

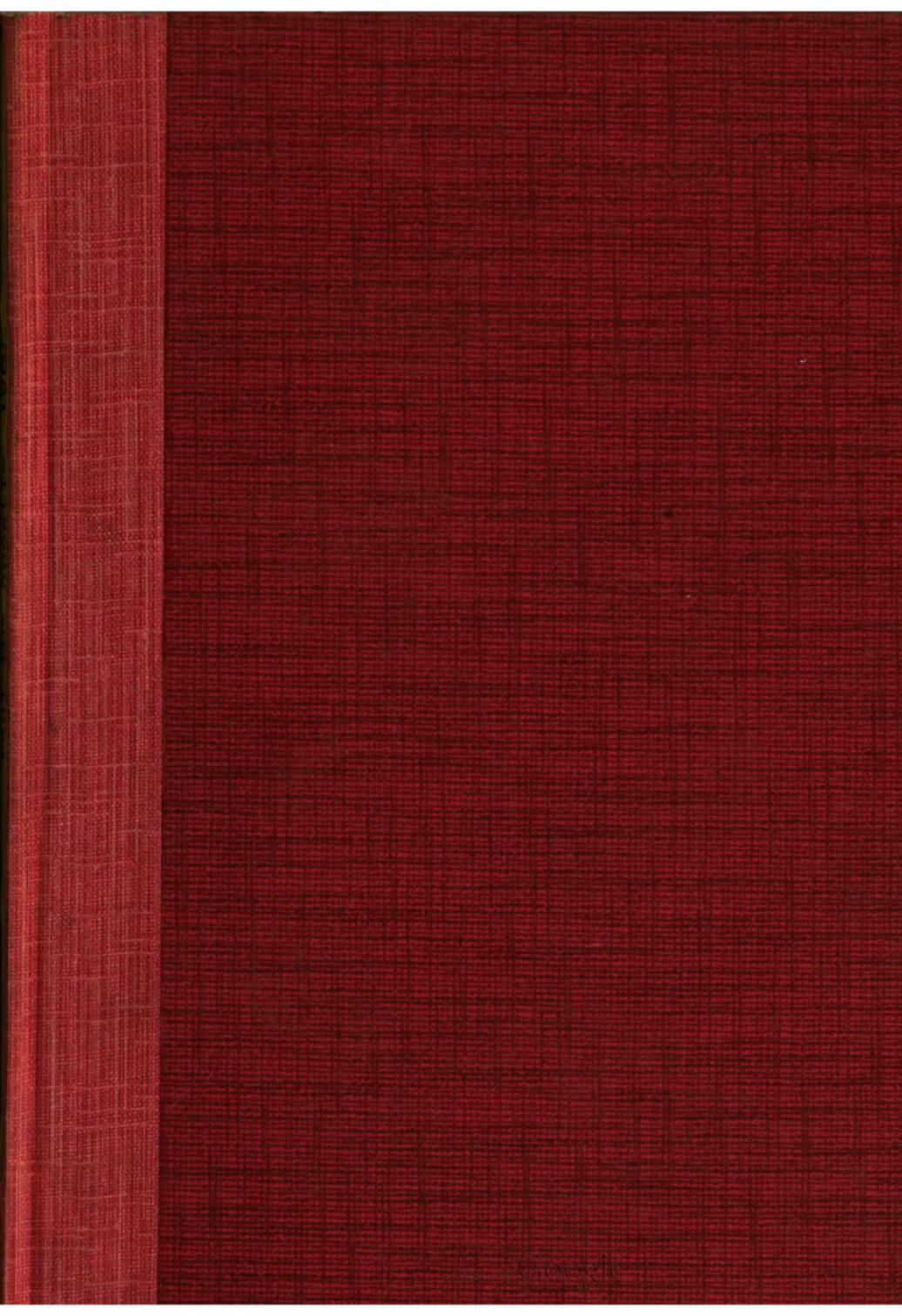
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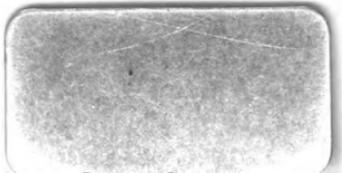
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A SHORT INTRODUCTION  
TO THE  
EPISTLES OF PAUL  
THE APOSTLE

BY  
**W. KELLY.**

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## INTRODUCTION.

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It is not without interest, and sometimes of importance, to take into account the order in which the Epistles were written, as far as it can be ascertained: where it cannot, we are entitled to gather that it is of no practical moment.

From Corinth the apostle Paul wrote his earliest inspired letters, both the Epistles to the Thessalonians. The subscription at the end of most manuscripts and copied by our translators is given up as unauthorised and untrue. They were written, not from Athens but from Corinth. Probably the error arose from a misconstruction of 1 Thessalonians iii. 1, which rather disproves the hasty deduction. Timotheus with Silas carried the report of the Thessalonian state to the apostle at Corinth (Acts xviii. 5), where he abode some eighteen months; and thence no doubt he wrote both. The First carries its own evidence in its joy over their freshness; the Second indicates a decline in their enjoyment of the blessed hope, and the consequent inroad of the enemy. If a date may be safely suggested, the First was about the close of A.D. 52, the Second in A.D. 53.

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It was from Ephesus where the apostle spent at least two years, that the First Epistle to the Corinthians was written, and, it would seem, before Pentecost in A.D. 57. Here again the vulgar subscription is a mistake of some ignorant transcriber who misunderstood chapter xvi. 5, which verse 8 ought to have made impossible. The latter verse shows he was then in Ephesus and meant to leave after the time already pointed out. The Second was written from Philippi, as his subsequent course lay through Macedonia according to the statement in the First.

There is more difference among grave students when he wrote to the Galatians; but the weight of evidence seems to incline to his stay in Corinth (Acts xx. 2, 3; in A.D. 57-8), and before he wrote the kindred Epistle to the Romans. The writing of the Epistle to the Galatians many ascribe to the earlier date of A.D. 54 or later at Ephesus. It is a delicate point; but happily little turns on it. The two Epistles have much in common.

During his imprisonment in Rome the apostle wrote to Philemon, as well as to the Colossians, the Ephesians, and the Philippians.

On his liberation, and from Macedonia after leaving Ephesus, it would appear that the First Epistle to Timothy was written, and a little after, the Epistle to Titus; as they are also manifestly akin. The second to Timothy was written without

doubt from Rome, during his second imprisonment as we may suppose, and in full view of his speedy martyrdom (A.D. 67); as the other was some time before.

