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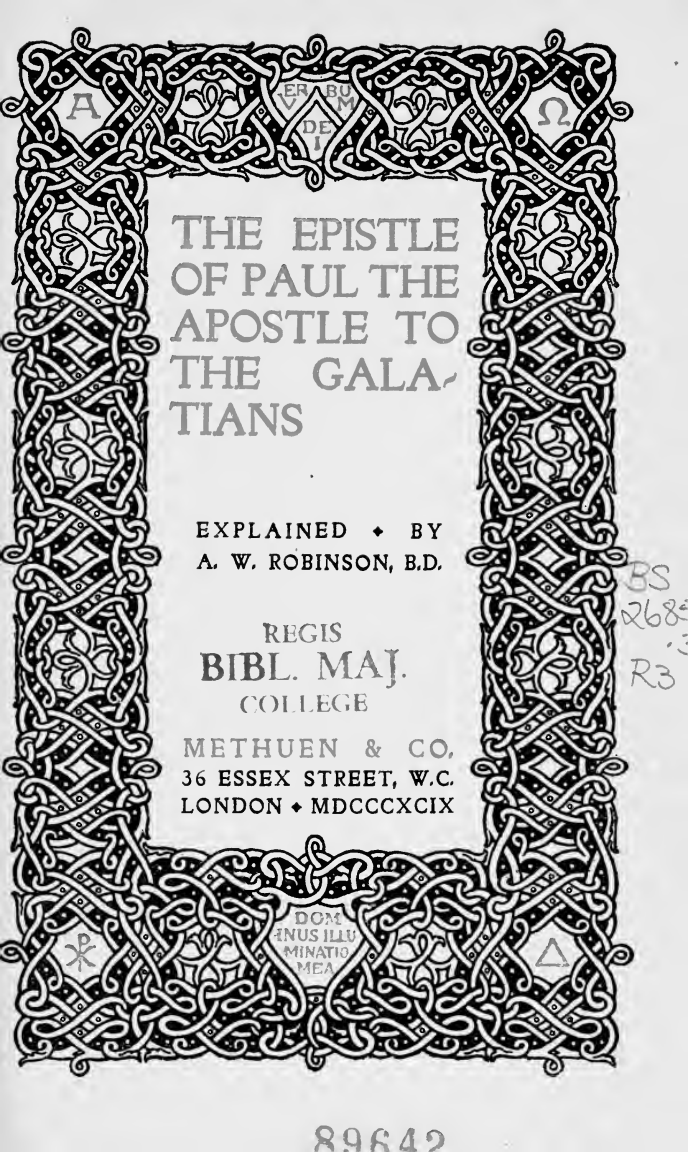


THE CHURCHMAN'S BIBLE

General Editor
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The Epistle of St Paul
to the Galatians



THE EPISTLE
OF PAUL THE
APOSTLE TO
THE GALA-
TIAN

EXPLAINED ♦ BY
A. W. ROBINSON, B.D.

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P R E F A C E

BY THE GENERAL EDITOR

THIS series of Expositions is intended to be of service to the general reader in the practical and devotional study of Holy Scripture. The Editors of the several Books, while taking into account the latest results of critical research, will make it their main endeavour to exhibit and emphasise the permanent truths and principles underlying the Sacred Text, and to indicate the bearing of these truths and principles on the spiritual, the moral, and the social life of the present day.

Each Book is prefaced by a full and clear Introductory Section, setting forth what is known, or may be reasonably conjectured, respecting the date and occasion of the composition of the Book, and any other particulars that may help to elucidate its meaning as a whole. The Exposition proper is divided into short paragraphs, which are grouped together in larger sections corresponding as far as possible with the divisions of the Church Lectionary, and a Table is given shewing the days on which the different sections are appointed to be read at Morning and Evening Prayer. The translation of the Authorised Version is printed in full, such corrections as are deemed necessary to bring out the sense being placed in footnotes.

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A VOICE REPLIED, FAR UP THE HEIGHT,
EXCELSIOR!

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

I

IT would probably not be easy to name a part of the New Testament which is less generally appreciated by the ordinary reader than the Epistle to the Galatians. Most persons seem to think of it as extremely dogmatic and highly controversial in its character; and most English people just now are in a mood to dislike dogmatics; partly, it is to be feared, because they are indisposed to take the trouble required by accurate thought and statement, and partly on account of the weariness with which practical minds are wont to turn from religious controversy, the more so when it is controversy which was waged in a now long-distant past. We are certainly little attracted to the task of raking over what we imagine to be the cinders of burnt-out disputes, on the chance that we may possibly discover something in them that will repay us for our pains.

We are aware, of course, that the greatest importance was attached to this Epistle by those who threw themselves most eagerly into the revolt against traditional Christianity, as it had come to be in the sixteenth century; and we

know that, since that time, it has been regarded by many as a very Gibraltar of Protestantism: but it is not unlikely that, for this very reason, we have been only the more ready to conclude that it is in other directions that we shall most hopefully look for the guidance which is needed to help us in dealing with the questions and problems which beset us at the present day.

And yet, if we allow ourselves to reflect upon the matter, we must see that to acquiesce in such a conclusion would be unsatisfactory, and even worse. Whatever we may think or feel, the fact remains that the deeper consciousness of early Christianity did recognise in this Epistle to the Galatians the signs of an inspired work, and that the Catholic Church has from the first given to it unhesitatingly a place amongst those of its writings which are not to pass away.

This being so, it must surely be our duty and our wisdom to make an effort to put from us all mere prejudice and misgiving, in order that we may apply ourselves heartily and intelligently to the consideration—probably to some of us, it may be the discovery—of the message which is waiting here to deliver itself anew to open and earnest minds.

It may even be that there are some among us who will be glad to render some reparation for their past neglect, and will welcome an opportunity of trying to get down beneath the surface of the

old words and technical phrases, to the essential meaning of great and unchanging principles.

It is for such, more especially, that this attempt at interpretation is intended, and it will certainly fail of its aim if it does not succeed in convincing them that the old Epistle is full of most vivid and vital interest, and that it has a great deal to say about some of the most important of the great questions which can never long be absent from the thoughts of seriously-minded people in this or any other age.

That the task, if it is to be accomplished, will demand a certain amount of labour from us, had better be recognised at the outset. It has been asserted that 'St Paul is perhaps of all writers, ancient and modern, the most difficult to understand.' Certainly it is true to say that, even apart from his lofty spiritual imagination and daring originality which call for more than ordinary sympathy and insight on the part of his would-be interpreters, there are characteristics of his style and treatment which in themselves add considerably to the amount of exertion required from those who are to get at his meaning.

There have not been many writers whose sentences have been packed so full with thought and feeling as are those of St Paul. Into a few lines he often condenses an argument which would require as many pages for its adequate expansion and expression. Then, too, he loves to employ illus-

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trations, and is continually making allusions which, for obvious reasons, are less likely to be familiar and intelligible to us at this distance of time than they were to the readers to whom they were originally addressed. And it is probably no exaggeration to assert that there is not one of all his writings of which all this can be said more accurately than this very Epistle to the Galatians.

However, we need not be afraid that the task will prove insuperable, nor indeed that it will demand more from us than any persons of ordinary thoughtfulness may fairly be expected to give. So many workers have, at different times, been engaged on the field, that there is scarcely a point of difficulty upon which it is not possible to bring to bear an immense amount of knowledge, gathered in the course of long and most careful investigation. In truth, it not seldom happens that we are in danger of finding ourselves bewildered amid the masses of material and the variety of the opinions which are so readily accessible to us. Our aim will be to resist the temptations to turn aside from the main issues, and to endeavour, while paying all due respect to the judgment of recognised authorities, to see as far as we can, with fresh eyes, and for ourselves, the broad outlines and general bearings of this part of the New Testament teaching.

We can have no doubt as to the way by which we must approach the consideration of the

Epistle. The advantages of the historical method have for so many years been so constantly and deeply impressed upon our minds that it would not be at all natural for us, perhaps it would be scarcely possible for us, to adopt any other. An instinct seems to tell us that we must begin by endeavouring to put ourselves, as far as we can, in the position of the writer, and of the persons whom he was in the first instance addressing. We must ask ourselves, 'What were the circumstances which led St Paul to address the Galatians at all, and led him to address them as he did?' Only in this way can we hope to get a satisfactory insight into his actual intention and meaning; and not until we have done this can we form any reasonable opinion as to how far the things which he had to say to them have any real significance and value for ourselves under the obviously altered conditions in which we have to live our lives at the present time.

Let us then, by way of preparation for a more detailed study, do our best to give answers to such simple inquiries as these :

- a.* What was it that had happened among the Galatian Christians which led St Paul to write to them ?
- b.* Why was it that in writing he took so extremely serious a view of the situation that had arisen ?

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- c. How was it that, speaking quite generally, he set himself to deal with it?

By the time that we have answered these questions, we ought to have a very fair idea of what we may expect to meet with, if we are disposed to make a further and closer acquaintance with the Epistle.

II

The story of the Galatians, so far as we know it, can be quickly told. They were a people living in the centre of Asia Minor. Whether they were the direct descendants of the Celts who had invaded the country, coming from the westward, rather less than three centuries before, to whom the term *Galatae* more properly applied; or whether, as has been maintained, they were a part of the mixed populations who inhabited the more southerly districts of the more inclusive Roman province which bore the name of *Galatia*, is, and is likely to remain, a debatable matter.¹

¹ The advantage of understanding *Galatia* in the wider political sense (as comprising Lycaonia, Isauria, and portions of Phrygia and Pisidia), would be that we should thus be enabled to include Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, all of which we know to have been visited by St Paul (Acts xiii. xiv.); whereas, if we confine the term to its narrower meaning, we are left without any detailed knowledge of what the actual places were to which the Apostle went. Against such an obvious attraction to this view (maintained with ardour by Renan, and more recently advocated in England

St Paul had preached the Gospel to them in the first instance; and his preaching had been attended with the most clearly-marked success. His stay among them had, it would seem, been occasioned by an illness, but this, so far from proving a hindrance, had rather helped him to win his way to their hearts. Nothing could have exceeded the enthusiasm with which he had been received. The people had vied with one another in their efforts to express the warmth, the almost extravagance, of their affection. When he left them, their souls were welling over with thankfulness and joy.

For a while all had continued to go most prosperously; but it was only for a while. Ere long there came about the most extraordinary change. It was not merely that the first ardour of early enthusiasm had begun to decline—there would

by Prof. W. M. Ramsay) has to be set the fact that St Luke distinctly describes Lystra and Derbe as "cities of Lycaonia" (Acts xiv. 6), and assigns Antioch to Pisidia (xiii. 14). When further he speaks of Galatia, or of "the Phrygian and Galatian country" (xvi. 6), it seems almost certain that he intended to employ the word Galatia in its narrower and more popular sense. A yet stronger argument to determine St Paul's reference in this Epistle may be drawn from his exclamation "O foolish Galatians!" (iii. 1). It is scarcely possible to suppose that in an impassioned outburst of personal appeal he would use what was merely an official designation under which were grouped various peoples of different nationalities.

have been nothing so very unusual in that. Their ardour had not only declined, it had disappeared to make way for feelings of a wholly different kind. And it had all come about so rapidly.

The Galatians were evidently a mercurial and inconstant people ; but even St Paul, who knew them so well, was not prepared for the suddenness and the violence of this transformation.

With the report of it, however, there had come to him also the explanation of what had occurred. It had not been simply the effect of reaction. Had it been only this, there might have come in time perhaps a reaction from the reaction. But other influences had been at work. Teachers had appeared upon the scene who only too well understood the state of affairs, and were only too well pleased to make the most of the opportunity afforded to them by the coolness and depression of the once fervid converts of St Paul.

These persons were the bitter foes of the Apostle of the Gentiles, and they had systematically made it their business to follow in his steps, in order that they might neutralise his influence and destroy his work. It was not often that they found an opening so entirely favourable for their purpose, and they had evidently lost no time in availing themselves of it. Under the guise of friendship and sympathy, they had offered their counsel and their help. They addressed themselves to those who, as it would seem, had at last

been awakened as if from a dream, to realise that the emotions and resolutions of a period of great spiritual excitement could scarcely be taken to be the normal experience of average people at ordinary times.

Their advice to the Galatians was that they should be less ambitious and more practical in their aims ; and, above all, that they should learn from the experience of the past to be careful as to the choice of those to whom they gave their confidence in future. They did not scruple to assure them that they had been cruelly misled.

They spoke of St Paul as a discredited individual, no real apostle at all, but a vague visionary who had set before himself and before others a quite unattainable ideal. They denied that he had any proper authority for what he said or did, and they denounced his teaching as bad in every respect. They declared that it was new, unauthorised, unscriptural, and extremely dangerous in its tendencies.

For their part, they counselled the Galatians to be content with the time-honoured ways of religion which had satisfied, and were satisfying, multitudes of others. In these, so they assured them, they would find the fullest employment for their activities, while, at the same time, they would be saved from the exhaustion which followed indefinite attempts to reach impossible standards. Nor did they give them this advice in a merely

abstract shape. They put before them a regular system of exercises and observances; things actually to be accomplished and done, in the doing of which progress might be marked and the mind might find repose.

It was evident that the counsel of these teachers had commended itself to very many as timely and wise. More or less generally, the methods prescribed were being adopted, with the result that, so far as outward appearances went, there were all the indications of a vigorous and energetic religious condition.

This, in short, was the state of affairs as it had been reported to St Paul.

III

We have but to glance at the Epistle to see that to St Paul the report occasioned the acutest distress and dismay. He writes off, at once in a very anguish of alarm. Nowhere in any other of his letters that have come down to us does he express himself with so much warmth and urgency.

He tells the Galatians that they have been guilty of an almost incredible folly; and he warns them that, if they go on as they are going, they will find that they have deserted from the Gospel and have fallen from grace. He says that he is

afraid that the efforts which he has bestowed upon them have been entirely thrown away.

And why this serious view of the matter? Is it merely, or chiefly, that he feels aggrieved by the injury which has been inflicted upon his own reputation; and that he is indignant, as he naturally might be, at the fickleness of those whom he had counted as his friends? Or is it for reasons which move him much more deeply than any considerations of personal injustice and loss?

We are sure beforehand that it is not for himself that he is trembling, but for them. And in truth he very soon makes it clear that both he and they had good cause to be afraid.

He knew these false teachers well, and he knew what came of their influence. He perceived, as probably no other man then living perceived, the real issues which were at stake; and, as he saw the matter, it was simply a question of life and death. The change through which his former disciples were passing was in his view an altogether disastrous decline.

They were going down to a condition in which their entire attention was devoted to what they were being taught to regard as meritorious acts of compliance with an elaborated system of external religious observances. It was the thought of this that filled him with dread.

And why? Did St Paul mean them to understand that no value is to be attached to religious

observances? Assuredly, he did not. He understood human nature well enough to know that, even in its highest endeavours, it is unable to dispense with the help and the support of the outward and the material; that, in fact, religion simply could not continue to exist among a people without a due conservation of its external forms.¹ In one passage of this Epistle he speaks in the strongest language of the benefit received through the sacrament of Holy Baptism, and elsewhere he shews us how decisively he could deal with any who thought, of their own private judgment and selfwill, to devise practices or institute customs which were unknown to the Church at large.²

St Paul most certainly did not mean to say what he would quickly have had to unsay again. He did not mean to say that religious acts and exercises have no real value, and ought to have no place in the life of a Christian. What he did mean to say, and to say with all his might, was this: that religious acts and exercises are dangerous, and may become destructive, when they are deliberately adopted as *substitutes for spiritual character*. When men have come to a state of mind in which

¹ 'The form of religion may indeed be where there is little of the thing itself, but the thing itself cannot be preserved amongst mankind without the form.' (Bp. Butler, *Charge to Clergy of Durham*, 1751).

² 1 Cor. xi. 16, xiv. 36.

they allow themselves to say 'we cannot rise to that, let us be content with this'; when the inward is abandoned and the outward is accepted in its stead, then a compromise has been made which can only be fatal.

