and finally sealed his faithfulness with martyrdom. If so, there must have been a fine greeting at heaven's gate when Paul, who had been beheaded beneath the walls of Rome, met the slave who had just arrived at heaven's gate in a chariot of fire.

There are two practical thoughts suggested by this letter.

The first is the power of the Gospel to revolutionize the character of a man. In Luther's exposition of this Scripture he says, "We are all Onesimi"; by which I suppose he means that we are all fugitives from law and justice; "for there is no difference; all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." We are runaways from truth and duty, from conscience and from God.

And to all alike the Gospel offers a free pardon. The plea which Christ makes for us sinners is the same that Paul made in behalf of the fugitive slave. He takes our place at the bar of the offended law, saying, "If this man hath wronged thee or oweth thee aught, put that to mine account. I, Christ, with mine own hand, I will repay it!"

Nor is that all. He proposes to reconstruct us; so that whereas we have been unprofitable servants, we may now be profitable to God. He turns us right about face. He regenerates us by his Spirit; so that "old things are passed away and, behold, all things are become new." One who truly

submits himself to the power of Christ gets a new mind, a new heart, a new conscience, and a new will. Is there any power on earth except the Gospel which can do this? We speak of the mystery of regeneration; but however mysterious it may be, there is no denying it. The miracle is constantly going on. How often have we seen a drunkard taken out of the gutter and set upon his feet by the grace of God! How often have we seen a forlorn woman taken out of her shame and restored to character and self-respect by the Gospel! We may not be able to understand or explain it; but blessed be God, we are familiar with it.

The other truth that lingers with us is the power of the same Gospel to transform the world. We have been wondering, no doubt, why Paul in this letter to Philemon did not denounce slavery in scathing terms. What an opportunity he had for the use of dynamite just there! But this is not the divine way of doing things. God works in the calm logic of events. "The eternal years are his."

As to the horrible evil of human bondage there is no manner of doubt nor ever was.

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The slave-market in Rome was the industrial center of the world at the beginning of the Christian era. The Roman armies went forth to conquest and returned with long processions of captives who were exposed for sale like cattle in the market. There were only two thousand patricians or independent men in the city of Rome and half a million slaves. The auction block furnished the shops with toilers, the arena with gladiators, and the brothels with inmates. These slaves lived in stalls or *ergastulæ*; and when they died they were thrown to the fishes or cast into a pit. All this was horrible beyond words. God knew it; and he proposed to do away with it. But his ways are not always our ways. Christ came into the world to break every chain and bid the oppressed go free. The Gospel is full of abolitionism; but not that of John Brown of Osawatomie. There is more of love and less of battle in it.

Our Lord likened the Kingdom to leaven which works noiselessly but in due time leavens the lump. He set certain great principles in motion which were destined to bring about the desired result. He gave the world

his Golden Rule: "Do unto others as ye would be done by." How gloriously that principle has been doing its beneficent work in the progress of the ages!

The world has been drawing nearer and nearer to the brotherhood of man as it has learned more and more of the Fatherhood of God. All civilization is to-day embraced within the charmed circle which we call Christendom; and of the nations within its bounds there is not one which tolerates slavery. "He that believeth shall not make haste."

We are told by scientists that leaven is a mass of living cells; that fermentation is not death and decay, but a manifestation of life. So is God's love in the world. "God is love," and love is life. God has manifested himself in Christ, who said, "I am come that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly." His Gospel is love alive. Its influence is transforming the world. Men and nations are drawing closer together and seeing face to face and eye to eye. We may not precipitate the Golden Age; but we can

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lend a hand to bring it in. We can fall in with those who follow the conquering Christ and, by interpreting divine love in terms of practical life, we may hasten the coming of the time when all alike shall enter into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

XIV

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

“THE ANONYMOUS EPISTLE”

We come now to Paul's fourteenth letter. Of course you know there are those who say Paul did not write it. So far as the inspired truth of the Epistle goes it makes little or no difference whether he did or not; but I think Paul was its author, and my reasons are the very ones that are urged against it.

(1) *Its anonymity.* The presumption is that Paul, having written one Epistle to the Romans, would not willingly close his career without writing another to his own countrymen for whose salvation he professed an overmastering concern. (Rom. 9:3.) But he was in such bad odor with the Jews on account of his insistence that Jesus was their Messiah, that he would certainly deem it unwise to address them over his own name. In writing to the Gentiles he could boldly say, “I, Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, salute

you," but not in approaching a people who were bitterly prejudiced against him.