The Epistle to the Hebrews is none other than the one which Peter in his Second Epistle declares that Paul wrote to the believers of the circumcision, to whom only he was writing himself: compare 1 Peter i. 1; 2 Peter iii. 1, 15. It also was written late, perhaps from Italy (Heb. xiii. 24), but when is less clear.

As the book of the Acts sets forth the church formed by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the Epistles of our apostle give the doctrinal training, heavenly blessedness, and earnest correction of the Christian and the church, closing with God's last word to those of the circumcision before the fall of the city and the temple, that they might regard as a promise even the far more awful and universal shaking of the heaven as well as the earth at the Lord's return.

The so-called Catholic Epistles add important dealing, first with Israelitish saints in those of James and Peter, and still more with all saints in those of Jude and John.

The Revelation fitly concludes the Canon of the New Testament by the Son of man judging seven assemblies in proconsular Asia, as representing the entire church in varied and successive

vi. THE EPISTLES OF PAUL THE APOSTLE.

phases. After this we see the glorified above, and providential strokes applied to the guilty parties on earth, though with spared or suffering remnants of Jews and Gentiles, till the Lord appears from heaven in personal judgment of war, before He peacefully reigns for a thousand years while Satan is shut up. Then, when he is let loose to test mankind after that glorious kingdom of righteousness, the last rebellion brings fire on men and dissolution on the universe as it is. The eternal judgment follows the resurrection of the unrighteous, and the eternal state. Only there follows a retrogression to show the relation of the holy and heavenly city to the earth during the millennial age; just as the description and moral history of the great and corrupt city Babylon had been given after the seven vials, though its fall had been announced before in its duly predicted season.

## THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

It is scarce possible to overlook or mistake the divine aim. For herein, on the proved failure of man, God's righteousness is revealed, by or of faith unto faith, with its resulting deliverance (i.-viii.). Yet sovereign grace like this is conciliated with special mercy and unfailing promises to Israel (ix.-xi.). The practical consequences of God's mercies are urged in devotedness as a living sacrifice to Him personally, as well as in subjection to the world's authority, and in grace one toward another (xii.-xvi.).

In chap. i. the inspired writer presents himself as bondman of Jesus Christ, a called apostle, separated unto God's gospel, which He promised before through His prophets in holy scriptures. It is now fulfilled; for it is concerning His Son, Who came of David's seed according to flesh, and also marked out Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by resurrection of the dead—Jesus Christ our Lord. Thus He is heir of promise, and conqueror of death. It is not yet the day when to Him shall the obedience of the

peoples be ; but He is sending out witnesses of Himself, as here *He* was God's faithful Witness. Through Him Paul received grace and apostleship, not for law but for faith-obedience among all the nations, in behalf of His name ; among whom were also they called of Jesus Christ, all that were in Rome beloved of God : they saints, as he apostle, not by birth or merit but called respectively by divine grace. He wishes them grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, as he did to all saints. It was not only that he thanked his God for them, always at his prayers beseeching that he might be prospered in God's will to come to them, for joint comfort as he graciously said ; but he was hindered hitherto. He is not ashamed of the glad tidings, for God's power it is (not promise merely) to every one that believes, both to Jew first and also to Greek ; for God's righteousness in it is revealed, and therefore by faith unto faith. Thus the gospel is about God's Son ; and therein God's righteousness is revealed, in contrast with His law in vain claiming human righteousness. Hence as faith is the way or principle (so wrote the prophet), it was open to every believer, Jew and Greek (as wrote the apostle). Such is the introduction (vers. 1-17).

Then follows from chap. i. 18 to iii. 20 the overwhelming proof of man's dire need of the gospel. For God's wrath is revealed from heaven (in contrast with earthly judgments under law) upon all impiety and unrighteousness of men holding fast the truth in unrighteousness. As this embraces

both Gentiles and Jews, he from verse 21 to the end of chap. i. shows the shameless departure of mankind from God: first, ignoring the testimony of creation (19, 20); secondly, abandoning what they knew, especially by the public demonstration of moral government given in the deluge. Professing to be wise they were befooled, and changed the truth of God into falsehood; and as they gave up God for idolatrous images, God gave them up to vile lusts and a reprobate mind. Such were the heathen for ages before, and when the gospel went forth, morally as bad or worse (21-32).

But had there not been philosophic moralists who judged those unspeakable enormities and religious follies (chap. ii.)? Yes, but they did the same things; and their fine words could not screen them from the judgment of God. For they despised His long-suffering goodness, which leads to repentance, and thus treasured up wrath in a day of wrath. Then God will render to each according to his works, Jew and Greek (for with Him is no favouritism, though He considers privilege or the lack of it), in a day when He will judge the secrets of men through Jesus Christ (1-16).

From ii. 17-29 the Jew is weighed, and his rest on the law, and boast in God, and superiority in light to others; but how about his own ways? Was not the name of God blasphemed among the nations on their account, as it is written? Unrighteousness made circumcision uncircumcision, as righteous uncircumcision will be reckoned for circumcision. Shadows are gone with God, Who

insists on reality; and he only has the praise of God who is a Jew in what is secret, and heart-circumcision is in spirit, not in letter.

Are divine privileges nothing? Much every way, says the apostle in chap. iii. (1-19); and in nothing so much as having the scriptures. Yet the unbelief of some cannot invalidate either the faith of God or His right to judge. Was not the Jew then better than the Greek? In no wise. Jews and Greeks are alike under sin. This is shewn in Psalm liii., &c., Isaiah lix., &c. "Now we know that whatever things the law saith, it speaketh to those under (or, in the scope of) the law, that *every* mouth may be stopped and all the world come under judgment to God." The Jew, who would readily allow the Gentile to be hopelessly evil, is expressly condemned by the scriptures. All then were guilty beyond dispute. "Wherefore by deeds of law shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for through law is knowledge of sin" (ver. 20).

From verse 21 God's mouth is open to declare His grace, and how it can be righteously, now that every mouth of man is stopped. It is God's righteousness manifested apart from law, witnessed by the law and the prophets; God's righteousness by faith in (lit. of) Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all that believe: its universal direction, and its actual effect (confounded in the R. V., because of trusting the blunder of some old MSS., but right in the A. V.). For there is this distinction. All in fact sinned, and come short of the glory of God; for this becomes the standard, when Adam's para-

dise was lost. Hence there is "no way" but being justified freely through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, Whom God set forth a propitiatory through faith in His blood for showing His righteousness in the present time, that He might be just and justify him that is of faith in (lit. of) Jesus. What can be plainer or more precise? Behold boasting excluded. If law can be said, it is faith-law, apart from works of law; and God is of Gentiles as well as of Jews—one God justifying Jews by faith only, and Gentiles through the faith which they have (and hence only in this case the article is used). Thus is law established, not annulled, through the faith of Jesus Who paid the penalty to the utmost.