He meant, and he asserts it again and again in different ways, that '*doing* is a deadly thing' when *doing* takes the place of *being*.

With St Paul, spiritual attainment, Christian character, was the principal thing. It was for this that Christ had come, and had died, and had risen again. It was for this that His Spirit was ever striving within them. To repudiate and abandon the desire for this, and to be willing instead to find satisfaction in a prescribed routine of ordered observances, persuading themselves that these could avail to secure or to retain the favour of God, this was, indeed, after they had "begun in the Spirit," to seek to be "made perfect in the flesh." This was a course which could only result in the darkening and the deadening of their souls.

It was to persons who were taking this downward step that the Apostle uttered the warning, appealing cry of the Epistle; and it is—we need not hesitate to say it at once—because this Epistle is addressed to those who are exposed to the stress of this terrible temptation that it has had in the past, and will continue to have in the future, a most powerful and never outworn message to the minds and the consciences of men.

IV

We have spoken then of the situation with which St Paul found himself suddenly called upon to deal, and of the reasons which might rightly lead him to look upon it as being critical in the last degree. We have now to ask further how it was that the Apostle set about to discharge the very painful and anxious duty which had thus been forced upon him.

The task before St Paul was by no means a slight one. He had to make an *Apologia* for himself and his doctrine. His right to teach at all had been defiantly challenged, and his teaching had been denounced as not only unauthorised, but false and pernicious.

Plainly, therefore, it was necessary that he should face the assertions of his detractors on these issues before he could hope to offer counsel with any effect to persons whose confidence in himself had been so severely shaken. This consequently is the course he adopts. He begins by asserting and proving his right to be heard.

St Paul vindicates his Apostleship on the ground that the call to it had come to him direct from Christ. In this respect, his position was equal to that of any other of the Apostles. He had not derived his authority from them, nor indeed had his doctrine been delivered to him by them. His relations with them had at the first been restricted

to the briefest interviews; and there had been occasions on which he had found it needful to maintain before them, and even against them, the truths with which he had been entrusted. At the same time he is able to shew that, so far from there having been any disapproval of himself on the part of the elder Apostles, they had fully admitted that he had received a Divine commission in no way inferior to their own.

Having thus established his right to be regarded as an authoritative exponent of the Christian faith, he proceeds—after an outburst of astonishment at the unreasonableness of those whose personal experience had afforded them such convincing evidence of the character of his teaching—to meet in order the charges which had been so confidently made against it.

It had been urged that his doctrine was *new*. He had admitted already that in some sense it was. It was new, that is to say, in the sense that it had come to him newly and afresh, and not at second-hand. He had not learned it in any of the schools, whether Jewish or Christian. He had received it independently of intervention on the part of man. But new in any other sense it most certainly was not. It was old; old as the earliest records of the religious life on the first pages of the Bible.

His antagonists had appealed to the Scriptures; to the Scriptures by all means let them go. They

would not deny that Abraham was the great head of the Jewish race; the man who beyond all others had been eulogised and beatified by the Divine approval, and set forth as the pattern and type for those who should come after.

On what ground, then, had this most honoured saint found favour with God? It had been unmistakably declared that Abraham was accepted on account of his Faith—of that which was inward, and of all things most unlike an outward act or work. It was by reason of his Faith—that most elementary and yet most deep movement of the soul by which it is drawn upward and Godward: it was by Faith — by that which is the first evidence as it is also the most indispensable condition of spiritual character — that Abraham was what he was.

In the simplest and most natural way Abraham had believed in and trusted himself to God; and had in consequence been blessed with a promise of good which, by the very terms of it, was pledged not to himself alone, but to a spiritual offspring, who were not to be restricted to any particular family or race.

St Paul, laying hold of this ancient testimony, claimed that in it is to be found the anticipation, nay more, the very promulgation of the Gospel; and this, of course, at a date wholly anterior to the Law. By a carefully elaborated argument he works out the thought that the Law, coming as it

did so much later and being of an entirely different nature, could not possibly have been intended to set aside the earlier provisions of the pre-established order of Grace. That the Law had its purpose to serve he fully allows, and he enters at some length into the explanation of what that purpose was. But it was a purpose which could be carried out with advantage only in the case of those who were in a state of religious infancy. For others, who ought to have got beyond it, to return to the conditions of pupilage and bondage was to renounce the very ends which the Law itself had in view, and to turn their backs upon the hopes of a Christian.

If they did this, they might indeed make out that they were the descendants of Abraham; but it would be by the wholly inferior line of Ishmael the child of the bondwoman, and not according to the true succession of Isaac the son of the free.

Rather than that, let them stand by their liberty, and follow the Scriptural precedent by chasing away into the wilderness the offspring of Hagar who had come to disturb their peace.

So much for the appeal to Scripture, and the conclusions to which alone it could legitimately lead!

But the doctrine of St Paul had been denounced as *unsafe* as well as unsound; and the mention of Freedom forms the point of transi-

tion at which he could pass on to say what he felt it necessary to say on this head. His enemies had made the accusation which is ever ready to hand, when for other reasons religious teaching is to be condemned. It is always so easy to give logical proof to shew that the tendencies of certain doctrines must necessarily be mischievous; and in the case of St Paul's teaching the task was more than commonly easy. 'Take away restrictions'—that is what he did—'and the results must be obvious enough!'

Now, St Paul was the very last man to shrink from the application of the moral test; and in this matter he has not the smallest misgiving as to what the effect of such a test would be. Only he not unnaturally insists that it is his own teaching that must be put to trial, and not a perversion of it. It is a teaching of Freedom, but what does that mean? Does it mean that permission is to be granted to the lower part of human nature to do what it pleases? That is not liberty, but license.

What "the works of the flesh" are, when the flesh is left free, that everyone knows; and if religion aims at nothing more than to keep the evil that is in us within bounds, then indeed it must be most dangerous to think of removing restraints. But if on the other hand religion has the power to quicken and strengthen the good, to give new life to the spiritual part of our

nature ; then the best hope of highest attainment will lie in the free and unhindered development of the "fruit of the Spirit."

For the results of such liberty—the only liberty worthy of the name—St Paul has no fear at all. In words which glow yet with the light of inspiration he sets forth to view an enumeration of the characteristics of such a life, as he had often beheld them ; and we may readily imagine the look of triumphant assurance in his face as he penned his conclusion, "against such there is no law!" 'Away then,' he would say, 'with all hesitation as to the practical outcome of my doctrine. In results such as these there is nothing to fear and nothing to condemn.'

Defence was never more bold or more complete. And there is more than defence. At every step of the argument we are made to realise that the Apostle is thinking not only of a victory which has to be gained over dangerous foes, but far more anxiously of those for whose well-being he yearns with an affection as tender as his attitude on their behalf is courageous.

The Pastor is never for a moment lost in the Controversialist. Never are we allowed to forget that, over and beyond every other aim and desire, his chief hope and ambition is that he may be permitted to minister to the necessities of souls. The Epistle abounds in flashes of rapid practical insight, anticipations of doubts, suggestions of

help drawn from the most various quarters; and these are accompanied by encouragements to press forward bravely and perseveringly, with earnest pleadings for that support which one may render to another at times when the way is steep and the burden presses.

The final chapter is mainly concerned with considerations of practical duty; but before it closes the tone once more becomes that of warning. There is a last protest; and then a final aspiration for the peace which is at once the crown of Christian endeavour and the end of Christian conflict.

V

We have now accomplished what we set out to do in this Introduction. We have tried to indicate something at all events of the needs which the Epistle was at first intended to meet. It is to be hoped that what has been said has increased the expectation with which we shall turn again to the venerable document. It is to be hoped that it may have done more. Is it possible that we can follow, even in such briefest outline, a story like this of the Galatians, and not feel that very much of what was addressed to them is, after all these years, just as truly applicable to ourselves?

The temptation before which they faltered in their hour of trial is as strong as ever to-day. Endeavour after the highest in character is hard and exhausting. Reliance upon the support of supernatural Power makes a continuous demand for faith and self-abandonment. It is so easy to sink into self-consciousness, and to become dismayed at the thought of a task which is so evidently beyond the attainment of our unaided strength. The failures are so frequent, and the progress seems so slow. And the suggestion is ever at hand, 'Would it not be wiser, even humbler, to abandon the struggle after the unattainable, and to be content with some more satisfactory, because more possible, aim?' And how subtle are the arguments which are always ready to pour in to complete the discomfiture of the already despairing will! ¹

It may be everything to us, when the crisis comes, that we have been at the pains to master

¹ 'It is, in my mind, impossible to ignore that there are in several directions grave dangers of what under the guise of most religion becomes least religious—of lowering, of materialising, of making religion lull the conscience instead of awaken and strengthen the conscience, of making the way of God seem an elaborately technical thing, instead of the old way of the conscience and of simple faith, going out towards the fulfilment of itself and its needs in Christ Jesus and the work of His Spirit.' (Bishop Talbot, *Address to Rochester Diocesan Conference*. June 1898.)

the meaning of the brief treatise in which the greatest of Christian writers has given to the Church of all time such instruction and guidance about the whole matter as he believed to be in accordance with the mind of our Master.

A TABLE

Shewing the days on which the several sections of this Epistle are appointed to be read in the Lessons at Morning and Evening Prayer.

Section	Chapter	Morning Prayer	Evening Prayer
1.	I.	September 22.	April 10.
2.	II.	,, 23.	,, 11.
3.	III.	,, 24.	,, 12.
4.	IV. 1—21	,, 25.	,, 13.
5.	IV. 21—V. 13	,, 26.	,, 14.
6.	V. 13—end.	,, 27.	,, 15.
7.	VI.	,, 28.	,, 16.

Chapter V. 1—16 may also be read at Evening Prayer on Whitsunday.

EXPLANATION
OF THE
TEXT OF THE EPISTLE

EXPLANATION
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CHAPTER I

IN the closer examination of the Epistle upon which we now enter, we shall not attempt anything like a microscopic inquiry into the sense of every word. This has been done again and again, with results which may be found in the larger Commentaries. Our aim will rather be to get a strong grasp upon the meaning of the letter as a whole, and we shall concern ourselves with the particular verses and expressions only so far as the accurate understanding of these is directly useful for the accomplishment of this purpose.

We shall take the text in short sections, and it will be observed by those who are accustomed to follow the order of reading prescribed in our Church's Lectionary, that the larger divisions, according to which these sections are grouped, will correspond with its arrangement.

The translation adopted is that of the Authorised Version. Where in any instances it has been

thought necessary that this should be altered, the words to be changed will be indicated by numerals, and the suggested alterations will be given immediately after the text.

- 1 Paul, an apostle (not of men, neither by man, but
 2 by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised
 3 him from the dead;) and all the brethren which
 4 *be* to you and peace from God the Father, and
 5 *from* our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for
 our sins, that he might deliver us from this present
 evil world, according to the will of God and our
 5 Father: to whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.

At the outset St Paul asserts his claim to be heard in the most unmistakable terms. He is an Apostle, deriving his authority from no source less than divine, through no other instrumentality than the commission of our Lord Himself. Though he had not known Christ after the flesh, he was compensated, perhaps more than compensated, by the fact that he had known Him as "raised from the dead." The reference to "all the brethren" who are with him may be intended to indicate that he was not, after all, quite so isolated a teacher as his opponents had wished to represent.

The salutation is his ordinary one, combining "grace," the greeting of the new Dispensation, with "peace" the watchword of the old. It is given as with Apostolic authority, and conveys

the assurance not only of his own personal good feeling, but of the Divine love and good purpose towards them; a love which had stayed at no sacrifice in the past, and a purpose which could never be satisfied until those for whom Christ died should have been set free from the bondage of the lower life of sense. As a true Apostle, his desire is not to sound his own praises, but simply to further the glory of God.

After this brief introduction of himself and his motive, he passes at once to speak of his particular reasons for writing.

6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed¹ from him
 that called you into² the grace of Christ unto
 7 another³ gospel: which is not another; but⁴ there
 be some that trouble you, and would pervert the
 8 gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel
 from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you
 than that which we have preached unto you, let
 9 him be accursed. As we said before, so say I
 now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel
 unto you than that ye have received, let him be
 accursed.

¹ removing ² in ³ a different ⁴ only

In every other Epistle but this, St Paul, when he has given his salutation, proceeds to express his thankfulness for what he has known or heard of the state and progress of those to whom he is writing. He does so even when, later on in the course of the letter, he has to use language of disapprobation and censure. The entire absence of commenda-

tion here is therefore most significant. So filled is he with distress at the condition of the Galatian Churches, that he cannot keep back even for a moment his feelings of sorrow and amazement. The change since his last visit, or even if the time were reckoned since the date of their first conversion, had come with such extraordinary rapidity. It is true that the Authorised Version exaggerates somewhat by its rendering in the past tense. What St Paul says is that they were "so quickly removing." He does not imply that the defection was absolutely complete, but that it had gone far enough to justify the most serious apprehensions.

His wonder is that they do not see matters as he sees them. Their disloyalty and desertion were not merely sins against their Apostle, but against the God Who had sent him. They were rejecting His goodness and refusing to hear His voice. In taking to a different Gospel they were taking to what was in reality no Gospel at all. It was only a Gospel if the perversion of a Gospel had any right to be described by that name. Those who had come to disturb them were in simple fact turning the Gospel upside down. This is the force of St Paul's expression, "perverting the Gospel of Christ." What he means by it we shall see more clearly later, in Chapter iii. 3. Now the Gospel of Christ was a thing which no created being might dare to change. The most fearful

condemnation that could be pronounced would not be too severe for anyone, be he who he might, man or angel, who should presume to tamper with it. From the words "as we said before" we gather that the Apostle and his companions had, when with them, in a measure foreseen and forewarned them of the peril that might beset them. It was the more inexcusable, therefore, that they should have been so readily led astray.

It gives him no pleasure to speak as he does; nothing but the most urgent sense of his duty would induce him to do so :

10 For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek
to please men? for¹ if I yet pleased men, I should
11 not be the² servant of Christ. But I certify you,
brethren, that the gospel which was preached of
12 me is not after man. For I neither received it of
man, neither was I taught *it*, but by the revelation
13 of Jesus Christ. For ye have heard of my con-
versation³ in time past in the Jews' religion, how
that beyond measure I persecuted the church of
14 God, and wasted it: and profited⁴ in the Jews'
religion above many my equals⁵ in mine own
nation, being more exceedingly zealous of⁶ the
traditions of my fathers.

¹ omit for

² a

³ manner of life

⁴ I advanced

⁵ beyond many of my age

⁶ for

St Paul is determined to allow no room for compromise. His natural disposition inclined him to win his way by conciliatory methods; and

possibly the turn of his expression here implies that, in the representations of his enemies, this willingness to make concessions—to be “all things to all men”—had been brought as a charge against him. All the more need therefore to shew that, whatever line he may have taken on other occasions, only one attitude could be possible for him now, if he were to maintain his loyalty to the Master Who was far more to him than all earthly friends and foes.

The strength of his language is to be regarded as the measure of his conviction. He was certain that the message which he had delivered was not devised by man, and could not be altered by man. Ordinary earthly knowledge is acquired by painful efforts of teaching and understanding, processes which leave room for numberless possibilities of misconception and mistake. It was far otherwise with the heavenly knowledge which had come to him. That had not been given and received in the way of instruction to the intellect, but had been flashed upon him as a revelation from above, carrying with it to his inmost intuition its own evidence of truth.

And indeed nothing short of a Divine interposition could have availed to convince him. All his previous sympathies and antipathies would have disposed him towards quite other conclusions. His previous manner of life had certainly given no hint of what he was subsequently to become. No

fanatical adherent to Judaism could be more hostile than he had once been; no Rabbinical student more zealous for the venerated traditions of the schools. Never did man seem less likely to ally himself to a cause than he to that which he had once so cordially hated.

15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from
my mother's womb, and called *me* by his grace,
16 to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach
him among the heathen ;¹ immediately I conferred
17 not with flesh and blood : neither went I up to
Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me ;
but I went² into Arabia, and returned again unto
Damascus.