(2) *Its rhetorical style.* They say the diction of the Epistle is unlike Paul. No doubt, in some respects, this is correct; but suppose the original was written in Hebrew, as there is good reason to believe, and translated into Greek by his faithful and learned friend Luke, is it not likely that there would be some twisting and turning and polishing of rhetorical phrases in the process? Nevertheless there are enough Pauline ear-marks to warrant the conclusion that scarcely any one else could have written it.

(3) But the *tout ensemble* is the main argument for its Pauline authorship. The proposition, though treated from a different standpoint, is precisely that of the Epistle to the Romans, to wit, *Justification by Faith*; and Paul stands forth above all others as the historic advocate and defender of that "postulate of a standing or a falling church," as Luther called it. The two great Epistles complement each other so perfectly that it is difficult to account for either their agreements

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or their differences except on the assumption that one composer was behind them.

The title of the Epistle is *The Priestly Office of Christ*.

In the first two chapters the inspired author shows that Jesus as our atoning High Priest is superior to angels. This rests upon his claim as the Son, the begotten Son, and the only begotten 'Son of God. "For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my son: this day have I begotten thee?"

In the next two chapters he shows that Christ as our High Priest is superior to Moses, who was regarded by the Jews as second only to God himself. This rests upon the fact that Moses, however great, was a servant, while Christ as a Son claimed to be co-equal with the Father. Then too Moses as representing the Law "could not enter in," while Christ as "Joshua" or Jesus leads his people by way of Calvary into the Land of Rest.

In chapters 5-8 he shows the superiority of Christ to Aaron. This is based upon the fact that Aaron was a man, serving in an of-

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fice "ordained of men in things pertaining to God," while Christ is "a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." The mysterious figure of Melchizedek here introduced must not be invested with the supernatural; the simple and significant fact being that he was not of Israel nor of the Aaronic line, but a devout priest of some alien tribe, of whose history, that is, the "beginning and end of his days," little or nothing was known. He belonged to the universal order of priesthood made up of those who everywhere wait upon God. To this superior order, rather than to that of Aaron, did Christ belong, inasmuch as he dwelt beyond the horizons of all human ordination.

In chapters 9, 10 he affirms the superiority of Christ to Levi. The family of Levi were the administrators of the ceremonial or Levitical Law. This most elaborate cult of rites and ceremonies was intended to keep alive the Messianic hope until Christ should appear. When he came these types and symbols naturally and automatically ceased to be binding, being fulfilled in him, as shadows vanish at the break of day. Thus it is written he

blotted out "the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; and, having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." (Col. 2:14, 15.)

In chapter 11 we reach the climax of the argument. In this wonderful chapter we have "*the Canticle of Faith.*"

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." There are those who regard believers as a credulous folk; but faith, so far from being credulity, is *substantial* and *evidential*: only it has to do with things beyond the purview of the physical senses. It has pleased God to equip man with a sixth sense for the apprehension of spiritual truth. By the use of this sense, which distinguishes him from all the lower orders of life, he is able, as Kepler said, "to think God's thoughts after him."

A man without faith is a materialist, being shut up within the circumscription of his finger-tips. How much better is he than a sheep? By faith we solve the problems that have to do with our eternal destiny. The

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men whose names are enshrined in this monumental eleventh of Hebrews were all heroes of faith. They dreamed dreams and saw visions of something better than yellow dust or Sodom-apples or fading wreaths of laurel. They had the far-away look; and that far-away look was fixed on the remote figure of One "whom kings and prophets longed to see and died without the sight."

Now observe the strange anticlimax: "These all, having obtained a good report, through faith, received not the promise." Why not? "*God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.*" Thus do the ends of history come together in Christ. These fathers labored in faith and, behold, how we have entered into their labors. Go back to the beginning of the Epistle and read again: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds."

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This chapter really concludes with the two first verses of the next, in which we, as the heirs of our believing forefathers, are urged to look to Jesus as the "author and finisher" of faith. Great verses these: "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb. 12:1, 2.)

Chapters 12 and 13 contain, as the logical *terminus ad quem* of all that goes before, an exhortation to leave the rudiments of the Gospel and press on to higher levels of truth and character; which does not mean that we are to forsake the fundamentals, but to "leave" them as a flower leaves its bud, or a stream its fountain, or a growing youth his childhood in pressing on toward the fulness

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of the measure of the stature of a man. And this is to be done by a constant increase in faith as we keep our eyes fixed upon him who is "the author and finisher" of it.

And then the benediction, in which the anonymous author betrays his identity: for here is the sign-manual of Paul, "Grace be with you all. Amen."

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