Did the Jew plead the cause of Abraham for favour to his seed? The apostle answers in chap. iv. 1-5 that Ab. *believed* God, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness. David's case (6-8) equally and quite as evidently proves that all depends on God's grace through faith. For how else is a transgressor to have blessedness? We see again, how circumcision contributed nothing; for Abraham was reckoned righteous by faith when uncircumcised (9-12). Faith secures the promised heirship of the world in the face of all natural disabilities; not law, which works wrath through man's transgression (13-19). Faith on the contrary gives glory to God, and reaps its fruit (20-22). And the Christian has more even than Abraham, fully persuaded as he was that what God had promised He was able also to do; whereas we believe

on Him Who actually raised from among the dead Jesus our Lord Who was given up for our offences and was raised for our justification (23-25). Thus as the latter part of chap. iii. brought in propitiation through Christ's blood, chap. iv. adds the intervention of God in justifying us by His raising Him from the dead, though not without our faith.

Chap. v. 1-11 draws the blessed consequences : peace with God in view of the past, His grace for the present, and His glory in the future. Not only do we boast this, but also in tribulations, as the allotted experience of Christians now, knowing the invaluable result to which God turns them, in breaking the will, and severing from the world, and lifting above things seen ; so that faith, love, and hope are all strengthened by better learning God's love. Not only are we so, but "boasting in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom now we received the reconciliation." Beyond this "boasting in God" it is impossible to rise. One may learn the glories of Christ in God's purpose and our own union with Him in them ; but to boast in God Himself is of unequalled depth and joy, and we are called to it now.

But a profound discussion forms the needed supplement to that which we have already had, dealing not with our sins, but with sin in the flesh, and deliverance in Christ learnt experimentally and enjoyed by the power of the Holy Spirit in the believer. Hence from Romans v. 11 (closing the former part) the apostle is no longer occupied with

the evils we had done, and the grace of God in justifying the guilty by faith. He now lays bare the root of all that we are, and so goes up to Adam, the figure of Him that was to come. For as to man there are two heads, of whom scripture speaks : as of sin and death in him who transgressed where all was good, so of obedience and life eternal in the face of nothing but self-will and ruin here below ; the first man, and the Second. For, as we know, no Jew doubted that one man's sin brought those dreadful consequences on the human race.

If this were just on God's part, as they allowed, was it not worthy of God to bring in the gift by grace through one man, Jesus Christ? Adam was under *a* law, and the Jews had *the* law ; and transgression followed for both. But the nations who had not law were none the less sinners, and thus obnoxious to death like the Jews ; for in fact death reigned universally. But shall not the act of favour be as the offence? And shall not the gift be as through one that sinned? Accordingly, as the bearing through one offence was to condemn all men, so is it through one righteousness toward all men for justification of life. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were constituted sinners, so through the One's obedience the many shall be constituted righteous (vers. 12-19).

Thus grace far outstript sin ; and if the Adam family were obnoxious to death through sin, the Christ family in spite of manifold sins shall be justified and reign in life. The law came in by the way, that the offence might abound and so crush Jewish

self-righteousness ; but where sin (and not transgression only) abounded, grace exceeded far ; that as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness unto life eternal through Jesus Christ our Lord (vers. 20, 21).

Chap. vi. meets the cavil that grace tends to license sinning. This, the apostle shows, contradicts the truth that we died to sin, and by baptism unto Christ Jesus were baptised unto His death ; in order that as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too should walk in newness of life. He that died has been justified from sin ; for it is a question not of sins forgiven, but of sin and of continuing in it, which death with Christ denies. Hence this also is the meaning of our baptism (vers. 1-14). But there is the further reply that being under grace, not law, is the way of holiness for those set free from sin and become bondmen to God. For the wages of sin is death, but God's act of favour is life eternal in Christ Jesus our Lord (vers. 15-23).

Then in chap. vii. Christ dead through Whom we were made dead is deliverance from law, as in chap. vi. from sin. Law provoked lust and condemned those under it. The Christian belongs to Christ dead and risen, in order that he might bear fruit to God (vers. 1-4). When we *were* in the flesh, fruit was borne to death ; but now even Jewish believers have been discharged from the law through having died thus, so as to serve in newness of spirit (vers. 5, 6). Thereon follows the detailed case (which the apostle personates, as he

often does) of one converted yet still struggling under law with its powerlessness and misery; till experimentally learning that we have flesh unchanged, along with a new nature, one looks to God for deliverance, and finding it in Christ (as truly as before for the remission of our sins), he thanks God for it, though the old man is as bad as ever, but with the mind he serves God's law (vers. 7-25).

Lastly, chap. viii. is the blessed conclusion of this appendix on indwelling sin through death with Christ, as chap. v. 1-11 was of pardon of sins through Christ's blood. We are in Christ where *all* condemnation is gone, as fully treated in vers. 1-4 (the latter half of ver. 1 being spurious, but right in ver. 4). We are not in flesh but in Spirit, if so be that God's Spirit dwells in us—the distinct privilege of the Christian; and therefore we put to death the deeds of the body. For the Spirit we have received is of power, love, and sobriety, as the apostle reminds Timothy. Hence as He is a spirit of adoption, so He groans in us who are delivered, yet with our bodies awaiting redemption which we now have only in our souls. Thus the Spirit, Who gives us joy, helps our weakness, interceding for us according to God. For we are called, as well as predestinated, and being justified, the apostle can say, "glorified": so sure is God's purpose (vers. 5-30). Then comes the final triumph even now: God for us, who against us? A series of unanswerable challenges of grace and truth in Christ follows, in the face of all opposing circumstances;

and as "no condemnation" began the high argument, "no separation" from God's love closes it in vers. 31-39.

We have now to consider the bearing of chapters ix.-xi. They are the divine solution of the question, how to reconcile the indiscriminate grace of God in the gospel (as already seen in chapters i.-viii.) with the special promises made to the fathers in favour of the children of Israel. Here all is cleared to the opened eye. The scriptures, which the Jews owned to be of God, are here also decisive.