¹ Gentiles ;

² went away

St Paul had gloried in his old title of Pharisee, the original meaning of which was 'separated,' little imagining all the while that one day he would discover that he had been set apart in the purposes of God by a far nobler separation from his very birth. He had thought it his mission to build higher the dividing barriers of Judaism : it was shewn to him that it was to be the work of his life to evangelise the Gentiles. The revelation when it came was so direct, and its meaning so self-evident, that external corroboration seemed at the time to be wholly superfluous. He needed but to withdraw that he might ponder it and realise it in stillness, that

'Separate from the world, his breast

‘ Might duly take and strongly keep
 ‘ The print of Heaven.’¹

Most assuredly it was not “flesh and blood” that had revealed to him his message at the beginning. True it was that later on, as he proceeds to tell, he had some intercourse as was fitting with the Apostles at Jerusalem; but this had been of the briefest character, and had left him still a stranger to the great majority of those who were Christians before him.

18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to
 19 see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But
 20 other of the apostles saw I none, save James the
 21 Lord’s brother. Now the things which I write
 22 unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. After-
 23 wards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia;
 24 and was unknown by face unto the churches of
 25 Judæa which were in Christ: but they had heard
 only, That he which persecuted us in times past

¹ *Christian Year* for 13th Sunday after Trinity (of Moses).

The question as to the place to which St Paul went for this retreat has been much discussed. It is difficult, however, to think that he used the term “Arabia” here in a different sense from that which he gives to it later in the Epistle (iv. 25), where it can only stand for the Sinaitic peninsula. Nor can we fail to see how fitting it would have been that at such a time he should have felt drawn to tread in the footsteps of Moses and Elijah. There, where the Jewish Law had been given at the first, he might hope to be taught what it really meant. To him also “the still, small voice” might come with the revelation and the strength which were needed for the work of a new prophetic mission.

now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.
24 And they glorified God in me.

When St Paul speaks of going to "see Peter," he employs a term which, as St Chrysostom remarks, is 'used by those who go to see great and famous cities.' The visit was one which was prompted by a feeling of unusual interest. It was natural that he should desire to become closely acquainted with one who held so prominent a position in the Christian community.

The stay lasted about a fortnight. It included also interviews with St James, 'the Bishop of Jerusalem,' as he is styled by later writers. The other Apostles were evidently absent, engaged it may be in some such work as that which had formerly taken St Peter and St John to Samaria (Acts viii.).

That St Paul should lay such stress upon these particulars is doubtless to be accounted for by the fact that his foes had represented him as having spent much more time with the leaders at Jerusalem, and as having derived his information from them; in which case he might rightly have been regarded as entirely subordinate to them. The truth was, as he says, that he had remained for many years almost unknown to them, and a stranger to the Churches in Judæa. These knew of him by report as a preacher of the Faith, and as a most remarkable instance of the transforming power of Grace. They knew enough, however, to have no doubt that the change in

him was God's doing; and it was marvellous in their eyes.

So much then for the circumstances which preceded and immediately followed the great crisis of the Apostle's life. They were such as rendered any ordinary explanation of his call to Apostleship out of the question. Neither then, nor indeed since,¹ have any attempts at such an explanation been able to stand in the light of the simple facts. Never had teacher better right to feel confidence in his vocation, or to expect that it should be recognised by others. In so far as authority was required in order to carry conviction of religious faith, St Paul could fearlessly maintain that his own was inferior to that of no other man.

¹ Even Baur, at the end of his life (1860), confessed that 'no psychological nor dialectical analysis' could explain the extraordinary transformation of 'the most vehement adversary into the most resolute herald of Christianity'; and that he felt constrained to call it a 'miracle,' notwithstanding his philosophical aversion to miracles. (Schaff, *Galatians*, p. 17.)

CHAPTER II

ST PAUL'S intercourse with his fellow-Apostles, so far as it had gone, had been of the most friendly character. Although he had not derived his principles from them, he had been received by their representatives, and had been generally honoured in the Churches of Judæa. So much he has been able to allege in support of his contention that he was entitled to speak with all the authority which belonged to a Christian Apostle.

But he has yet stronger evidence to adduce. He proceeds to describe another visit which he had made to Jerusalem, when a considerable interval had passed. For some time he had been engaged in missionary efforts to reach the Gentiles, and it was in order that he might secure the uninterrupted success of these efforts that he gladly welcomed the opportunity which arose of holding a conference with those whose influence was so far-reaching as was that of the elder Apostles in the original home of Christianity. What befell him in this important and delicate negotiation he now goes on to narrate with considerable care.

1 Then fourteen years after I went up again to
 Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with *me*
 2 also. And I went up by revelation, and com-
 municated unto them that gospel which I preach
 among the Gentiles, but privately to them which
 were of reputation, lest by any means I should
 3 run,¹ or had run, in vain. But neither² Titus, who
 was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be
 4 circumcised : and that because of false brethren
 unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy
 out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that
 5 they might bring us into bondage : to whom we
 gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour ; that
 the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

¹ be running² not even

This was the visit described in Acts xv. when St Paul and St Barnabas were sent from the Church of Antioch expressly for the purpose of coming to an understanding with the authorities at Jerusalem in regard to the action of certain men who had been disturbing the minds and consciences of Christians, by urging upon them the necessity of submitting to the requirements of the Jewish ceremonial laws.

St Paul was determined to raise the questions at issue in the most unmistakable way, and accordingly took with him as one of his companions Titus, a Christian Greek, who had never conformed to the most elementary of those requirements.

There were public conferences and private consultations. These latter were held with persons

of position, in order, no doubt, to facilitate the progress of the more general discussions.

St Paul's earnest desire was to gain an approval of the line of action which he had adopted, and so to secure that his Gentile converts should not be interfered with. We observe that he is careful to say "the Gospel which I preach," thereby making it clear that he had made no subsequent change in his position.

It is plainly evident, both from the account here given, and from the narrative in the Acts, that the Apostle's principles were only accepted in the face of a strong opposition. There were those who would have used almost any means to bring about a decision unfavourable to his teaching. And indeed, as we shall see, his language even in regard to his fellow-Apostles, is undoubtedly intended to imply that the sanction which they gave—and gave ultimately with every sign of good fellowship—would not have been given had not the case been set before them with a completeness of evidence and argument which they found it impossible to resist.

- 6 But of these who seemed¹ to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me : God accepteth no man's person :) for they who seemed *to be somewhat*² in conference added³ nothing to
7 me : But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as *the gospel* of the circumcision *was* unto

¹ were reputed ² were of repute ³ imparted

8 Peter ; (For he that wrought effectually in⁴ Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same
9 was mighty in⁵ me toward the Gentiles :) And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed⁶ to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship ; that we *should go* unto the heathen,⁷
10 and they unto the circumcision. Only *they would* that we should remember the poor ; the same which I also⁸ was forward to do.

⁴for ⁵for ⁶were reputed ⁷Gentiles ⁸the very thing I

The broken sentences tell plainly enough how difficult St Paul found it to say what he felt bound to say about the elder Apostles, who were appealed to as the paramount authorities by the Judaic teachers of the Galatians. While desiring to speak of them with all possible respect, he was constrained, in order to vindicate his own independence and to correct an extravagant over-estimate of their influence and position, to make it clear that they had contributed nothing that was new to him of any kind. What he had received from them was a public recognition that he had his own work to do, in a sphere distinct from theirs ; a work with which he had been directly entrusted, and for which he had been specially fitted by the Grace of God. In giving him their pledges of friendship and loyalty, they had only stipulated that he should think of the needs of the poor in Judæa, as doubtless the simplest and most efficacious way of proving that the Gentile Christians were, in heart and sympathy,

one with those from whom they were parted by so many external differences. To this St Paul needed no urging. He had, on a previous occasion, come to Jerusalem as the almoner of the Church of Antioch, and in later years he was eager to shew that he held it to be a sacred duty to fulfil the promise which he had so willingly made.

Thus the great controversy upon which so much depended, and in which so firm a stand had to be made, ended happily with signs of mutual regard and counsels of practical charity. But although the controversy had been closed at Jerusalem, it was soon to be re-opened under circumstances which rendered it necessary that St Paul should do even more than maintain his assertions of equality and independence.¹

- 11 But when Peter¹ was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.²
 12 For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles : but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them
 13 which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him ; insomuch that Barnabas also³ was carried away with their

¹ Cephas ² stood condemned. ³ even Barnabas

¹ 'Nothing, we may be sure, but the conviction that the whole future of the Gentile Ecclesiæ was bound up in the vindication of his own authentic Apostleship would have induced St Paul to commit to paper the sad story of his conflict with St Peter.' (Dr Hort, *The Christian Ecclesia*, p. 73.)

14 dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter⁴ before *them* all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

⁴ Cephas

As at the time of St Peter's visit St Paul and St Barnabas were at Antioch together, it follows that the incident here described must have occurred soon after the apostolic conference at Jerusalem.

St Peter, it would appear, had gone even further in the direction of compliance than had been definitely contemplated in the terms of the arrangement that had then been agreed upon (see Acts xv. 29). Not only had he consented to see the Gentile Christians use their liberty in the matter of ceremonial enactments, but he himself—bearing in mind no doubt the teaching of the vision in which he had been shewn that it was not unlawful to go in to men uncircumcised and eat with them—had not scrupled to join them in common meals. And this he had continued to do until the arrival of certain rigorists from Jerusalem; when, with a timidity which had on more than one occasion previously succeeded an outburst of his natural impetuosity, he lost the courage of his convictions and began to withdraw from the position which he had assumed. The result was that the rest of the Jewish Christians, and even Bar-

nabas, who had so thoroughly identified himself with the cause of the Gentiles, were for the moment swept away by the power of example and the fear of hostile criticism; while the impression left on the minds of the non-Jewish converts would naturally be that they could only hope to become fully approved Christians by conforming themselves in all respects to strictly Jewish ways.

That St Paul was left alone made it but the more necessary that he should raise his voice in protest against such manifest inconsistency and abandonment of principle. Had it been merely a question of personal inconsistency, we may be sure that we should never have heard of the matter. The issues involved were wider and more far-reaching. For St Paul, everything that was most vitally essential to Christianity was at stake. How intensely he realised this we can feel as we try to follow the closely-packed sentences which are poured forth in quick succession, as if from a mind and heart too fully charged and too deeply stirred for easy and ordered utterance.

It is difficult to determine how far these sentences were intended to recall the lines of reasoning actually adopted at Antioch, and how far the Apostle may have allowed himself to be carried on and away from the thought of the particular argument in order to justify, perhaps as much to himself as to the Galatians, the ardour and energy with which he had conducted it.

15 We *who are* Jews by nature, and not sinners of the
 16 Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law : for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

These words may very well have formed part of the address to St Peter, and they lift the discussion at once to the highest level. It is now no question as to how their actions are likely to be regarded by a section of their fellow-countrymen, but of what really constituted their standing in the sight of God. No one had taught more clearly than St Peter that there was but one Name given under heaven whereby men must be saved (Acts iv. 12). Their only hope of acceptance lay, not in merits acquired by the fulfilment of legal enactments, but in an absolute reliance upon the Person of the Saviour. Such a faith was equally possible for Jew and for Gentile ; and indeed it could only be possessed by the Jew in so far as he was prepared to confess that his need of the Divine mercy and forgiveness was not less than that of all others. Upon this conviction they had been content to act ; had they done wrongly ?

17 But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, *is* therefore Christ
 18 the minister of sin ? God forbid.¹ For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself² a transgressor.

¹ Far from it.

² make myself out

Must they admit that Christ had led them astray in leading them to abandon the hope of obtaining God's favour by means of the Law? Such a thought could not be entertained for an instant. Condemnation must rather fall upon the one who was guilty—as St Peter had been—of the inconsistency of re-erecting a structure which he had previously demolished. With a delicacy that was characteristic of him, St Paul uses the first person instead of the third, thus transferring to himself, as on a subsequent occasion (1 Cor. iv. 6), what strictly speaking applied to another. After having thus introduced the mention of himself, it became natural to proceed with what was in reality a personal experience.

19 For I through the law am dead¹ to the law, that I
 20 might live unto God. I am² crucified with Christ :
 nevertheless I live ; yet not I,³ 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,
 21 and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate⁴ the
 grace of God : for if righteousness *come* by the law,
 then Christ is dead in vain.⁵

¹ died ² have been ³ and I no longer live,

⁴ set at nought ⁵ died without cause.

Speaking for himself, he was conscious that whatever service the Law could render him was over for ever. His connection with it had come to a natural end. He had passed beyond it. The Law had made him conscious of his need of that which the Law was itself impotent to

bestow, of a life far higher and holier than any which consisted in a mere conformity to the requirements of a system of conduct. That higher life of direct relationship with God had been opened to him through the sacrifice of Christ; and had actually begun to be realised in him as, ceasing from independent efforts of his own, he had simply yielded himself in utter confidence and devotion to the Person and to the influence of the Son of God. To look for the perfecting of human nature from any other source, was surely to proclaim that God's grace and Christ's death were alike unneeded and uncalled for.

In a later part of the Epistle we shall meet again the thoughts which are here presented rather as an outburst from the heart, than as the fully reasoned conclusions of the intellect. For the present the Apostle restrains himself in order that he may continue to deal in an orderly way with the situation as it has been brought before him in the reports which have come to him.

Hitherto—to sum up very briefly the contents of these first two chapters—he has been refuting the allegations and insinuations of those who were seeking to belittle his authority in the eyes of the Galatians.

They had represented that he held a position decidedly inferior to that of the Apostles at Jerusalem, who had received their training and their commission directly from the Lord Himself;

and they had maintained that his special doctrines were either developed from notions of his own, or else were distorted versions of teachings which he had derived from others, and in either case were entirely at variance with the views in regard to the permanence of the Jewish law which were held at the place from which Christianity had gone forth to the world.

We can well imagine with what telling force point after point of the reply must have appealed to those who originally read or listened to the Epistle. There is indignation in the tone, but what is far more noticeable is the unhesitating strength of assurance such as ever results from the settled conviction that the speaker has truth on his side. With the greatest dignity St Paul asserts that his apostleship had been given him from heaven, that his doctrine had not come to him from his own past training, either before or since his conversion; that he had received it in the crisis of his life by the revelation of our Lord Himself. He is able to prove that his intercourse with his fellow-Apostles had not begun until some years after the substance of his teaching had taken shape in his mind; and that when he did meet them it was to discuss on equal terms the practical difficulties which had arisen, and would arise, as he endeavoured to fulfil the special ministry to which he had been appointed by God. The fact of his independence

he further illustrates by reference to an occasion on which he had felt himself compelled to administer a public rebuke to no less a person than St Peter, for a course of action into which he had allowed himself to be drawn, against his own openly expressed convictions, by just such persons as those who were now disturbing the Churches of Galatia. Then, as ever, he was convinced that in making such a protest he was contending not merely for his own rights, but for principles which bore most directly upon all that was most sacred in Christian faith and life.

So far then the discussion has turned upon matters chiefly personal to St Paul. These having been considered, the way is now cleared, and the Apostle can proceed to deal with the erroneous doctrinal reasonings which had so powerfully influenced the Galatians.

CHAPTER III

IN the words which immediately followed the opening salutation of the Epistle, St Paul had expressed his pained astonishment at the distressing change which had come over his converts in Galatia. For a while he had said no more about this feeling, having been compelled to enter upon a somewhat lengthened defence of his right to speak at all. Now, with all the added force which this argument has brought to his authority, he returns to the standpoint of that first personal appeal. Again he tells them of his amazement at the strange effects that had been produced in them. It really seemed as if some dark spell of enchantment had been cast upon them. How else could it have happened that they had been turned away from truths which had once shone out so brightly, and had moreover been verified with such unmistakable force in their own actual experience? They had made the change too at the bidding of men who had never yet helped them to any real good of any kind.

I O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth,¹ before whose eyes

¹ *omit* that ye should not obey the truth,

Jesus Christ hath been² evidently set forth, crucified
2 among you?³ This only would I learn of you,
Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or
3 by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having
begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by⁴
4 the flesh? Have ye suffered⁵ so many things in
vain? if *it be* yet in vain.