First, the apostle shows how far he was from lowering his interest in Israel; they on the contrary were shutting out their highest privileges by their unbelief. Moses loved them no more than he; but how blind were they in not recognising the Christ, not more truly of David according to flesh than One Who is over all, God blessed for ever! Psalms xlv. cii.; Isaiah ix. 1. (ix. 1-5). Next (in 6-13), he denies that the word of God had fallen through, for it is certain that not all are Israel that are of Israel. This he proves from the family of Abraham and of Isaac. Fleshly descent, or "seed," is not all: witness Ishmael and Esau. If the Jews must, as they would, repudiate the title of both lines, they must also admit God's sovereignty: a principle plainly shewn in Isaac, still more in Jacob where the mother and father were the same, and the children twins. It was God's purpose according to election as Jehovah indicated before

their birth, in the first book of the Pentateuch (Gen. xxv. 23), and sealed it by the last of the prophets (Mal. i. 2, 3). Is anyone ready to charge God with unrighteousness? The unrighteousness was in Israel beyond doubt, when they made and adored a calf of gold, and must have been justly destroyed but for that sovereignty in God which unbelief criticises and rejects: "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy" (Exod. xxxiii. 19). How would pretension to righteousness have suited Israel then? But God is no less sovereign in judgment, as the apostle cites Pharaoh's case (Exod. ix. 16). God is judge, not man, who has no right to reply against Him. For has not the potter power of the same clay to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour? In effect however He endured with much longsuffering vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction, and vessels of mercy which He fore-prepared unto glory. The evil is man's, the good is of God's grace, whether of Jews or also of Gentiles, as Hosea declares (ii. 23; i. 10). On any other ground all was lost for Israel; but if God fell back on His sovereignty, the prophet shows he would use it for Gentiles who believed; and this at the very time He executes judgment on Israel, guilty not of idolatry alone but of rejecting their own Messiah, His Messiah, as is plain from Isaiah x. 22, 23; i. 9; xxviii. 16; viii. 14 (vers. 14-33).

In chap. x. the apostle reiterates his earnest love for their salvation. Zealous for God, they

ignored His righteousness in the gospel and sought to establish their own. For Christ is end of law for righteousness to every believer. Deuteronomy xxx. furnishes the proof; for there, when Israel lost their land by apostasy, God holds out His testimony for believers to lay hold of, though exiles from the land where alone the law could be carried out. Under the law they were ruined, where the word of faith (pointing to Christ) can alone avail, as Isaiah xxviii. 16 confirmed. But being the word of faith, not law, it is for Gentiles as much as Jews, and calls for preachers according to the principle of Isaiah lii. 7; liii. 1; Psalm xix. 4; and, as a fact, Jews needed it no less than Gentiles. Nor could Israel deny that God had made this known. Moses (Deut. xxxii. 21) and Isaiah had warned, not only of God's provoking Israel to jealousy, but of being found by a nation that sought Him not, while Israel was perverse and disobedient.

This raises the enquiry in chap. xi. if God thrust away His people (Israel), as indeed Christendom had long dreamt. Of this three disproofs follow. (1) The apostle cites himself as witness of a remnant, and refers to Elijah who erroneously thought himself alone, whereas God had and has a remnant, the fruit and pledge of grace, the rest blinded and for judgment (1-10). (2) Their fall, far from being definitive, is but to provoke Israel to jealousy, as already stated. Theirs is the olive tree, so that they are the natural branches, and the breach of some was because of their unbelief. The

Gentiles, now grafted in, were but wild olive ; and if they continued not in God's goodness, they too should be cut off (11-24). (3) The prediction is sure, that after the solemn dealing of God with His guilty people, and when the complement of Gentiles shall have come in during the partial blindness of the Jews as now, " All Israel shall be saved ; as it is written, There shall be come out of Zion the Deliverer, He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." According to the gospel the Jews are enemies for the Gentiles' sake, according to election beloved for the fathers' sake. God does not change His mind as to His gifts and calling. " For as ye once disobeyed God, but now were objects of mercy by their disobedience, so also they disobeyed your mercy that they too should be objects of mercy. For God shut them all together into disobedience that He might show mercy on them all." No wonder that the apostle breaks forth into a transport of praise. For thus the special promises are fulfilled, while all pride of the law and pretension to righteousness vanish : again, Gentiles who boasted, instead of enjoying all as mercy, like the Jews before them, are cut off ; whilst all Israel returning to His mercy are saved.

After the episode of the three chapters preceding, the direct course of the Epistle proceeds. The apostle beseeches the saints by the compassions of God, so fully shewn, to present their bodies (for they are now vessels of the Spirit) a living sacrifice, holy, well-pleasing to God, their

intelligent service or one governed by the word. Outwardly they are not to be conformed to this age, yet not by mere externalism, but changed by the renewing of the mind unto their proving the will of God, good, well-pleasing, and perfect. They were to be lowly, and obedient to God in the Spirit, each acting according to the place God chose, many members in one body, but each in his own function. The gifts pass from those in the word to moral and gracious service in the varying circumstances of saints on earth, blessed with all good and its expression to all, in a spirit of humble and holy sympathy. Such is chap. xii.

In chap. xiii. the saints are set in their due relation to higher authorities of the world. Every soul was to be subject. For there is no authority but of God; and the existing authorities have been ordained of God. To resist authority is to oppose God's ordinance; and they that do shall receive judgment (not "damnation," which is an extravagant mistake here as in xiv. 23); but a chastening (compare 1 Cor. xi. 29-32). Conscience therefore acts, and not merely dread of punishment. The Christian is to pay honour as every other debt, love alone the due that can never be paid off. And love works no ill, and is the law's fulfilment. Besides, it is already time to wake up: salvation, our deliverance for glory, is nearer than when we believed. As in day-light let us walk becomingly, not as the dissolute world, but putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, and making no provision for lusts of the flesh.

From chap. xiv. to xv. 7 is the great seat of brotherly forbearance as to things above which "the strong" rose in liberty, but which burdened "the weak" with scruple. Many Jewish saints did not realise their deliverance from meats forbidden, or from days enjoined by the law; which Gentile believers knew to be outside Christianity. This led to friction and trial: to judging on the one side; and to despising on the other. The apostle does not hesitate to declare for freedom, but urges receiving the weak, not for discussions of such points. Conscience, though uninstructed, must not be forced: doing, or not doing, "to the Lord" is a great peace-maker. Each shall give account of himself to God. We are therefore now if strong to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves, receiving one another, as Christ received us, to God's glory.

This question, to which the union of Jew and Gentile naturally gave occasion, leads on to the apostle's explaining God's ways from verse 8 and onward. Jesus was minister of circumcision for God's truth to stablish the promises of (*i.e.* made to) the fathers, and that the Gentiles (who had not promises) should glorify God for His mercy. And proofs are produced not only from the Psalms xviii. 49, cxvii. 1, but from the law (Deut. xxxii. 43) and the prophets (Isa. xi. 10). He appeals to the God of hope to fill the saints in Rome with all joy and peace in believing, and give them to abound in hope; and the more so as he had no doubt of their actual blessing and ability to admonish

each other. But he does not hide from them the grace given him by God to do Christ's public service toward the Gentiles in the sacred work of the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. What a difference from Israelitish holiness with its fleshly mark of circumcision !