² was ³ *omit* among you ⁴ being made perfect in
⁵ Did ye experience

The conduct of these Galatians seemed to defy all attempts at reasonable explanation. They had been brought face to face with the most vivid presentation of the Cross of Christ; they had received abundantly the quickening and renewing of their inward spiritual life, when they had yielded themselves to become disciples of Christ; and now they seemed to expect to continue their progress by reversing their direction, and turning their backs upon the whole of their previous experience. It could only be described as an incredible folly.

If they had not entirely lost the ability to recognise the plainest facts, let them answer a simple question. From whence had come that new and wonderful power which had made all the difference to their lives?

5 He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, *doeth he it* by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

To that challenge there was but one possible

reply. Those who aimed at re-enforcing the yoke of legal ordinances had no results to shew which could be compared for a moment with the effects which were constantly being produced by the ministry which the Apostle had left to continue the teaching which he had given.

And now, what of that teaching in itself, and of the objections which had been brought against it? Twice has St Paul set over against one another the watchwords of the rival positions, "works of the law," and "hearing of faith." He must now address himself seriously to the task of vindicating his doctrine, as he had already vindicated his authority.

And in the first instance the battle must be waged on the ground of the Old Testament. His opponents had been wont to entrench themselves behind the sanction which Scripture appeared to give to their exaltation of the Mosaic law. They could quote text after text, and display what might easily pass for a profound understanding of the deeper senses of the sacred writings. But they were to find that they had more than a match in the theologian and dialectician who was opposed to them.

In the great passage which is to follow, we have presented to us the line of argument which was the means of repelling a most dangerous assault upon Christianity, delivered as it were

from behind. And we have in it yet more than this. Seldom have victories in controversy left such permanent fruits. It is not too much to say that in St Paul's reasonings are contained the first indications of that religious philosophy of the Old Testament which has furnished us with the most satisfying clue we possess to the meaning of the Divine purpose in the education of mankind.

The sentences are compressed to the utmost, and it will be necessary to follow them with more than ordinary attention. It is probable that to the Galatians they served to recall previous teachings which would render them more easily intelligible to them than they are to us. We need, however, find no very great difficulty in tracing the general course of the thought.

His enemies had appealed to the Scriptures; to the Scriptures let them go. And let them begin at the beginning, with the recognised father of the Jewish race. They prided themselves that they were the children of Abraham. Well then how fared it with Abraham? let them read:

6 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was
7 accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye
therefore that they which are of faith, the same are
8 the children of Abraham. And the scripture fore-
seeing that God would justify the heathen¹ through²
faith, preached before³ the gospel unto Abraham,
9 *saying*, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So
then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful
Abraham.

¹ Gentiles

² by

³ beforehand

There could be no question about the ground of Abraham's standing in the sight of God as it was set forth in the Scriptures. "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness" (Gen. xv. 6). Righteousness before God, that was what the Jewish teachers were above all else anxious to attain to: they sought it, and would have all men seek it, through conformity to the requirements of the Levitical Law. But here it is credited to Abraham before ever there was a Law; and for quite other reasons than any exertions of his own—on account of the faith, the trust, and confidence which he had placed in the word, and character, and ability of Another. It looked therefore as if the true sons of Abraham must be those who most resembled him in his capacity for faith. And indeed the language of Scripture seemed designed to warrant such an expectation, for it had been especially declared that in Abraham "all the nations," that is to say, all the Gentiles, should be blessed (Gen. xii. 3, xviii. 18). Here then was a proclamation of the Gospel before the giving of the Law, an anticipation of the wider order in which the blessing granted to Abraham was to be shared by all who shared his qualification to receive it.

Moreover, to say this was only to assert what Scripture had expressed in other ways:

10 For as many as are of the works of the law are

under the¹ curse : for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that continueth not in all things which are
 11 written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, *it is* evident : for, The just shall live by faith.
 12 And the law is not of faith : but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.

¹ a

Could words be plainer? The Law brought not a blessing but a curse. It had itself declared (Deut. xxvii. 26) a curse to be the portion of those who transgressed its provisions in any particular. Was it in the power of any who sought to achieve righteousness by the Law to escape that penalty? Then again, in a later passage (Hab. ii. 4), the blessing of Life is distinctly promised to him who has faith ; whereas the Law (Lev. xviii. 5) knew nothing of faith, and rested its requirements upon an entirely different principle.

Is it asked, how then can anyone who has ever been under the Law hope to escape from its curse, and receive God's blessing at all? St Paul might no doubt have replied in part by referring to the intimations and foreshadowings of atonement for sin furnished by the sacrifices which existed under the Law, and indeed also before it ; but he preferred to proceed at once to the only complete account of the matter.

13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law,
 being made a curse for us : for it is written, Cursed
 14 is every one that hangeth on a tree : that the

blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through¹ Jesus Christ ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

¹ in

Christ by dying had discharged the claims of the violated law. In the very manner of His suffering He had brought Himself under the terms (Deut. xxi. 23) of its most extreme malediction. He did it in order that there might come to the whole human race, unhindered by any obstacle, the blessing of Abraham ; in order that Jews and Gentiles might together receive the new life which is now again granted to faith.

Here St Paul has touched the great conclusion towards which the whole of his argument has been perpetually tending ; but before he could rest in it, and expound it fully in all its bearings, it was necessary that he should deal with certain difficulties which were sure to arise in the minds of his readers. They, or at all events their Jewish advisers, would not be content to allow that the whole question of the Law could be settled so summarily. After all, they might well urge, there is the existence of the Law to be accounted for : it was Divinely appointed, had it no use ? had God two contradictory methods ? and so on.

St Paul was fully aware of the existence and the force of objections like these, and accordingly

he applies himself to their consideration with the utmost sympathy and skill.

The Promise, several times repeated to Abraham, was a covenant Divinely granted and confirmed. Such a covenant, even amongst men, when once definitely established and duly ratified, cannot be arbitrarily set aside; nor may it be subsequently invalidated by the addition of new and contradictory clauses. How much more unchangeable then must be the covenant made by God.

- 15 Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though *it be* but a man's covenant, yet *if it be* confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.
 16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.
 17 And¹ this I say, *that* the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ,² the law, which was³ four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none
 18 effect. For if the inheritance *be* of the law, *it is* no more of promise: but God gave *it* to Abraham by promise.

¹ Now

² *omit* in Christ

³ came

The covenant made with Abraham looked far beyond him to a Person in the distant future in Whom it was to be fulfilled. Accordingly the point to be observed is this, that, as the Law did not come until centuries after the covenant of Promise, it is not to be imagined that the Law had any power to cancel what had been firmly established and accepted so long before it appeared.

And this clearly would have been its effect if obedience to it had been enforced as a condition of the fulfilment of the Promise. A promise to which such a condition had been added would cease to be a promise at all. The Law then, whatever its uses might be, could certainly never have been intended to interfere with the antecedent covenant of Promise.

Well then, if the Law was so distinct and so different, what was it for? what purpose did it serve? This is the question which must force itself to the surface, and has to be met and answered.

- 19 Wherefore then *serveth* the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; *and it was* ordained by¹ angels in the hand of a mediator.
- 20 Now a mediator is not *a mediator* of one, but God is one.

¹ through

The Law had its purpose, important but subordinate. Its purpose was to reveal to men the sinfulness of their hearts (see Rom. iii. 20, iv. 15, v. 20). It was a moral discipline intended to occupy the interval, until the Promise could be fulfilled. That the Law bore the stamp of inferiority was to be gathered from the further fact that, while the Promise had been directly imparted by God Himself, the Law was communicated through the instrumentality of angels. The intervention of Moses too gave a distinctive

character and *status* to the Law. Mediation implies arrangement between contracting parties, whereas in the case of a promise the giver stands apart, single and alone.¹

21 *Is* the law then against the promises of God? God forbid:¹ for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should²
22 have been by³ the law. But the scripture hath concluded⁴ all under sin, that the promise by faith of⁵ Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

¹ Far from it! ² would ³ of ⁴ shut up ⁵ in

The essential difference between the Law and the Promise being thus as great as it well could be, are we therefore to conclude that there is any necessary antagonism between them? By no means. If the Law had had for its purpose to produce holiness of life, instead of leading merely to a consciousness of sin, then conceivably the two might have been rivals; but as a matter of fact, the effect of the Law had been, as passages previously quoted had shewn, to force men to realise that there was but one way of escape for them, and that the way of Faith and the acceptance of the Promise in Christ.

23 But before faith came, we were kept¹ under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards

¹ kept in ward

¹ This would seem to be the simple, and indeed almost obvious, explanation of ver. 20; a verse of which a quite extraordinary number of interpretations have been offered.

24 be revealed. Wherefore² the law was our school-
 master³ to *bring us* unto Christ, that we might be
 justified by faith.

² So that

³ became our tutor

In Greek and Roman families of rank the moral supervision of younger children was entrusted to a *paedagogus* or tutor, often a superior slave, a sort of nursery-governor. Just such an office as this was discharged by the Law; by it, those who were subjected to its rigorous constraint were being prepared for the fuller privileges and larger liberty which were to be given them through Christ. The Law then had a work to do for a time:

25 But after¹ that faith is come, we are no longer
 26 under a schoolmaster.² For ye are all the children³
 27 of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of
 you as have been baptized into Christ have put
 28 on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there
 is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor
 female: for ye are all one⁴ in Christ Jesus.

¹ now

² tutor.

³ sons

⁴ one *man*

Clearly, when the time for the new state of things had at last arrived, the work of the subordinate supervisor had come to an end. For "we," yes and "ye" too, says the Apostle—all, that is to say, whether their past had been Jewish or Gentile—have been raised to the dignity of fullgrown sons in consequence of the new order of faith (literally "the faith") through

incorporation with Christ. This change had come to pass when they were baptized. In the act of baptism they had been invested with all the privileges which can result from identification with Him. Previous barriers of disability—whether they arose from difference of religion, or alienation of race, or the constitution of society, or even from a distinction so primeval and natural as that of the sexes—must disappear; for all have common interests and share a common life, as of a single person, when once they have been admitted into the fellowship of Christ.

And certainly, not further to insist upon other consequences, there was one consequence which ought to be evident to all :

29 And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

To be part of Christ was—whatever their antecedents may have been—to be part of Abraham's seed, with all that this involved, in the fullest, proudest sense in which the words could be used. In short, there was no position, no privilege, that any one could offer them which was not already theirs as united to Christ, and that—let them realise it clearly—quite independently of any advantages which it might be imagined could be conferred by the Law.

CHAPTER IV. 1—21

ST PAUL had been using language in regard to the Jewish law which must have contrasted in the most startling way with the claims made on its behalf by the Judaizing teachers in Galatia. According to their view of it, the Jewish legal system was nothing less than the ideal goal towards which the providentially guided history of the highest religious life of the world had been steadily moving, as to its final and complete expression: Christianity could do no more than help men to reach it. According to St Paul, on the other hand, subjection to the Law, instead of being in itself an end, was but a subordinate and temporary means to an end; so far from representing the state of spiritual maturity at which men might hope eventually to arrive, it was in reality only a stage of tuition in which they were detained during the years of their infancy.

The two views were irreconcilably opposed; and it is not therefore hard to understand the intensity of dislike and suspicion with which not only Jews but Judaizing Christians regarded the name and the teaching of this Apostle.

He on his part felt it to be his solemn duty, at whatever cost, to make clear the truth as it had been revealed and entrusted to him; and he was determined to do it in such a way that there should be no room left for mistake or misrepresentation.

Not content therefore with what he has already said, he returns again to the illustration which he has been employing, and takes up for the second time the comparison of the religious progress of the world to the epochs of development in the life of a child, in order that he may still more markedly emphasise the inferiority of the condition of those who are subjected to the limitations and regulations of law, and may prove yet more irresistibly the utter unreasonableness of going back to these when once the time of emancipation has arrived.

1 Now I say, *That* the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be
 2 lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until
 3 the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the
 4 elements¹ of the world: but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made
 5 of a woman, made under the² law, to redeem them that were under the³ law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

¹ rudiments

² *omit* the

³ *omit* the

The position of an heir in his infancy, though he is prospectively lord of all, is yet for all

practical purposes that of a slave. He is under orders, subjected to others who control both his person and his property. This condition of things continues until he attains his majority, that is according to Hebrew custom until he reaches the age of thirteen years and one day; or according to Roman, which it is more likely the Apostle had in his mind, until he has entered upon his twenty-fifth year. In just such a position of disability were those who were held bound under systems which confined them to the rudiments, the very alphabet, of what from the spiritual standpoint was itself but the most elementary sort of instruction.

It is certainly startling to find St Paul drawing no essential distinction between the Law imposed upon the Jews and the kind of discipline, in many ways of course so inferior, which was provided under paganism. Both were in their degrees preparatory, and both were temporary. When they had served their purpose, and when God's time was ripe, there was given to the world the revelation and the offer of sonship. The Son of God became Man and was made subject to the Law, in order that He might liberate men from bondage to law—whether it were Jewish or any other—and enable them to enter upon a sonship which could not otherwise have been theirs. Adoption is the granting by an act of favour of a sonship which could not have been claimed as a matter of right.

Nothing moreover was lacking which could make the evidence of this sonship complete.

6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your¹ hearts, crying, Abba,
7 Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.²

¹ our

² an heir through God.

The presence of the Spirit—the power of a new and divine life—speaking in the mother tongues of Jew and Greek, witnessed from the depths of their hearts to the reality of their sonship to God. If that was so, bondage had come to an end: as sons they had entered upon the inheritance which had come to them, not indeed by any efforts or deservings of their own, but solely through a gracious provision on the part of God.

The least that could be required from them was that they should avail themselves of the freedom which had been granted to them. Whatever they might have been content to do while the old life lasted, now their aims and their interests ought to correspond with their altered position.

8 Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service¹ unto them which by nature are no gods.
9 But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak

¹ were in bondage

and beggarly elements,² whereunto ye desire again
 10 to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months,
 11 and times,³ and years. I am afraid of you, lest I
 have bestowed upon you labour in vain.

² rudiments,

³ seasons,

There was a time when, through ignorance of the true God, they as Gentiles had lived in a condition of fearful subjection to things which at best were semblances of the divine, no real gods at all. That time was now past. They had been brought to recognise God, or, as it were better to say, they had been owned and recognised by God. On what principle then were they turning back to the old outworn childish stage, and wishing to condemn themselves to undergo it all over again? True, it was towards a Jewish and not a Gentile form of it that they were inclining; but when compared with the privileges and experiences to which they had advanced, it was weak and poor enough, most unhelpful and utterly unsatisfying.

What with their anxious and slavish observance of sabbaths, new moons, Jewish festivals, and sacred years, it really looked as if the labour spent in making them Christians had been labour thrown away. St Paul evidently did not think that it was worth while to have toiled as he had done merely for the sake of turning people from heathens into Jews. It was in his opinion quite too absurd that grown men should wish to be sent back again to the sing-song alphabet of the infant class.

The Apostle has not yet concluded his discussion of the doctrinal question, but for a moment or two he pauses in his argument, as was constantly his habit, in order that he may find room for some words of the nature of a personal appeal. He realises no doubt that his rebuke of the folly of the Galatians may read somewhat sternly; and the reference to his labours among them has called up memories which would strongly dispose him to write very differently if only he dared. At all events, they must understand that his severity does not arise from any sense of personal ill-treatment, but simply and solely from a most tender concern for their well-being.

12 Brethren, I beseech you, be as I *am*; for I *am* as
 13 ye *are*: ye have not injured me at all. Ye know
 how through¹ infirmity of the flesh I preached the
 14 gospel unto you at the first. And my² temptation
 which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected;
 but received me as an angel of God, *even* as Christ
 Jesus.