Then he speaks of the extensive work he had already wrought in might of signs and wonders, in power of the Spirit, preaching the gospel of the Christ from Jerusalem to Illyricum round about, and this where He was not named (as in Isa. lii. 15). This had been the hindrance ; but as he had no more of this work in those parts undone, and had long desired, he would visit them on his way to Spain. He was going now to Jerusalem in remembrance of the poor saints, as those of Macedonia and Achaia wished with their contributions ; after which he would set off by them into Spain, assured to come with the fulness of the blessing of Christ (omit "the gospel of"). But he beseeches their earnest prayers for him that he might be delivered from the disobedient in Judea, and that his service in Jerusalem might be acceptable to the saints. The Acts of the Apostles shows how he got to Rome.

Chap. xvi. is very full of personal commendations and salutations to individuals, though he was as yet a stranger there. But what associations of love and faith ! What comfort to Phœbe going to Rome ! What joy to Prisca and Aquila in such a mention from him ! and to the assembly in their house ! It is a notice of much interest.

Then follows a roll of brothers and sisters with the distinctive marks of honour which a single eye does not forget, closing with a call to them all to salute one another, and to receive the salutation of the churches of Christ. It is the mind of heaven on earth. In verse 17 he is equally earnest in warning against those that make divisions and stumbling-blocks contrary to the doctrine learnt. If they formed divisions, they were to be avoided; for such serve their own belly (he says with disgust), whatever their fair speech to deceive the hearts of the harmless. The obedience of the Roman saints was known: but they should be wise unto the good, and simple as to the evil. And a second time he commends them to the God of peace, yet more fully and triumphantly. Then he adds the names of Christians saluting with him, and of the scribe of the epistle, Tertius; and after more salutation prays that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ may be with them all. Lastly he himself ascribes glory to Him that was able to strengthen them according to his gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery as to which silence had been kept in everlasting times, but now manifested, and by prophetic scriptures according to the eternal God's command made known for obedience of faith to all the Gentiles; to an only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory for the ages. Amen.



## THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

WE now enter on a very different theme from that developed in the Epistle to the Romans, where the foundation of the gospel is in question, and the individual privileges and walk of the saint. The same apostle writes on the corporate walk of Christians, of the church. The difference of the divine aim is made evident in their respective addresses.

To those in Corinth he writes, but to more; "to the assembly of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, to called saints, with those that in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours." It is a remarkable superscription, and, as written by the Holy Spirit, surely means to warn against an imminent danger to which the new institution of His grace, His assembly, was to be exposed. The work of grace in each is of course presupposed. That they were saints by God's calling is not forgotten in addressing them in their corporate position. Further, there is care taken from the start to guard against all independency, "with all that in every place," etc. (vers. 1-3). No countenance is given to the assumption that the church is free to change or innovate; it has to walk

everywhere, and, we may add, always obedient to the word and in holy fellowship.

The usual thanksgiving follows for the grace of God given them in Christ Jesus, which assuredly from the apostle was no mere form. But we may observe that it is not said for faith as he says of the Roman believers, but for gifts of grace, while waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who also would confirm them as blameless in His day. Solemn responsibility with encouragement he thus awakens: "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (vers. 4-9).

Thence he turns to their state, and reproaches them with their divisions. They had set up schools of thought among themselves, like the Jews and the heathen, saying, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Assuredly Christ was not divided, nor was any servant of His crucified for them. The apostle thanks God that, as things were at Corinth, he had baptised only a few of them, lest any should say that he had baptised unto his name. His repudiation shows the mistaken place assigned to baptism. For he presses the superior dignity of evangelising, which Christ sent him for, and the contempt which God puts on the world's wisdom by that which is its foundation, Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling-block, and to Gentiles folly, but to those that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Far from choosing the wise, powerful, and well-born, God had

chosen the foolish, the feeble, the vile and despicable, yea things that are not to annul those which are, that no flesh should boast before Him. But he adds the position and blessing too: "Now are ye of him in Christ Jesus, who was made to us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; that, according as it is written, He that boasteth, let him boast in the Lord" (vers. 10-31).

Hence when Paul first testified at Corinth, it was not the world's wisdom he urged, but Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ crucified. No truth makes less of man, and more of God, when those who heard were men, yea, guilty and lost sinners. But when believers can bear, they indeed need more; when they are not infants but grown men ("perfect" here as elsewhere), he could, and in fact did, lead them to learn of Him everywhere, incarnate, risen, glorified, and coming again. Then he goes on to make known that all hangs for the truth on the Spirit of God, Who now does far beyond what the O.T. had revealed. We have Christ and redemption accomplished for the soul; and hence, as He is on high, the Holy Spirit is sent down here, God revealing by Him what had previously been reserved. Thus the all-important relation of the Spirit to Christ comes fully out. Revelation, communication by words, and reception, are alike and only by the Spirit of God. So foolish was it to cry up man's mind or the spirit of the world (chap. ii.).

The Corinthians addressed were not "natural"

as once; nor were they "spiritual" as they ought to have been. They were "carnal." They falsely estimated their state, and, in fact, needed the food of babes rather than of men in Christ. The proof of their carnality, of their walking "as men," was their setting up Paul and Apollos, as rival leaders with the saints as followers to each. The servants thus shrouded the Master to their loss, fleshly as they were. God gives the increase. The most honoured fellow-servants are but God's journey-men; while the saints are God's building. If Paul was given as a wise architect, the sole foundation is Jesus Christ; and hence the serious question of what one builds on Him. Happy he who builds things precious that stand the fire! Sad is he, who, though saved, loses his building of what the fire consumes. Terrible is his lot who corrupts God's temple and is himself destroyed. Here the world's wisdom only ensnares. Besides it is real folly: for all things belong to the saints, not only Paul, Apollos, and Cephas, but world, life, death, present things and future: "all are yours, and ye Christ's, and Christ God's" (chap. iii.).

The apostle then in the beginning of chap. iv. exhorts that he and others like him should be accounted as servants or officials of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries. These last are the Christian truths, previously hidden as being incompatible with the restricted object and the earthly character of Judaism, but absolutely essential to the gospel and the church. They have nothing to do with the notion of sacraments, which superstitious

men have fancied. Now fidelity is requisite in a steward, and the Lord is the One that examines; not the saints, who have neither the place nor the power, but are responsible in matters of discipline as we shall see in chap. v. When the Lord comes, He will make manifest the hidden; and then shall be to each the praise from God. He had applied the case to himself and Apollos, not to set man up but to humble him and exalt the Giver (6, 7).

In fact God appointed apostles to the extreme place in suffering at the grand spectacle that Christianity affords to the world, both to angels and to men. The lightminded worldliness in Corinth adds point to the comparison: "*we* fools for Christ, but *ye* prudent in Christ; *we* weak, but *ye* strong; *ye* glorious, but *we* in dishonour." And as he had opened this in verse 8 by saying that they "reigned without us," so in 11 he continues, "to the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and are in weakness and buffeted, and wander homeless, and labour working with our own hands. Reviled, we bless; persecuted, we endure; blasphemed, we entreat; we became as the world's offscouring, refuse of all, until now." How withering is the contrast, not for the Corinthians then only, but for the still more selfish and vain development in our day, as in fact ever since!

Yet he tenderly assures them, that it was not as chiding, but to admonish them as his beloved children, he writes (ver. 14). "For if ye had ten thousand child-guides in Christ, yet not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I begot you through the

gospel. I entreat you then, become mine imitators.' "Teachers" is not the word in ver. 15, but a servile term expressly. And in his love had he sent to them one so beloved and faithful as Timothy, "who shall remind you of my ways that are in Christ, according as I teach everywhere in every assembly" (ver. 17). The church, as the Christian, stands in liberty; but it is the liberty of Christ, never the liberty of differing as we like, or to oppose others. The Spirit of God dwells there to maintain the glory of the Lord Jesus, Whose mind is one. Petty man sets himself up. The apostle lets those know who said he was not coming, that he was, and quickly, the Lord willing; then he would know not the word of the puffed up, but the power. It was love, and to spare them, that he did not come sooner (18-21).

In the next division we have the apostle availing himself of evil rumours which had reached him, not about their general party spirit on which he had dwelt so fully from chap. i. to iv., but on special evils, the abominable case of incest as yet unjudged in their midst (chap. v.), their worldliness in going to law before the unjust (chap. vi. 1-11), and their abuse of liberty, or licentiousness, denounced and corrected (12-20). As the portion is short, we may dilate the more.

Desperately evil as were these disorders, general or special, the apostle did not lose confidence in the words of the Lord during the early days of his work at Corinth: "Fear not but speak . . . . because I have much people in this city" (Acts

xviii. 9, 10). With these evils of theirs weighing on his heart he wrote to them as "the assembly of God that is at Corinth," sanctified (as they were) in Christ Jesus, called saints (or, by calling). The inconsistency of their practical state with their standing, individually and corporately, was extreme; but he remembered the Lord's assurance, and pressed home their responsibility. There is no sufficient ground for assuming a lost epistle from chap. v. 9 of this Epistle, any more than an unrecorded visit from 2 Corinthians xiii. 1, 2, though not a few have argued for both. The worst enormity may glide into the church through its light state or individual pravity; and thus Satan incessantly seeks to dishonour the Lord and destroy those who bear His name. Then comes, as here, the testimony of the Holy Spirit to judge the evil and deliver the saints. It is the rejection of His testimony, and the maintenance of the evil notwithstanding, for which they forfeit their place as God's assembly. From heinous evils, as here, the church may be restored, as the second Epistle proves; for incomparably less, if not judged, the church may have its candlestick removed, as we read in Revelation ii. 5.

What a grief for the apostle to write about the common rumour of fornication among the Corinthian believers, "and such as is not even among the Gentiles, so that one should have his father's wife (v. 1)!" But it was a great aggravation that they, the saints generally, were puffed up, and did not rather mourn, in order that he who did this deed

might be taken away from among them (2). Though not on the spot, the apostle could and does pronounce on the case. "For I, absent in body but present in spirit, have, as present, already judged him that hath so wrought this, in the name of our Lord Jesus, ye and my spirit being gathered with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,—to deliver such a one to Satan for destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord (2-4)."

Thus did it seem good to divine wisdom that we should have the extreme act of excommunication fully left on record. If the Corinthian assembly had known and discharged its duty, we could not have had it in so solemn a form. For in this instance the apostle joins the exercise of his own official authority and power with the duty of the church to put away the offender. He could deliver to Satan, and thereby to sore trial of mind and body, though with the good and holy aim of the flesh destroyed in order to the spirit's salvation eventually; as we learn in 1 Timothy i. 20 that he could act similarly in cases demanding it without the church. But, with apostle or not, the church is bound not to tolerate but to remove the wicked person from themselves (6-13).

In order to explain the principle further, and to show its application fully, the apostle uses the figure of leaven, intelligible to everyone familiar with its working, and especially to such as knew the care to get rid of it required at the paschal feast, which bore typically on the redeemed. Leaven represents corruption—evil in its tendency to spread

and in its character of contaminating. "Your glorying is not good: know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out the old leaven that ye may be a new lump, even as ye are unleavened. For our passover also, Christ, was sacrificed: wherefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven nor with leaven of malice and wickedness, but with unleavened things of sincerity and truth." Clearly Christ's sacrifice, set forth in the paschal lamb, is the ground and means by which Christians are unleavened. The feast of unleavened bread that follows figures the hallowed condition that attaches to them imperatively.

We who believe in Christ are now celebrating this feast during our earthly sojourn as pilgrims and strangers, if we rest on His redemption. But the Corinthians in their levity had ignored it; and the apostle most instructively rebukes them with the authority of that word which abides for ever. If they did not yet know God's mind about discipline, divine instinct left them inexcusable. Granted that they had no elders, nor experience; but they had gifts, and if they had life eternal in Christ, they should have felt rightly. Instead of mourning, they were puffed up and boasting: never a becoming state, but how shameful at such a crisis! The will of God was now declared; theirs was to judge themselves and obey. Here we have authoritatively the fullest light from on high to guide us, and to guard from like error.

"I wrote [or rather "write," the epistolary aorist] to you in the epistle not to mix with

fornicators; not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or the covetous and rapacious or idolaters, since then ye must go out of the world. But now I write [same acrostic as before] to you not to mix, if any one called a brother be a fornicator or covetous or idolater or a reviler or a drunkard or rapacious; with such a one not even to eat. For what have I [to do] with judging those outside? Ye, do ye not judge those within? But those without God judgeth. Remove the wicked [person] from among yourselves."

Here the scope is shown to embrace not only the immoral but the evil generally, though in no way to give an exhaustive list; for other scriptures duly denounce other sins. As a plain instance, false and wicked doctrine does not here find a place; whereas in Galatians v. it is treated as "leaven," no less than immorality. In 1 John also fundamental error as to Christ's person is dealt with more stringently still as "antichrist," or even not bringing Christ's doctrine. Thus is the church preserved from legislation and called to be true in this respect as in all others to Christ's glory. We have only to do God's will, as He did it perfectly.