¹ on account of

² your

Whether they are prepared to take their place as Sons or not, he at all events will claim them as Brothers. His dearest wish, for the furtherance of which he has already made the greatest sacrifices, is that no sort of difference or distinction should exist between him and them. Certainly they had never given him any cause to complain of their conduct in the past. Their treatment of him had,

on the contrary, been extraordinarily generous. When he stayed with them on the first occasion that he visited them, he had been forced to do so by a serious and distressing illness; and yet, so far from regarding him with indifference or aversion on account of his infirmity, as they might naturally have been tempted to do, they had received him with the utmost love and veneration.¹ No one could possibly have been more honoured than he had been by them. Why then this change that had come over their feelings towards him?

15 Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for
I bear you record, that, if *it had been* possible, ye
would have plucked out your own eyes, and have
16 given them to me. Am I therefore become your
enemy, because I tell you the truth?

They had risen up and called him blessed. No words that they could use were too strong to express their gratitude. And there was literally nothing that they would not have done to relieve his sufferings or to attest their devotion. Could it be that all this had utterly vanished simply

¹ 'Compare the well-known scene in the history of the ancestors of these very Galatians, when in the sack of Rome the Gauls had first regarded the Roman senators in the Forum as something more than human, and then, the moment that the spell of reverence was broken, put them all to death—*primo ut deos venerati, deinde ut homines despiciati interfecere.*' (Stanley, *Sermons and Essays on the Apostolic Age*, p. 210.)

because he had told them and was telling them the truth?

He knew that others were endeavouring to supplant him in their affections; and he knew also that their show of interest was utterly insincere.

17 They zealously affect¹ you, *but* not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect² them.
 18 But³ *it is* good to be zealously affected always in a good *thing*,⁴ and not only when I am present
 19 with you. My little children, of whom I travail in
 20 birth again until Christ be formed in you, I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you.

¹ earnestly desire ² earnestly desire ³ Now

⁴ to be earnestly desired in a good *cause* always,

The Galatians were being courted by men whose aim was not really to serve them, but rather to bring about a situation in which court should be paid to themselves. Not that St Paul would find fault with zealous attentions from any quarter, provided only the motive were an honourable one; nor did he wish to complain of their receiving such from others than himself in his absence, although indeed he could not forget that he stood to them in a relationship very different from that which any new friends could possibly aspire to hold. He had addressed them as his Brothers, but in truth they were far more to him than brothers; they were his Children towards whom he had felt, and was even yet feeling, what could only be likened to a mother's pangs.

There was nothing that he had undergone for them that he would not undergo again, if only he might see, not the formalities of ceremonialism, but the character of Christ developing and increasing among them. Would that he were not so far away, for then perhaps he might be able to change the tone of severity which in his uncertainty and perplexity he had found it impossible to avoid.

CHAPTER IV. 21—V. 13

IF St Paul had his doubts of the Galatians, he is determined that they shall have no doubts whatever as to himself or his meaning. He has been setting before them a great argument from history. They may have found it somewhat difficult reading. He will give them now what will perhaps more readily appeal to their imaginations. Let them listen then to an illustration of the matter such as their Judaistic teachers loved to extract from the Scriptures.

21 Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye
 22 not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham
 had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the
 23 other by a freewoman. But he *who was* of the
 bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of
 24 the freewoman *was* by promise. Which things
 are an allegory: for these¹ are the two covenants;
 the one from the Mount Sinai, which gendereth²
 25 to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is
 Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem
 which now is, and³ is in bondage with her children.
 26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the
 27 mother of us all.⁴ For it is written, Rejoice, *thou*
 barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou
 that travailest not: for the desolate hath many
 more children than she which hath an husband.

¹ these women ² bearing children ³ for she
⁴ our mother.

As at the beginning of his doctrinal argument, so now again at the close of it, St Paul directs attention to Abraham. Their new instructors would have them to become children of Abraham ; but let them not forget that, according to the sacred narrative, Abraham had two sorts of children, differing very widely in regard both to position and character.

There was the child of Hagar the bondmaid, which was born in the ordinary course of nature ; and there was the child of Sarah the true wife, the free woman, born in fulfilment of the promise.

Now all this had been and might well be regarded as containing an allegory. For just as there were these two mothers of old, so were there two Covenants now. One of these Covenants was given, not in the land of promise but far outside it in Arabia, from Mount Sinai, where Hagar's descendants live, and which is actually called by her name.¹ This Hagar-like Covenant

¹ This seems to be implied by the reading of the generally received text. The problem of interpretation would be considerably simplified if we might, with several ancient authorities, omit the word "Hagar" altogether from ver. 25 and read, "For Sinai is a mountain in Arabia."

In support of the supposition that Hagar was a name for Mt. Sinai we have only testimonies to this effect by Chrysostom in the fourth century, and by a Bohemian traveller Haraut at the end of the sixteenth. There is an Arabic word of somewhat similar sound but different etymology, which signifies a 'stone,' and of course it is just

belongs to the same order of things and is represented by the present earthly Jerusalem which is in bondage both politically and spiritually.

But there is also another Covenant. In one sense it was a later Covenant, though in reality a much older one, inasmuch as the Promise had been given many years before the child of the bondmaid was born. As Hagar is Sinai and the material Jerusalem, so Sarah is the ideal and heavenly Jerusalem emancipated from all worldly limitations, a free mother of the free.

Her children, like Isaac, may be long in coming, but indeed they will come as the prophet foretold (Is. liv. i.). And just as the name Isaac meant "laughter," even so shall there be joy at their birth; nor would it be long before they far outnumbered their rivals.

However, it ought not to be surprising if in the meantime they found themselves regarded and treated with considerable jealousy and arrogance :

28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children
29 of promise. But as then he that was born after
the flesh persecuted him *that was born* after the
Spirit, even so *it is* now.

The children of promise must expect very much the same kind of treatment in any age. It was scarcely to be hoped that they should be left to possible that St Paul might have heard it applied to the rocks of Sinai by the Arabs during his sojourn in the peninsula.

enjoy their inheritance in peace. Hagar's son in the old time vexed the true seed, and her children would not do otherwise now. But this only means that now as then a strong and determined course must be taken.

30 Nevertheless¹ what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.

¹ But

The instinct of Sarah was a true one, and was approved by God (Gen. xxi. 10, 12). There could be no compromise then; there ought to be no compromise now. The Law must disappear to make room for the Gospel.

'It is scarcely possible,' wrote Bishop Lightfoot, 'to estimate the strength of conviction and depth of prophetic insight which this declaration implies. The Apostle thus confidently sounds the death-knell of Judaism at a time when one half of Christendom clung to the Mosaic law with a jealous affection little short of frenzy, and while the Judaic party seemed to be growing in influence, and was strong enough, even in the Gentile churches of his own founding, to undermine his influence and endanger his life.'¹

So far from shrinking from the application of his conclusion, the Apostle only longs to impart

¹ *Galatians*, p. 181.

Deliberately to adopt ceremonial Judaism could only be to abandon Christianity. Anyone who suffered himself to be circumcised must be given to understand that he was taking upon himself the obligation to do all that the Law required. And let them remember that if they did undertake this, they could look for no benefit or help from Christ, for in the act by which they thus bound themselves to seek their salvation by Law they would have renounced their connection with Him, and would have lapsed from dependence on Grace.

The Christian hope looks in a wholly different direction.

5 For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of
6 righteousness by faith.¹ For in Jesus Christ
neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision ; but faith which worketh by² love.

¹ by faith wait for the hope of righteousness.

² working through

Christians are expectantly looking for righteousness, not from any imagined fleshly advantages but through a change wrought upon the spirit ; not by merits which they themselves may acquire, but by faith in the goodness and grace of God in Christ. They need, therefore, never fear that in coming to Christ as Gentiles they had missed anything that could have been theirs had they been originally Jews. Once united to Christ the former outward condition could signify nothing,

the one thing of importance then being that their faith should evidence its vitality by deeds of love.

Faith, and Hope, and Love: that is the path of the Christian. And they had been going so bravely:

7 Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye
8 should not obey the truth? This persuasion
9 *cometh* not of him that calleth you. A little leaven
leaveneth the whole lump.

Certainly the change was no work of God Who was ever calling them onward. It could only be the result of an evil influence gradually spreading among them, against the mischievous effects of which they had not been, and still were not, sufficiently on their guard.

St Paul would have little anxiety about them if only they could be left undisturbed.

10 I have confidence in you through¹ the Lord, that
ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that
troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever
11 he be. And I, brethren, if I yet preach circum-
cision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the
12 offence of the cross ceased. I would they were
even cut off² which trouble³ you.

¹ with regard to you in

² would even mutilate themselves

³ unsettle

The author of all the trouble, the ringleader in the disturbance, would most certainly meet with his punishment, whatever might be his position in the Church.

Had he ventured to insinuate that sometimes

St Paul could, when it suited his purpose, make a point of circumcision, relying perhaps on the case of Timothy, whose circumcision as the son of a Jewish mother had been judged to be expedient under very exceptional circumstances? There was a very practical answer to any such charge.

If circumcision were a part of his Gospel, why should he be continually followed and vexed by these people? If he were really a preacher of circumcision, if, that is to say, he made it under all circumstances an essential of salvation, then surely the main objection which they had to the doctrine of Christ crucified would have disappeared.

No, it was utterly false and wrong; patience failed in speaking of such men. He could wish that these disturbers of others would practise on themselves; would that they were *excised* (this is his terrible play upon the words) as well as *circumcised*. If only they could be got to imitate those emasculated priests of Cybele whom the Galatians knew so well, there might be an end to their mischief. Then, at all events, they would be seen to be the pagans that they were.

CHAPTER V. 13—END.

ST PAUL has been meeting one by one the charges of his opponents. They had denied his Apostolic authority; and he has shewn most conclusively the grounds on which it rested. They had denounced his doctrine as new, which on their lips meant that it was false. He has allowed that it was new in the sense that it had come to him newly, by a direct revelation from heaven, and not at second hand from other men; but in no other sense than that. He has maintained that it was to be found in the earliest chapters of the Scriptures, and that it was moreover the only true key to the understanding of the meaning of God's dealings with man.

So far then it had been a question mainly of his right to teach, and of the truth of his teaching; but even now the controversy could not be regarded as ended. There still remained the further insinuation as to *the practical effects of the teaching* upon actual life. The discussion therefore must now pass out from the study and the lecture-room into the arena of ordinary experience.

St Paul's enemies had been bold to assert that his doctrines were as unsafe in practice as they were in principle unsound. And here no doubt

they imagined that they occupied a position from which it would not be easy to dislodge them. Had not the Lord laid it down that "a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit," and that "by their fruits ye shall know them"? 'What,' they would confidently demand, 'was likely to follow from telling men that they might ignore the restrictions and dispense with the safeguards of the Moral Law? Could there be a second opinion as to what the inevitable effects of such preaching must be?'

If ever teacher refused to face the practical outcome of his teaching, that teacher was certainly not St Paul. We know well how constantly it was his habit in his Epistles to pass from doctrinal statement and exposition to consider in the most thorough manner the bearing of what had been said upon the minutest details of everyday conduct. No one could realise more strongly than he did that the whole issue in this dispute was ultimately a practical one: no one could have been more determined to make it such. He writes under the deep conviction that upon the decision which the Galatians arrived at must depend the whole direction and character of their lives. And having this in view, his protest is unhesitatingly for faith and for freedom.

The Judaizers were all for a policy of safety. To tell men that they might, from the very outset of their religious career, rejoice in the assurance of their acceptance by God and rely for their

direction upon the inner movements of His Grace, was to their minds exceedingly dangerous. They would have men kept in doubt and held in leading-strings. It was the policy of those who had no real trust in God or hope for human nature; of those in whose own souls the life of the Spirit was at the lowest ebb.

Against such a policy St Paul declared the most uncompromising warfare. 'Away with doubt,' he cries (unless indeed we have wholly misconceived his meaning); 'It is neither fair to God nor man. You need not be afraid of Faith. It is Doubt that is deadly and dangerous. By faith the soul is strengthened and inspired. And away with leading-strings: to hold men in these is to condemn them to a perpetual infancy. The strong new life which comes through Christ may be trusted to take care of itself.'

They were for the timid course; he was for the bold. They were for trying to make the best of the old nature; he was for relying upon the growth and development of the new. Beyond all else he was fighting for Liberty. He has used the word already, and he will use it again. He has no fear at all of what will follow from the true freedom of the Spirit.

Accordingly he proceeds to recommend and explain it.

13 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only *use* not liberty for an occasion to the flesh,

14 but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this ; Thou shalt love
 15 thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

They were intended for liberty ; but not of course liberty of the flesh. It was here that the false teachers, whose conceptions of life were so limited and materialised, had always failed to make the true distinction. Liberty is not to be confounded with license. License is allowing free play to the worst. Liberty is the predominance of the best. Hence it is that Liberty, paradoxical as it may sound, is the complete fulfilling of Law ; for Liberty is the service of Love. Without love—as perhaps it would be well for those who were splitting themselves into such violent factions in defence of law to remember—men might very easily sink to the condition of wild beasts, hateful and destructive.

16 *This* I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh : and¹ these are contrary the one to the other : so that ye cannot² do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of³ the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

¹ for

² may not

³ by

Let them fearlessly follow the higher, and they will be released from the tyranny of the lower. The lower appetite and the higher aspiration are in active opposition the one against the other,

with the result that each tends to paralyse the working of the other, whether it be inclined towards the evil or towards the good. What was needed was the strengthening of the spiritual. They had but to secure this, and then yield themselves freely to its influence, and they would find that they had attained the very object of the Law, and had at the same time been lifted above the necessity for it. The strengthening of the good would do more for them than any mere battling with the bad.

Did any still say, 'But tell us exactly what the life would be like that is lived under the influence of the Spirit'? They had better think first what the life is like when the flesh is left free to do as it pleases. In this way they will more thoroughly realise the greatness of the contrast. The results of the unchecked action of the flesh are unhappily but too evident and familiar.

19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are
these; Adultery,¹ fornication, uncleanness, lascivious-
 20 ness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emula-
 21 tions, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings,
 murders,² drunkenness, revellings, and such like:
 of the which I tell you before, as I have also told
you in time past, that they which do such things
 shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

¹ *omit* Adultery,

² *omit* murders,

Such are the products of the lower nature when left to itself. The horrid enumeration follows a

natural order. The list begins with sins against *self* (see 1 Cor. vi. 18), sins of impurity increasing in wantonness; sins so universal among the heathen that no ancient moralist ever thought of pronouncing an absolute condemnation against them. Then come what were more directly sins against *God*; idolatry, 'the open recognition of false gods,' and sorcery, 'the secret tampering with the powers of evil.' Finally, there are the sins against *society*, beginning with hatreds cherished in the heart, leading on to rivalries and contentions and the indulgence of passions which destroy all proper bonds of union among men, and substituting for them forms of fellowship which are even yet more fatal than the divisions.

Of such things a Christian Apostle can but declare that the practice of them must shut men out from any share in the blessings of God's true order, here or hereafter.

Over against such dreadful deeds let them now set the natural effect, the ripening result, of the unhindered life of the Spirit.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-
23 suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness,
temperance : against such there is no law.

It will be best to defer the detailed study of the parts which constitute this wondrous whole until we are able to consider them more fully in a section by themselves.¹ Enough for the present

¹ See pp. 112—133.

to say that here too as in the former list, the arrangement has its method. As then, so now also, the division will be found to be threefold, corresponding again to the same three great aspects of life, but with a significant change in the order.

We shall shew that there is good reason for thinking that the words, "Love, Joy, Peace," have reference to the life of a Christian in his intercourse with *God*.

The four next, "Longsuffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith," plainly describe the qualities which should characterise him in his bearing towards his *fellow-men*. By "Faith" appears to be meant, not the theological virtue which occupies a very different position in the spiritual development, being of the root rather than of the fruit; not, that is to say, faith towards God, but faith in the other sense in which St Paul employs the term, as trust, belief, reliance shewn towards men.¹

Then, finally, we have the description of the life in respect of *self*. While in the account of "the works of the flesh" considerations of self came

¹ *e.g.* in Eph. i. 15 (if the strongly-supported reading adopted in the R.V. be correct): and possibly in Philemon 5. Compare also 1 Cor. xiii. 7.