In chap. vi. 1-11 the apostle insists on the incongruity of the saints appealing to the tribunals of that world which they are destined to judge, yea, to judge even angels. Yet at Corinth, instead of bringing a difference before the saints, they like men who had no faith appealed to "the unjust"! Even those of no account in the assembly could well judge such matters; for he

speaks to make them ashamed. Why did they not rather suffer wrong? Alas! they did wrong, and to brethren, forgetting that wrongdoers (and he enumerates more than in chap. v.) shall not inherit God's kingdom. Their past evil was no excuse; seeing that they were washed, sanctified, justified (a very observable order), in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

This introduces the abuse of liberty. It is not Christian to be under the power of anything. Even now the body is for the Lord; and as God raised Him up from the dead, so will He raise us. We shall be conformed to Him in that glorious change, and are to act now in faith of it. Our bodies are Christ's members. How shameful and disloyal to be joined to a harlot! For this was the habit, one might say the religion, of the old Corinthian community. Hence the enormity of fornication in a saint, who is one spirit with the Lord. Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit Who is in us, and this of God. We are not our own, but bought with a price, and therefore to glorify God in our body. The rest of the verse in the Authorised Version and others is a spurious addition from bad manuscripts.

In this section of the Epistle we have answers to questions which seem to have been submitted to the apostle on marriage and meats, with a notice of the detraction of his authority.

There is a spiritual energy which raises one to whom it is given above ordinary conditions; but the institution of God, as here marriage, remains

all the same. If Paul was a witness of the former, none the less does he maintain the latter. Marriage is the rule as laid down of God; but the Holy Spirit may and does exceptionally lift up this one or that for worthy reason above the need of marriage. It was a question of God's gift; so that he who marries does well, and he does better who does not marry. The contrast of this holy wisdom is seen in the world-church, which turns the exception of grace into an ecclesiastical rule of corruption, and builds up thereby a city of confusion hateful to God and ruinous to man. The apostle calls for mutual consideration in married life, as well as for prayer, as having to do with God and the adversary.

This leads him, in an interesting and instructive way, to draw the line between what he counselled, and what the Lord commanded by revelation, though the apostle was inspired to give both. He deals also with mixed marriage, and, looking at position and occupation, reminds us that God has called us in peace. Hence too, if one were called as a bondman, it was not to be a concern; but if one could become free, to use it rather. For the bondman called in the Lord is His freedman; likewise the called freeman is Christ's bondman. Bought with a price, they were not to be bondmen of men, but abide with God in that wherein they were called. He presses also the time as straitened, and the passing away of this world's fashion, as reasons for not setting the heart on change. Such is the outline of chap. vii.

In chap. viii. he speaks of eating of animals sacrificed to idols; and, quite allowing the nullity of an idol, he points out the danger for conscience in those who lacked that knowledge seeing a Christian at table in an idol-temple. Gracious thought for another is better than knowledge empty, selfish, and sinning against Christ.

This largeness of heart in the apostle exposed him to the false charge of looseness and self from those really guilty, and brings in the parenthetical chap. ix. in which he vindicates his apostleship, and glories in its grace. He maintains title to eat and drink and lead about a sister-wife, as also the other apostles, specifying the Lord's brethren and Cephas. "Or I only and Barnabas, have we not a right not to work?" Yet he draws the plain title to support for all labourers—from the soldier, the husbandman, the shepherd, and the herdman. Nevertheless he used no such title, supported though it was by the clear case of those that served the altar in the law. While asserting the right, he refused to use it for himself (not "abuse") in the gospel. It was God's grace in it that filled his heart and led his course, free from all yet making himself bondman, so inexplicable to man and hateful to the worldly mind, becoming all things to all that he might save some. A fellow-partaker with the gospel, he was living what others only preached, lest he, after preaching to others, should himself be rejected or reprobate.

This warning, though transferred to himself (as he says in chap. iv. 6, "to himself and Apollos for

their sakes" who were in danger), he follows up in chap. x. by pointing out the ruin of so many in Israel of old, who all were baptised unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink (x. 1-4). Is the Christian to be more indifferent, because privilege is now greater? Idolatry is a great danger for the professing Christian, as it was for the Jew. Yet what condemns it more than Christ's death? What more inconsistent with the Lord's table? For demons were behind the idols; and those a serious reality. True liberty is profitable and edifies; it cannot be at the expense of God's glory, unto which we as Christians are called to do all things, giving no occasion of stumbling to Jews or Greeks or God's assembly. So it was that the apostle pleased all in all things, not seeking personal advantage, but that of the many that they might be saved; and he called them again to imitate him, as he did Christ (xi. 1).

We have here another section of the Epistle, as distinct, or nearly so, from what precedes as from its concluding two chapters. Before coming to the assembly which was compromised in more ways than one at Corinth, the apostle regulates the relative place of the man and the woman in themselves. The importance of this is the more evident from the humanitarian liberalism of our own day which leaves out God's mind and order. Paul wished them to know that the Christ is the head of every man (*ἀνδρὸς*), but woman's head is the man, and the Christ's head is God. Hence not

men, but women, in praying or prophesying were to have their heads covered before others in token of subjection, as the act otherwise seemed to deny it. For woman was created because of man and as of him, so also the man by her; and angels looked on who should see godly decorum. Neither is without the other, but all things of God, which unbelief forgets or takes no account of. For woman to act like a man is to her shame, and that of the contentious person who ignores God's will (2-16).

Nor was it in private only. The Corinthians publicly were coming together for the worse. Schisms already existing would surely lead to heresies or sects, which in effect deny the one body of Christ, the church, though the approved are thereby made manifest. How sad too at such an occasion as the Lord's Supper the dishonour put on the poor! It was really on the church of God; so that such a supper was not the Lord's. Therefore as he emphatically received the Supper from the Lord, he here also delivered it to them in all its grace and holy solemnity for the remembrance of Him, the centre of the church's worship. The Lord's death makes selfishness in any form most hateful, yet fills the heart purified by faith with thanksgiving and praise, and claims vigilant self-judgment, lest any slight might bring on the Lord's chastening now, that one be not condemned with the world by-and-by. So the apostle rules the severance of a meal, even were it that called the love-feast or Agape, to hinder such disorder in future (17-34).