If "faith" be not thus interpreted here, the alternative would be to render the word ($\pi\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$) so translated in the A.V. by 'faithfulness' or 'fidelity.' Instances in which it has this meaning are frequent in the LXX. In the N.T. it occurs in this sense in Tit. ii. 10, and perhaps in St Matt. xxiii. 23.

first, here they occupy the last place. Two words contain all that needs to be said. The really free life of the Spirit will culminate in "Meekness," by which is meant a due estimate of the place which self ought to hold; and "Temperance" (in its widest meaning of self-control), which is the rigorous determination to see to it that self is kept in its place.

Such is the rich cluster which St Paul holds up to view. He might confidently have challenged all the moralities and all the religions to produce the like, or even to shew that they had so much as contemplated such an ideal as in the very least degree possible of attainment.

His actual conclusion is a much more modest one. He is content to remark—not without a touch of irony in his tone—that these things do not seem to call for the interference of legislation!

If such are the effects of Liberty, the Galatians need not have any misgivings as to what would result from boldly obeying the impulses and dictates of their spiritual nature. There was, moreover, a yet further reason pointing in the same direction:

24 And they that are Christ's¹ have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

¹ of Christ Jesus

In the case of those who have been brought into union with Christ, not only has the good in them

been renewed and strengthened, but the evil has received its death-sentence and indeed its death-blow. In the very act through which they were joined to Christ there was a participation in His death. The crucifixion of the flesh is not the work of a moment ; but the evil element in those who have received the new life is dying, and will die with all its energies.

Here, then, is the only true and safe conclusion of the matter :

25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the
26 Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vainglory,¹ provoking one another, envying one another.

¹ vainglorious,

The one aim of Christians must be to advance in the life of the Spirit. In this heavenly rivalry they may freely engage with each other, but in no lower forms of less honourable competition.

CHAPTER VI

THE Epistle has reached its climax, and prepares to draw to its close. What is to follow is very largely of the nature of a postscript. St Paul naturally desires to leave the main thoughts of his letter as the last impression on the mind. To do this with the greatest possible emphasis he will take the pen from the amanuensis and write the final message with his own hand.

But before he does so he has an appeal to make, in regard to their personal relations one with another. He introduces it by the word "Brothers!" As Bengel truly says, 'A whole argument lies hidden under this one word.'

It was a word very specially dear to St Paul, as is strikingly shewn by a reference in one of his speeches recorded in the Acts. He was describing the circumstances of his conversion. More than twenty years had passed, but the facts stood out in vivid detail before his mind. And among the memories of that wonderful time was one which had a peculiar tenderness of its own. Never could he forget the first welcome addressed to him by a Christian man. "He came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother"

(compare Acts xxii. 13 with ix. 17). In that single word was gathered up a whole revelation of newly found sympathy and helpfulness. We need not wonder therefore that he uses it now when he is pleading for the exercise of just these qualities, the need for which was by no means confined to the outset of a Christian career.

1 Brethren, if a man be¹ overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

¹ should be

St Paul's appeal is to those who claimed to have made most progress in the life of sanctification. He calls upon such to aid their brethren who may be lagging behind. Possibly, when he uses the expression, "Ye that are spiritual," he has in view some of his converts who may have stood firm to their old allegiance, and may have been disposed to congratulate themselves that they at all events had not been carried away into the errors which he had so sharply condemned. If so, he would have them evidence their spirituality by shewing a more than ordinary degree of meekness and love.

However flagrant the offence, those who were really living a higher life must help and reinstate the guilty one: not proudly, with any consciousness of their own superiority, but rather as

remembering that at any moment any one of them might be tempted, and might be in no less need of forgiveness and loving restoration.

Some among them desired—did they?—to have burdens imposed upon them, and to obey a law. Here then was their opportunity; let them be burdens of sympathy, in the bearing of which they would be fulfilling the most perfect of all laws, “the law” not of Moses but “of Christ.’

- 3 For if a man think himself to be something, when
4 he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every
man prove his own work, and then shall he have
rejoicing¹ in himself alone, and not in another.
5 For every man shall bear his own burden.

¹ his glorying

The poorest of all sources of satisfaction is that of the man who comforts himself by contrasting his own imagined superiority with the faults which he perceives in his neighbour. If a man wishes to boast, let his boasting be at least for some merit of his own. Let him not think to excuse himself by dwelling upon the weaknesses of others. The load of personal responsibility is one which can never be shifted. Each man will be called upon to answer directly to God for what he has done.

But sympathy and helpfulness are not to be confined to spiritual things. They may well begin with these, but they must not end with them. And so there follow some very earnest and

practical exhortations as to certain forms of duty which might easily be overlooked.

6 Let him that is taught in the word communicate
 7 unto him that teacheth in all good things. Be not
 deceived ; God is not mocked : for whatsoever a
 8 man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that
 soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption ;
 but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit
 9 reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in
 well doing : for in due season we shall reap, if we
 10 faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let
 us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who
 are of the household of faith.

It looks as if the Galatians had been remiss in this matter of liberality. They had been asked to make contribution for the brethren of Judæa (1 Cor. xvi. 1), but we do not know that they did so. It is clear that St Paul felt it necessary to speak very strongly to them about the dangers of niggardliness. It had evidently come to his ears that they had not treated those who were their appointed ministers with a proper generosity.

In writing to the Corinthians about almsgiving (2 Cor. ix. 6), St Paul says, "He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly." Here he employs the same illustration, but he enforces it much more strongly. He bids the Galatians recollect that though they might deceive themselves, there was One Who could not be cheated by fair professions. There was no favouritism in God's dealings. It would be with Christian men just as with any others. What men sowed

in this world that they reaped. If they sowed the sort of seed which was calculated to grow in the low part of their nature, it would grow there, and end in rottenness; only if they sowed in the spiritual soil could they reap the reward of Life.

In their own interests, then, let them never lose heart in doing right, or grow tired of honourable deeds: the recompense might seem to be long in coming, but it would come like the harvest at its proper time. Life is the chance of doing good. Let them do it on as large a scale as possible, but let their well-doing 'begin at home' with the Family of the Faith.

Had the condition of the Galatian Church been at all an ordinary one, St Paul might have ended this Epistle in what would have been for him the ordinary way. In this case we should have had little further than a commendation of himself to the prayers of his readers, and a benediction of farewell.

But such an ending in the present case might, and probably would, have conveyed an erroneous impression. It might have led to the inference that the mind of the writer was more at ease than it really was. It might even have seemed as if something of the heat of the earlier parts of the letter had been kindled to meet the requirements of controversy, and had begun to abate as these had given way before the practical conclusions of

the calmer judgment. The Apostle is determined yet once again to make misunderstanding impossible. In his own handwriting they shall have the proof that his attitude is never in the very least degree likely to change. His earnestness is the result of settled conviction and unwavering devotion. He knows these men as the Galatians do not—their aims and their insincerity. And he knows also that the things which they disparage and denounce are the things which are the most sacred realities of life. There can be no truce between him and them. The Galatians must take their own line. He can only tell them that he has for ever taken his.

11 Ye see how large a letter¹ I have written² unto you
 12 with mine own hand. As many as desire to make
 a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be
 13 circumcised; only lest they should suffer perse-
 cution for the cross of Christ. For neither they
 themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but
 14 desire to have you circumcised, that they may
 glory in your flesh. But God forbid³ that I should
 glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,
 by whom⁴ the world is crucified unto me, and I
 15 unto the world. For in Christ Jesus⁵ neither cir-
 cumcision availeth⁶ anything, nor uncircumcision,
 16 but a new creature. And as many as walk⁷
 according to this rule, peace *be* on them, and
 17 mercy, and upon the Israel of God. From hence-
 forth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my
 body the marks of the Lord⁸ Jesus.

¹ in what large letters

² write

³ far be it from me

⁴ through which

⁵ *omit* in Christ Jesus

⁶ is

⁷ shall walk

⁸ *omit* the Lord

The boldness of the hand-writing is to be regarded as indicative of the force of his conviction. Let them take it from him, these zealous proselytizers had their own interests to serve. They did not sincerely believe in the value of circumcision: they were not themselves consistent observers of the Law (compare St John vii. 19). Their objects were selfish and worldly. They wanted to avoid being hated as those were hated who proclaimed a crucified Messiah. They wished to obtain the credit which would be obtained if they could point to a large following of outward adherents.

For himself, he had no care to boast but in the Cross of his Lord, through which worldliness and selfishness had alike received their death-blow for him. He lightly esteemed the tokens of visible success, for he had learnt that the true criterion by which to judge in religion was, not any old-world form of distinction which was outward in the flesh, but the deep inward evidence of the presence of the new-creating Spirit of God. The Cross through which the old nature should be put to death, and the Power which could lead to newness of life—these and these only were of the essence of Christianity.

Against those who refused such a ruling there could only be war without quarter, but upon all who were prepared to adhere to it—and in them the true Israel would be found—he invoked

the Peace and the Mercy which were the portion of the People of God.

As for himself, it ought to be plain what he was. If men must judge by outward tokens, they might observe that he carried on his body the scars, the brands of his Master. For them—and once more he claims them as “Brothers”—he can only pray with all his heart that they may be drawn into ever closer and more vital union and fellowship with his Lord and theirs.

18 Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with your spirit. Amen.

Here, then, we take our leave of the Epistle as a whole. We shall enter somewhat further into the consideration of some particular expressions which seem to call for a rather fuller treatment than has been possible in the course of a general exposition; but it will not be necessary to go back upon the general argument again. We have tried to trace its outlines, and to form some conception of its power and its scope.

How far it availed for its immediate purpose, our knowledge does not enable us to say. We have no idea in what spirit the letter was received, or what lasting impression it made upon those for whose sake it was written. Perhaps we might be justified in concluding, from the mere fact of its preservation, that it did meet with respectful attention and was looked upon as a possession of permanent worth.

In regard to the influence which it has exerted upon the Church at large, there can be no question at all. That the young life of Christianity was not stifled in the swaddling-clothes of a narrow and rigid Judaism was, humanly speaking, due to St Paul. The literature which has come down to us from the age immediately succeeding that of the Apostles is comparatively scanty, but yet it amply suffices to shew that the results of the teaching of which at one time St Paul was the single exponent, had been loyally accepted by those who were regarded by the Church as the truest representatives of the Apostolic tradition.

Do we not catch an echo of our Epistle in words like these from the lips of the martyr Ignatius? 'If any one propound Judaism to you, hear him not: for it is better to hear Christianity from a man who is circumcised, than Judaism from one uncircumcised.' 'If we live after the manner of Judaism, we avow that we have not received grace.'¹ Utterances such as these written in the early years of the second century—and it would be easy to multiply quotations²—prove clearly enough how victorious had been the issue of that struggle for liberty which had seemed at its crisis to depend upon the strength and

¹ *Ep. to the Philadelphians*, 6. *Ep. to the Magnesians*, 8.

² *e.g. Ep. of Barnabas*, 9. 'The circumcision, in which they have confidence, is abolished; for He hath said that a circumcision not of the flesh should be practised.'

courage of an individual man battling against the most tremendous odds.

We can then estimate in part the effect which has been produced by the protest of St Paul ; but only in part. Its influence was not exhausted, nor was its work completed, in the earliest centuries of which Church history tells. Again and again it has made itself heard, sometimes to unwilling ears, sometimes to eager hearts. The thought of St Paul was the inspiring force in the souls of those who felt that they were fighting over again his battle at the time of the Reformation ; and no extravagance into which some of them may have been betrayed can make us shut our eyes to the immense value of the service which they rendered to the great common cause of faith and intelligence.

Nor can we imagine that truth, which has been so potent in the past, is to be without its effects in the present and the future. Such teachings as those we have been endeavouring to re-learn have a permanent office to fulfil, and that can be no healthy stage in the life of the Church in which they are allowed to remain for long forgotten or unheeded. Our study of them will not have been without its reward if it has helped us, even a little more clearly, to catch the notes of the strong trumpet call which reaches us coming across the long centuries--shall we not rather say, coming down from the height far above us?—bidding us to

press onward and strive upward, in the humble yet confident hope that at length we may attain, through Faith and Patience, to that which God in His goodness would have each one of us to be.

ST PAUL'S TEACHING AS TO CHRISTIAN PRIVILEGE

A SURVEY

A GAIN and again in reading this Epistle—as indeed in reading any of his Epistles—we are struck by the force and the frequency with which St Paul accentuates the importance of a right understanding of the Privileges of the Christian's Position in the sight of God. He is perpetually impressing upon his readers the great principle that it could only be as they attained to a clear and thankful sense of what God had done for them, that they could even begin to think as they should about that which they on their part were bound to do for God.

We shall best be able to gain a true idea of what St Paul intended to convey in these chapters if we review the expressions which he employs, and then try to get some conception of their meaning and relation one to another. In the list which follows, we have but arranged these expressions in the order in which they occur. It will be seen at a glance that the order is in itself a most suggestive one.

IN CHRIST. i. 22.

IN CHRIST JESUS. ii. 4.

JUSTIFIED by the faith of Jesus Christ. ii. 16*a*.

JUSTIFIED by the faith of Christ. ii. 16*b*.

JUSTIFIED by Christ. ii. 17.

CRUCIFIED with Christ. ii. 20.

REDEEMED from the curse. iii. 13.

JUSTIFIED by faith. iii. 24.

SONS OF GOD by faith in Christ Jesus. iii. 26.

BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST. iii. 27*a*.

PUT ON CHRIST. iii. 27*b*.

IN CHRIST JESUS. iii. 28.

CHRIST'S. iii. 29.

THE ADOPTION OF SONS. iv. 5.

SONS. iv. 6.

A SON. iv. 7*a*.

A SON. iv. 7*b*.

AN HEIR through God. iv. 7*c*.

CHILDREN OF PROMISE. iv. 28.

BORN AFTER THE SPIRIT. iv. 29.

Children of the FREE. iv. 31.

FREE. v. 1.

IN JESUS CHRIST. v. 6.

LED OF THE SPIRIT. v. 18*a*.

NOT UNDER THE LAW. v. 18*b*.

CHRIST'S. v. 24.

OF THE HOUSEHOLD of faith. vi. 10.

Broadly speaking then, the sequence is that with which our own Church Catechism has made us so familiar—*Members* of Christ, *Children* of God, *Inheritors* of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The general doctrine may be stated thus :

i. In Christ Christians are Justified, having been made partakers of His Death and His Redemption.

ii. The justified life of those who have been united to Christ is a life of Adoption to Sonship.

iii. As Sons they are heirs to a spiritual Inheritance, freed from the bondage of this world, and admitted already into the new order of the family of Heaven.

Until these privileges had been grasped, and in some measure realised by individual faith, men and women—in St Paul's view — had not yet learned the very elements of what is implied in the name of Christian ; and only in proportion as this position was understood and accepted could they be enabled to face their difficulties and do their work in the world.

But if we are to do justice to the meaning of St Paul we must examine his language more closely, and in somewhat further detail.

I

We shall find that everything which follows it is but an expansion of the great watchword,—

“IN CHRIST.” This is St Paul’s favourite expression, and it continually recurs in his writings. The first dawning of all that it subsequently signified to him came, no doubt, when there was revealed to him on the Damascus road how vital and intimate was the union between the glorified Christ in heaven and His suffering members on earth (Acts ix. 4). The illustration of this union which was most frequently before his mind was that of the “Body”; an illustration used by himself alone in the New Testament. He loved to think that the Christ Who was Incarnate by union with manhood had become Incorporate by union with men. It is remarkable that the illustration of the “Body” is not to be found in this Epistle: unless, indeed, it underlies the statement in iii. 28, “Ye are all one (man) in Christ Jesus.” Other metaphors are used, however, to describe the *status* of those who in their Baptism have been admitted “into Christ” (iii. 27).

In the first place, they are said to be “JUSTIFIED.” The word is most familiar to all readers of St Paul. It is a word which carries us at once to the very heart of his conception of the Gospel. The Gospel, as he conceives it, is a unique declaration of the Love of God. We may think of Divine Love as manifesting itself in either of two great ways which correspond to the two revelations of Nature and of Grace. In Nature we are surrounded by the hints of God’s

Beneficence: in Grace we are made conscious of God's *Approbation*. Beneficence is the general disposition to shew kindness and to promote well-being. Approbation is much more than this. Approbation is acceptance to particular and personal favour. It is for God's Approbation that the spirit of man has yearned as for nothing else in all the universe. The provision to meet and satisfy this deep desire of the soul is expressed by St Paul by the term Justification.

He did not originate the use of the word "Justify" to denote the standing of a man before God. He borrowed it from the Old Testament. In this Epistle he first introduces it (ii. 16) with a quotation from the 143rd Psalm. And he goes back further still to find the essential thought of it in the account of God's dealings with Abraham (iii. 6, 8).

In the Greek version of the Old Testament the word "justify" is constantly employed as meaning to 'pronounce and treat as righteous,'¹ as for example in the following passages:—

"He that justifieth the wicked and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination unto the Lord" (Prov. xvii. 15).

"Hear Thou in heaven . . . and judge Thy servants, condemning the wicked . . . and justi-

¹ For a critical discussion of *δικαιοῦν* and *δικαίωσις* see Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, pp. 30, 31.

fyng the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness" (1 Kings viii. 32).

It is as we read such a phrase as the one which concludes this last quotation that we feel how great an advance had to be made before it became possible to speak, as did our Lord (St Luke xviii. 14) and St Paul, of a Divine Justification of those who had no righteousness of their own upon which they could hope to take their stand. To St Paul this deeper knowledge came slowly, but in the end unmistakably, by means of a profound spiritual experience.

The problem of his earlier life had been to find the answer to the old question, "How can man be justified with God?" He had longed for the Divine Approbation. He had struggled hard to win the sense of it by obedience to conscience and the moral law. At last he became convinced that it was a vain and hopeless task. Sinful men could by no means in their power attain to righteousness of their own. Indeed, strange as it might sound to say so, he came to see that it was in a large measure their effort to do this which constituted their sinfulness. The going about to establish a righteousness of their own was merely the establishing of themselves in a wrong attitude towards God. When they altogether ceased to think of doing this, and looked to God to do for them, not simply what they could not do for themselves, but something

far greater and better—when they believed that it was His will to make them sharers of His own righteousness in Christ—then at once their attitude became a true one and such as God might accept and bless. This one only true attitude for man was an attitude of Faith.

To state these conclusions exactly as St Paul stated them :

“They being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God” (Rom. x. 3).

“That I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of mine own, which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Phil. iii. 8, 9).

Justification then, in its complete New Testament sense, is the Divine Approbation which rests upon those who have renounced the hope—and even the wish—that they may acquire a goodness of their own, and are relying upon the promise of pardon and grace through Christ.

Justification includes and goes beyond forgiveness. Forgiveness looks mainly to the past; Justification embraces the present and the future. Forgiveness—as it has been happily expressed—seems to say, ‘You may go’: Justification says, ‘You may come!’ Justification is the welcome to a life of fullest and freest fellowship with God.

II

What has been said should enable us to understand how fitting it was that St Paul should pass at once from the use of the term "justified" to speak of ADOPTION and Sonship. The justified member of Christ is not kept waiting, even as one acquitted, before the bar of the Judge: he is received immediately into the gracious atmosphere of the Home.

The use of the metaphor of Adoption is peculiar to St Paul among the writers of the Bible. His Roman citizenship had brought him within the circle of ideas which made such an illustration natural. There was no legal adoption among the Jews, just as there is none amongst ourselves.

Under Roman law, which would be familiar to those who like the Galatians were living in a Roman Province, adoption was a process of the most ordinary occurrence. 'By the ancient Civil law adoption created the relation of father and son for all practical purposes, just as if the adopted son were born of the blood of the adoptive father in lawful marriage. The adopted child entirely quitted his own family and entered the family of his adopter, passing under the paternal power of his new father and acquiring the capacity to inherit through him.'¹

The common form of adoption was most

¹ Lord Mackenzie, *Roman Law*, p. 137.

dramatic. It consisted of an ancient ceremonial conveyance in the presence of seven witnesses. The would-be father used the formula, 'I claim this man as my son.' After the formal conveyance there followed a fictitious lawsuit. The adopted son gave evidence as to what had happened at, and after, the time of his adoption. Speaking of the father, who is supposed to have died, he said: 'The deceased claimed me by the name of son. He took me to his home. I called him father and he allowed it. I sat at his table where the slaves never sat. He told me the inheritance was mine.' The ceremony was completed by the summoning of one of the witnesses to corroborate this evidence.¹

Adoption was the admission by an act of grace to a position to which no claim could be made solely on the ground of nature. It is to be observed that St Paul is careful not to use language which would deny that all men are in some true sense children of God. Jews and pagans were infants under a Divine Discipline (iv. 2). But it was not until the revelation of the Son of God had been given in the Incarnation that the possibilities of the higher, nobler Sonship could be realised (iv. 4-6).

¹ See a most interesting article on 'St Paul and Roman Law,' by W. E. Ball, LL.D., in *Contemporary Review*, August 1891.

III

'He told me the inheritance was mine.' The Member of Christ, accepted in the court of law, admitted into the home, is introduced to the Estate. He becomes an "HEIR THROUGH GOD":¹ an heir, that is to say, not by virtue of birth or for any merit of his own, but "through" the act of "God," Who adopted him.

Again we may feel sure that St Paul is referring to the condition of things as they existed under the Roman law. And indeed the Roman law of inheritance afforded a much more true illustration of the privileges of a Christian than did the Jewish. According to Roman law, unless it were otherwise provided by a definite will to the contrary, all the children, whether sons or daughters, inherited alike: whereas by Jewish law the sons inherited unequally, and the daughters, except in cases where there were no sons, were entirely excluded. The adoption of a child, according to Roman law was sufficient to revoke any testament which had been previously made by the father.²

The question has been raised whether St Paul, in his illustration in iv. 1-7, thought of the "father" as being dead or alive. Doubtless the

¹ This is unquestionably the correct reading in iv. 7. That of the text of the A.V. was clearly influenced by the corresponding passage in Rom. viii. 17.

² Mackenzie, *Roman Law*, p. 301.

“heir” might even in the father’s lifetime, be rightly described as prospectively “lord of all”; but the reference to guardians and “a time appointed of the father,” seem plainly to shew that, in the case of the earthly analogy, St Paul imagined that the death of the father had taken place.

It is therefore of little utility to endeavour to prove that under the Roman law there was ‘a species of co-partnership in the family property between a father and his children.’ The evidence for this is far from convincing, and has to be gathered from a time a good deal later than that in which the Epistle was written. It is better to admit freely that, as all metaphors must cease to apply at some point, so here the comparison between the earthly father and the Eternal Father breaks down, as it must of necessity break down, when duration of life is in question. St Paul’s point is to insist in the strongest possible way that the Christian under the provisions of God’s grace, does actually enter upon his privileges as heir quite as fully and indisputably as does any successor to any ordinary estate.¹

¹ It is most interesting to note the reply given by the bishops at the Savoy Conference to those who wished the word ‘Inheritor’ at the beginning of the Catechism to be altered to ‘Heir.’ ‘We conceive this expression as safe as that which they desire, and more fully expressing the efficacy of the Sacrament, according to St Paul in Gal. iii. 26, 27, where St Paul proves them all to be children of God, because they were baptised, and in their baptism had put

Such then is the position of surpassing dignity and splendour which St Paul maintained to be the spiritual birthright of the Christian ; a position not to be reached at last and as the reward of long striving by those only who had made great efforts to win it, but rather to be accepted thankfully as the very starting-point of a true and humble and Christ-like life.

Little marvel that he was startled at the thought that any who had ever in the least understood what the position meant should desire to exchange it for anything lower, and should even think it a gain to go back to a condition in which they would live not as sons but as slaves. Little marvel, too, that his whole being should burn with indignation against those who would deliberately rob men of the hopes and blessings which had been gained at such an infinite cost, and without which Righteousness—the outcome of a right relation with God — must for ever have remained an unattainable dream.

on Christ : “if children, then, heirs,” or, which is all one, “inheritors,” Rom. viii. 17.’ (Cardwell, *Conferences*, ch. vii. p. 357.)

ST PAUL'S TEACHING AS TO CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

A STUDY

THOSE who would give us real and lasting help towards the attainment of Christian character must not be content to deal in generalities. It is well of course that the utmost stress should be laid upon the broad fact that Character is the all-important thing to aim at. We need to have it constantly impressed upon us that, in the highest sense in which the words can be used, 'To Be or not to Be, that is the question.'

The formation of character is beyond question the ultimate purpose of education and government; the final test of efficiency in Church and State. Character is the principal thing; the one true standard of worth, and the one sure measure of influence. The world is manifestly designed to produce character. As we find it constituted, it is evident that all cannot *do* great things, or *get* great things, but that all may *be* great if they will. In this happy rivalry of most holy competition the success of one does not endanger, but rather ensures the success of another.

He who will urge all this upon us, and make us believe it, has rendered us no small service. But he must go further and do more, if his service is to be of much permanent value.

As soon as we seriously attempt to give effect to such counsels in practice, we begin to discover the need of more and more definite directions. There are questions that rise to be answered, and difficulties that have to be met. It is not enough to say in a general sort of way, 'Keep a lofty ideal before you, aim at the highest you know, try to be noble and good, strain every nerve and never abandon the task.' All this may be urged upon us with the most persuasive eloquence, but a very short experience of actual endeavour will suffice to convince us that unless we can be taught more than this we shall not for long retain our hold on so much.

We need to have it made clear to us where we are to begin, and how we are to go on, and how at last we may hope to end. The goal must be shewn to us, and the path that is to lead to it. And then too something must be said that may enable us to face and surmount the obstacles that will meet us on the way. What are we to do in the days when the task is difficult and the progress seems so slow?

It may seem ungracious to find fault with the teaching about Character which is so generally given to us at the present time. There is in it

so much that is true, so much that is stimulating. And yet it will scarcely be denied that it is open to the charge of insufficiency on several grounds. Its most obvious defect is its vagueness. Then again, it does not make allowance enough for the difficulties of the task which it, often so lightly, enjoins. Moreover, it fails as a rule to provide against the inevitable depression which overtakes those who discover that what they have attempted is not to be accomplished as rapidly as they had been led to imagine.

Let us hope that the result of our study of the teaching of St Paul will convince us that he at all events is not to be charged with the like shortcomings, but that on the contrary we may find his teaching to be exactly such as will enable us to supply them, whether for ourselves or for others.

If we have at all rightly interpreted the meaning of St Paul in this Epistle, he intended his words to be taken as a protest, a warning, and an appeal. We have seen how earnestly he inveighs against the folly of those who could allow themselves to be persuaded to accept any aim less than the highest; how with all the force of his nature he sets before them the perils of the downward course, and how he pleads with them to follow strongly and bravely after the loftiest spiritual ideal.

And yet, if this were all, we might indeed complain that here again we were in danger of being put off with generalities ; and we need not scruple to say that the Epistle would not have been what it has been to the Church, had it contained this and nothing besides. The greatness of the Epistle is surely to be seen in the fact that it not only deals with large and general principles, but so deals with them as to bring the truth of them to bear most directly and with the greatest tact and tenderness upon the actual misgivings and weaknesses of the men and women whom, from the very depths of his soul, the Apostle is longing to guide and to encourage to the utmost of his power.

For a detailed proof that this is no exaggerated account of the matter we should have to recall passage after passage, and indeed to repeat a good deal that has already been said in this Commentary. That of course we cannot attempt to do. What we shall attempt is to strengthen the impressions which we may have gathered from our reading of the Epistle, by fixing our thoughts with some considerable care upon a particular instance, which might fairly be taken to illustrate the teaching of the Apostle as a whole. The particular instance is one which may most fitly be selected as representative, inasmuch as it consists of the sentence in which St Paul seems intentionally to have brought to a climax all

the best thought and deepest feeling of his preceding argument.

"THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT
IS
LOVE, JOY, PEACE,
LONGSUFFERING, GENTLENESS, GOODNESS, FAITH,
MEEKNESS, TEMPERANCE."

We have already attempted some interpretation of this wonderful utterance. The old words will perhaps mean more than they have meant to us if we study them afresh in view of the very real practical needs of which we have been speaking: needs which are often felt, but are not in our ordinary experience as often provided for.

I

We have spoken of the *vagueness* of the exhortations which we not unfrequently receive. The advice is admirable, but its indefiniteness daunts us. We say, 'Tell us exactly what it is that we are to strive after. What are the steps, and what are the stages, and to what may we expect that they will lead us in the end?' Now, it must be allowed that these are hard questions. The analysis of character demands a moral insight, a power of spiritual penetration, far beyond the ordinary. But here, of course, is just a case in which we might

reasonably look to Inspiration to aid us. Whatever else Inspiration is or is not, it is, we are sure, the quickening of faculty to discover and discern the truths of the Spirit.

We turn then to St Paul with expectation; and indeed we shall not be disappointed. In the fewest possible words he exhibits to us just what we so greatly desire to see. To our inquiry, 'What is Christian Character? Shew it to us in its growth and in its development': this is his reply; let us repeat it again—

"The fruit of the Spirit is Love, Joy, Peace, Longsuffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, Temperance."

Here is the answer to our question. We shall find that it is extraordinarily complete.

Let us study the description as it falls into its successive divisions.

a. "LOVE, JOY, PEACE."—The best commentary upon the position and significance of these is contained in those divinest expositions of the spiritual life which are recorded for us by St John in the latter part of his Gospel. In those great discourses our Lord is seeking to give to His disciples some conception of the kind of life which He while on earth had been living with His Father in heaven, and which He desired that they should also live. In order that they may understand what that life is, He reduces it, as it were, to its elements. He

speaks of its "Love," of its "Joy," and of its "Peace."¹

We cannot be wrong then in taking these to represent the side of character which is the immediate outcome and the direct evidence of the life as it is lived with God.

Again and again in this Epistle St Paul had taught that the foundation of all true thinking and doing must be laid deep down in Faith towards God. How naturally then it follows that *Love*, which is the ripening of confidence and trust, should be the first outcome and sign of a living faith. And where there is Love there will be *Joy*, the pleasure, the rapture which is felt at the thought, in the presence and on each new revelation of that which is loved. And once more, where Love and Joy are there must also be *Peace*—the sequel, the abiding effect of both—the deep calm, the utter repose, the inexpressible sense of well-being which fills the heart and keeps the mind when they are resting in conscious dependence upon the source of fullest bliss. Peace after Joy, because

‘ Peace is something more than Joy,
 ‘ Even the Joys above ;
 ‘ For Peace of all created things
 ‘ Is likest Him we love.’

This then is the first answer to our questions. We ask ‘Where are we to begin in our efforts

¹ St John xiv. 31 ; xv. 11 ; xvi. 33.

after Character?' The reply tells us that the beginning of all true Character must be sought in a right attitude towards God.

We do well to lay the truth of it most seriously to heart in a time like ours, when we are all of us in such haste to be philanthropic. Let us understand that if a life is not right in its highest relationship, it must of necessity be wrong in every other; that what a man is in secret, in his private prayers, in his Communion—this, and no more than this, he really is and will be proved to be in his intercourse and dealings with his fellow-men. So long as he finds no interest, no pleasure, no refreshment in communing with the Divine; so long must he expect to fail when called upon to meet the incessant and exhausting demands which must be made upon him in his everyday contact with the world.

b. It is of the response which should be made to these demands that St Paul would have us to think next.

None knew better than he did the truth of that which our Lord, after speaking of the heavenly life, had gone on to tell His disciples in regard to the kind of life they might expect to meet with in their dealings with men upon earth. He had warned them that it would be a very different kind of life. There would be not love, but "hate"; not joy, but "sorrow." In the world,

He had said, they should have, not peace but "tribulation."¹

St Paul had experienced it all to the full, and he knew also full well in what spirit the Christian ought to prepare himself to correspond to the requirements of such an environment.

'When a man lives with God,' wrote a philosopher of our own time, 'his voice shall be as sweet as the murmur of the brook and the rustle of the corn.'² That was beautifully expressed, but St Paul speaks yet more truly and more beautifully, because in terms not simply of Nature but of Human Nature.

"LONGSUFFERING, GENTLENESS, GOODNESS, FAITH." It is not difficult to understand the meaning of these. *Longsuffering* is 'patient endurance under injuries inflicted by others.' *Gentleness* is the kindness and sweetness of disposition which cannot be satisfied merely to suppress the outward indications of anger, but will allow no hidden thought of bitterness or scorn. *Goodness* goes yet further, and is the active beneficence which suffers no opportunity of rendering a service to pass unused. And once more *Faith*, which is the strong belief in the goodness, or at least the possibility of goodness, in others. Such belief is the very opposite of miserable suspicion and cynical mistrust. Even when it has been

¹ St John xv. 19, xvi. 20, 33.

² Emerson.

most pitifully disappointed it stubbornly refuses to despair, and trusts on until at last it triumphs, as it so constantly does, in the uprising of the trusted. This is a quality which is an unfailing mark of the purest goodness, a most sure sign of

‘ Simple noble natures, credulous
‘ Of what they long for, good in friend or foe,
‘ And most in those who most have done them ill.’¹

c. We might not have thought it possible to add any further touches to such a portraiture of spiritual perfection ; and yet we can see that without some addition the description could not really be regarded as complete. For there is yet a third relation of life—the relation to *Self*. Two words tell us all we need to learn about it: “MEEKNESS, TEMPERANCE.” *Meekness* is the due estimate of the place which self is entitled to hold ; *Temperance* (or self-control, as the word might rightly be rendered) is the resolute determination to see to it that self is kept in its proper place. In other words, there are to be no high notions or vain conceits, no airs of fancied superiority, and no concessions to a weak self-indulgence ; but rather the ever advancing likeness to Him Who is represented as beyond all else our pattern in this, that He took upon Him the yoke of a perfect submission, and was “meek and lowly in heart.”

¹ Lord Tennyson, *Geraint and Enid*.

‘Goodness,’ it has been finely said, ‘is admired and taught in all religions. But to be good and feel that your goodness is nothing; to ripen all excellence and, like corn, to bend the head when full of ripe and bursting grain—that is Christianity.’¹

“The Fruit of the Spirit” is then only fully ripe, when to all other graces has been added the delicate bloom of a genuine humility.

That then is the Christian character as painted by St Paul. It is the delineation of human life as seen in all its bearings; in relation to God, in respect to our neighbour, and in regard to self. It is the ‘godly, righteous, and sober life’; the life in which God is first and foremost, and in which self is last and least.

No standard could be loftier, no ideal more glorious. And yet who would venture to assert that there is any sort of vagueness in the presentation? No, that difficulty at all events need exist for us no longer.

II

Because one difficulty has been removed, it by no means follows, however, that others must vanish also, nor indeed that they will be in any way lessened. It may prove, on the contrary,

¹ F. W. Robertson.

that they have been actually increased and intensified.

You have done something no doubt for a man when you have put your glass to his eye and have shewn him the outline of the mountain ridge above the cloud, clear cut against the sky; but you have not done everything. As a matter of fact you have not set him one foot nearer to the summit. The way is as long and as steep as ever it was, and it is quite possible that it may appear to him even longer and more arduous than he had previously thought it. Similarly, when a man has been shewn quite definitely the true ideal of character, he may not unreasonably turn round and say, 'You have helped me in one respect, but you have done not a little to dishearten me also. The life as you shew it to me is very wonderful. I can admire it, as I look at it far off in the distance above me, but how can I hope that I can ever attain to it?'

'How very hard it is to be a Christian!'¹ so speaks one of our modern poets, who has read very thoroughly and expressed very forcibly much of the deeper thought and feeling of the men about him. It was hard centuries ago. It is hard still. Time has brought no lessening of the difficulty.

Let us turn then again to the words which St Paul wrote to see whether they will contribute

¹ R. Browning, *Easter Day*.

anything towards the removal of this our second great difficulty.

It has been wisely remarked that while arguments are the pillars of the Temple of Truth, illustrations are the windows which let in the light. There are both arguments and illustrations in the Epistle to the Galatians. We have an illustration in this sentence which we are considering. We shall find that it does let in a good deal of light.

The first thing that strikes us about the illustration as we look at it is, that it is *not* the illustration which seems to us to come most naturally when we are trying to describe the Christian life. To most of us it probably seems most natural to think of the Christian life as a journey; a way to be travelled, a height to be gained. Nor of course are we wrong in thinking and speaking thus. Such an illustration is a very right and true one. It is constantly occurring in the Bible. In this Epistle, and in the immediate context, it is used by St Paul when he speaks of "walking" and of being "led by the Spirit." It is all the more noticeable therefore that in this particular place he exchanges it for another and a more excellent illustration; an illustration which has been made peculiarly sacred to Christians, by the fact that it was so frequently employed by our Lord. It was almost His favourite illustration—the illustration of Growth.

Certainly the thoughts and associations sug-

gested by this second illustration differ greatly from those suggested by the first. 'Climbing' is one thing, 'growing' is quite another. In the one case the idea conveyed is that of toiling and striving amid heat, and dust, and obstacles, with painful steps and slow: in the other the picture presented is of all that is gentle and gracious, a progress peaceful, and measured, and sure. The illustration from growth is a more attractive illustration, and that not merely to the fancy. The more we ponder it the more we shall feel that it is dear also to the deeper sense. It really helps us and does us good. And why? The reason is not hard to find.

Our daily experience teaches us that we are weak or strong according as we set out to attempt any task from the thought of ourselves or from the thought of God. When we have made self the starting-point we have found that energy and resolution have quickly failed us; but when, on the contrary, we have thought first of the Divine purpose and power, we have been steadied and strengthened, and have felt that we could not despair. Now the pre-eminence of the illustration of Growth consists in this, that it directs us in the first instance to the thought of the place held by the Divine activity in the formation of character.

In 'climbing,' the idea of help may, of course, come in, but only as of something which in its

nature is external and secondary ; as when someone guides, or upholds us, or supplies us with food. In 'growing' the power is within ; essential and original. Character is thus represented as a vital product ; the outcome, the expression of an inward force, of that 'something not ourselves which makes for righteousness.' In St Paul's very simple language it is "the fruit of the Spirit" ; the effect, that is to say, of the Divine Spirit mysteriously blending with and transforming the human spirit.

To some minds possibly it might appear that the very emphasis with which this aspect of the matter is represented is calculated to detract from the value of the illustration when considered as a complete picture of the development of Christian experience. The Divine side, they might be disposed to say, is made so prominent that the human is excluded altogether. No room is left for it. If that were really so, the illustration might indeed fail to satisfy us : but is it so ?

Is there really no room for human endeavour in the process of growth ? Have we really no share, no responsibility in regard, for example, to the growth of our bodies or of our minds ? Of course we have a great deal to do with it in both these cases ; and so also a great deal must depend upon ourselves in respect to the development of the highest side of our nature. Indeed, so clearly did the German poet see this that,

when he specially desired to point out the part that human endeavour must play in the formation of character, he actually said :—

‘ If thou would’st attain thy highest, go look on a flower :
‘ What it does will-lessly, do thou willingly.’¹

What is it then that the flower does, is ever doing? It is ever turning towards the sunlight, drinking in the dew and rain, gathering nourishment from all the elements within its reach, tending upwards, yielding to the law of its being. And the man must do the like. He must use all means of advance, directing each power of mind and soul towards the recognised goal of attainment, in glad obedience to the movements of the power within. He differs from the flower in that he must do it all consciously and willingly.

‘ Our wills are ours we know not how,
‘ Our wills are ours to make them Thine.’

It is the mystery and the majesty of a man that he is free.

It cannot be objected therefore that the illustration leaves no room for human effort. What it does is to refuse to give it the first place, and to reveal to us the difference between the sphere of the Divine action and of the human in the formation and development of Character. It is God’s to create, it is man’s to co-operate.

Does not this shed light upon the problem?

¹ Schiller.

Will it not be in proportion as we recognise the truth of this view of the matter that our sense of the difficulty of progress will be relieved?

It will still be our duty to labour and strive, but our labouring and striving will have changed its nature when once we realise that it is to be "according to His working that worketh in us mightily" (Col. i. 29).

If we find it hard, it will be because it is hard to be simple and trustful and obedient: but even so the hardship will be of a kind very different from that which we must feel as long as we forget that the life which we are to live is, in the strictest sense, not our own, but an outflowing of the full and abounding life of Christ which has been given to us, and is ever seeking to manifest itself in us.

If we could but receive it, it is really harder to resist than to yield to the grace of God: harder *not* to be, than to be a Christian. "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."

III

And now perhaps we shall see our way to that which will enable us to deal with the difficulties which arise out of the feeling that progress in character (the third difficulty of which we spoke) seems to be often so *slow*. That was a difficulty to which, as we have seen, the Galatians with their

quick impulsive temperaments were peculiarly sensitive. We also, though possibly for other reasons, are not less liable to be discouraged by it than they were.

The note of our age is pace. The demand on all sides is for rapid results and quick returns. We are 'idolaters of the immediate.' We find it so hard to wait. The people in Norway say that there is one word of their language which every Englishman knows. It is the word 'strax,' which means quick. It seems to them that our one desire is to get over the ground! Slowness in anybody or anything is, to most of us to-day, a very considerable trial.

This characteristic tendency of our time must not be overlooked by those who would minister to its necessities. It calls for strong and sympathetic treatment now, as much as it did in the first century of our era. How natural then that we should look once more to the teacher who spoke in that far-distant past.

What would St Paul have to say to us were he with us to-day? Would he tell us that the slowness of development is our own fault; that if we had more faith, offered less resistance to Grace, and gave ourselves more freely to obey it, our progress would be more rapid than it is? We cannot doubt that he would say all this, and say it most earnestly. But, at the same time, we may be equally sure that this would not be all

that he would think it needful to say. He had more to tell the Galatians, and we may be certain that he would feel that what he taught then was no less applicable now. Let us turn to his words again.

We have spoken a good deal already of the illustration which he uses, but we have by no means exhausted its teaching. Let us listen to the Apostle once more, as he is speaking to the Galatians. 'Look,' he seems to say, 'at the tree there on yonder wall, and learn yet another lesson that it has to teach you. It has not grown to be what it is in a moment. Assuredly its fruit has not been the result of a day. It has been the work of many days and many sorts of days, dull days as well as bright; yes, and of dark cold nights too. It is strange, slow work, this ripening of fruit. And remember, that is what Character is like.'

Lest it should be imagined that we are laying an undue stress upon the intention of St Paul, in using this illustration, it is worth while to recollect that he returns to it again in his concluding chapter, and draws from it inferences of the very kind which we have been drawing. 'Go,' he says, 'and see that harvest field with its various yield. It too was long in coming; it sprang from the smallest beginnings, it needed perpetual attention. That again is a picture of our life and work. We also must sow, and we must reap, and we must not

be weary.' "In due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (vi. 7-9).

St Paul then would certainly impress upon us that slowness of development is not entirely due to our fault, but is, to a large extent, inevitable from the nature of the case. Slowness is an indispensable condition of the highest development. The best things come slowest. The mushroom may spring up in a night, but the heart of oak needs the centuries to mature it.

Nowhere is the law more apparent than in our own individual constitution. The growth of the body is comparatively rapid: the growth of the mind is not so quick, as those know well who have been engaged in the work of education. Why, then, should it offend us to find that the growth of the Spirit—the Eternal part—is even slower still?

How often the discouragement caused by the difficulty of which we are now thinking would disappear if the matter were reasonably considered in this light. When persons complain that whereas at one time, in the beginning of their religious life, the signs of progress were unmistakably apparent; but that now they are often unable to detect any sort of difference in their condition from day to day, or even from month to month: might it not help them if they were to reflect upon these simple facts of growth? Would they not find that the explanation of their experience

was often this? At the beginning of which they speak the changes were for the most part changes of practice and habit; changes, that is to say, in the outward and physical sphere. Then followed changes which were for the most part intellectual, altered views of doctrines of the Faith, clearer apprehensions of great religious principles. In all these the difference made was clear to see, and could be consciously recognised. But when it came, later on, to changes not so much in the physical or the intellectual as in the spiritual sphere; when it became a question of their becoming a little more devout, or a little more gentle, or a little more humble, was it to be wondered at that the advances then should be less obviously noticeable?

The finer touches require time, and we dare not hurry the work.

A child had been playing in the garden. The mother said, 'What have you been doing, my child?' 'Helping God, mother,' was the quick reply. 'And how have you been helping God?' 'I saw a flower going to blossom, and I blossomed it.'

That is a parable of much that we are doing to-day. We are eager to witness the ripening of character in others and in ourselves. We long to accelerate the process, and we are only too ready to employ our rude and hasty fingers in the attempt. But it will not do; and why? We may

get the blossom, but we may spoil the fruit. And the Heavenly Husbandman is working for fruit. We are little men, and we are in a hurry. God is great and He is in no hurry. If we are to work with the Eternal, we must needs learn patience; patience with others, and what is harder still, so St Francis de Sales used to say, patience with ourselves.

All this, though it takes us many words to express it, lies wrapped in St Paul's one word—"Fruit." The more we grasp its meaning, the more shall we appreciate that sentence of this Epistle, "We through the Spirit by faith wait for the hope of righteousness" (v. 5).

Let us have no uncertainty then about St Paul's teaching in regard to Christian character. He sets before us the ideal in clear and unmistakable terms. He would have us know that our hope of attaining it depends upon our faithfully co-operating with the Power that is working in us. And for the rest, he would bid us be patient, and never presume to despair, inasmuch as nothing can be really impossible for which men have been made and redeemed, and to which they have been called by God.

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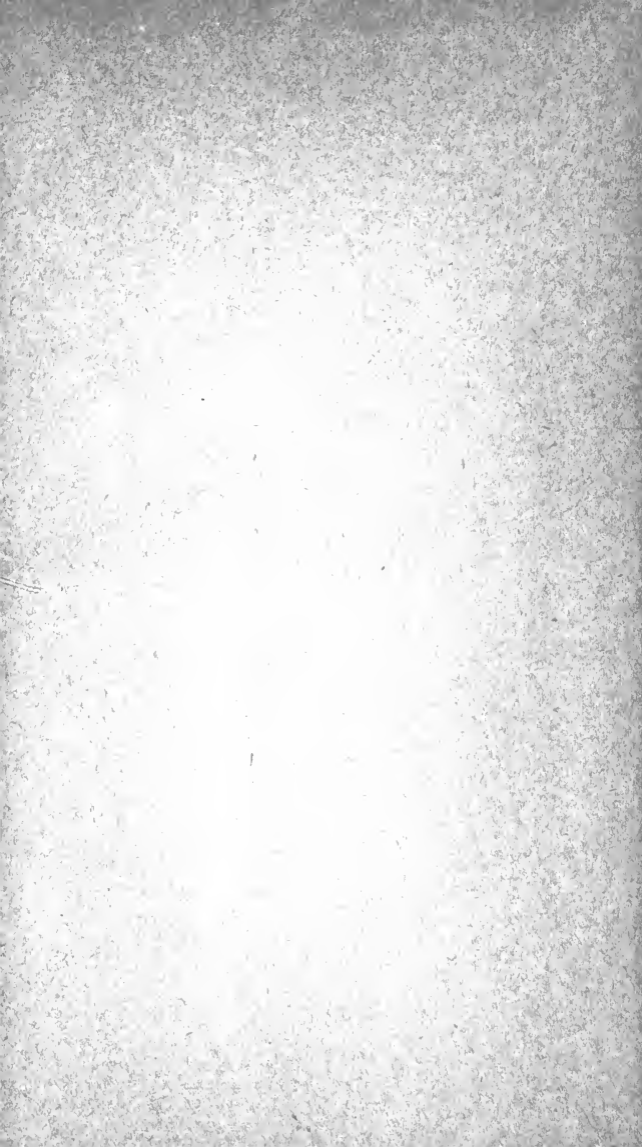
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