Thereon follows the greatest unfolding which

scripture furnishes of the presence and working of the Holy Spirit in the assembly with the love so essential to right and worthy operation, and the Lord's regulation of it accordingly against abuse; in chapters xii.-xiv. It is designedly apart from the Lord's Supper, though that Supper was in fact the most indispensable aim on the most important occasion for which the assembly met, the Holy Spirit acting in all holy freedom. But it seemed good to the Lord to treat of His Supper separately, and before entering on "the spirituals" (or manifestations of the Spirit) which are here explained. The apostle opens it by guarding against the imitative intrusion of demons, whose aim is to debase Jesus, the Son of God, as the power of the Spirit works in exalting Him. Now there are distinctions of gifts, but the same Spirit; as there are of service, but the same Lord; and of operations, but the same God that worketh all in all (xii. 1-6).

It is a question here, not of souls saved but of discerning spirits, who sought to dishonour the Lord, and deceive if it were possible the very elect. None the less but the more is the Holy Spirit sent down and here in the church to glorify the Lord and bless His own as His witnesses of Jesus in glory. The presence of the Spirit is more momentous than even the gifts He distributes and directs. It is that which constitutes the one body; and the assembly is bound to own and act thereon; which is exactly what Christendom has in effect denied since the apostles, perhaps the most perverse of the perverted things the apostle warned

of as at hand. There was but one Spirit, as also but one body; as faithfulness means walking by faith, so it is the shame of any to confess truth which they do not seek to carry out at all cost. The Corinthians were light and carnal, and their failure is turned to everlasting profit by the inspired instruction and corrective (7-13).

The gifts are manifestations of His power Who dwells in the church and works, though sovereign, to the Lord's glory; the one Spirit's baptism at Pentecost established that unity, which unbelief overlooks and in effect denies. Every true assembly is Christ's body, as the apostle told the Corinthians they were, though their state was bad enough to draw out the gravest rebuke. But it is the refusal to bow to the word and judge the evil which forfeits the title of God's assembly; whilst the Corinthians did bow to their restoration, as the Second Epistle shows. Again it is in the assembly as a whole that God set, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, etc. (14-28). Ministry therefore (that is, gift in exercise) is set in *the church*. The gift in every variety is for all. There is no such idea in scripture as *the minister of a church*; which supposes and generates all sorts of error. The edifying gifts are on the same principle and from the same source as the sign gifts (miracles, healings, tongues, etc.), but far more important and permanent and set in the higher place, whatever Corinthian vanity might prefer.

There was however, a quality higher than all, and of deep necessity for the right working of every

gift, as indeed for the well-being of every saint, to the Lord's praise. It was love: a sad word among the Greeks, who readily claimed the most refined place of the first man; but how blessed and blessing and divine as heard and seen and proved to death and deeper still in the Second! And this is essential both for the individual Christian (who alone loves, as begotten of God), and for the assembly. Again, it accounts for its place here, between the presence and the operations of the Spirit in chap. xii., and the order of His action (for which every member is responsible) in chap. xiv. It is striking to observe how the passive characters of love take precedence of the active, while the intermediate dwell on that joy in good which is truly godlike, as it well becomes the children of God now on earth. Again love never fails and abides for ever.

It is well to note in chap. xiv. 3 that we have no definition of prophecy here, only its description in contrast with "a tongue." Edification is the great criterion for the assembly, as comely order is due to Him Who dwells there, and to the Head. Revelation, now complete in scripture, is distinguished from knowledge; and power is subject to the Lord's authority Who gives rules which bind even prophets who might plead divine impulse, as they impose silence on women in the assembly. These might use their gifts at home, though as subject to order, like Philip's four daughters who prophesied. The word of God did not come out from the assembly, nor does it

come to one only. Through a called and inspired channel it is for all the church, being the Lord's commandment. "But if any be ignorant," it is his withering rebuke of the independent, "let him be ignorant." God has not only spoken but written, and His word abides for ever. May we be subject to the Lord, not in word only but in deed and truth!

Next comes the great unfolding of Christ's resurrection and its consequences. Some of the Corinthians doubted that the saints rise. They had no question as to the soul's immortality, but ventured to deny that the dead rise. The apostle treats the matter from its root in Christ, and thus decides it for the Christian, being associated with Him, as man is with the head of the race. It is for the apostle fundamental, bound up not only with God's counsels but with the gospel itself, which announces the glad tidings of Christ dead and risen. With this accordingly he begins, proved by the weightiest and fullest testimonies, his own closing them (xv. 1-11). Then (12-19) he reasons on Christ's resurrection out of (or, from among) dead men as the incontrovertible truth which utterly destroyed their speculation. "How say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" For this denies Christ's, and if so Paul's preaching, and their own faith; nay, it would make them false witnesses of God Who in that case had not raised Christ, and themselves be yet in their sins: so those put to sleep in Christ must have perished, and Christians alive be the most pitiable of all men.

This he interrupts with a sort of parenthetical revelation, terse, pregnant, and profound. "But now hath Christ been raised from out of the dead, first-fruits of those that are asleep. For since through man [is] death, through man also [is] resurrection of the dead." Two heads have thus their families respectively characterised, dying, and made alive. "But each in his own order (or, rank): Christ first-fruits; then, those that are Christ's at his coming; then the end, when he shall give up the kingdom to the God and Father, when he shall have annulled all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign till he put all the enemies under his feet. Death, last enemy, shall be annulled. For he subjected all things under his feet. But when he saith, All things are subjected, it is evident that he is excepted who subjected all things to him. And when all things shall be subjected to him, then shall the Son also himself be subjected to him that subjected all things to him, that God may be all in all" (20-28). The resurrection of those that are His is at His coming, and to reign with Him. The end is, when He judges those that are not His, yet raised; and He delivers up the kingdom, all enemies put down, for the everlasting scene, when not the Father only but "God" (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) shall be all in all.

Next he renews the reasoning, and refers in 29 to 18, and in 30 to 19, which clears up the sense. Why by baptism join such a forlorn hope, why share such a life of danger, if dead men are not at

all raised? Paul's life was in view of resurrection; as theirs denied it who merely eat and drink. Let such not be deceived, but wake up righteously and sin not. Ignorance of resurrection is ignorance of God and holiness, to the shame of those that speculate. And why raise curious questions? God surrounds us with even natural facts of analogous character: wheat and other grain, after death of what perishes, spring up, not what was sown, but of its own kind and not a different, yet in a new condition. There are also heavenly bodies and earthly. So too is the resurrection; and here again and yet more richly the last Adam, the Second Man, is contrasted with the first. We too who believe are styled heavenly, for we shall in due time bear that image, as now we bear the image of the earthly (or rather dusty) man, Adam (29-49).

Christ's life (and in resurrection, if men were to be His associates) alone suits God's kingdom and incorruption (50). This introduces a mystery or secret of God not revealed in the Old Testament: "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in an eye's twinkling, at the last trumpet; for trumpet it will, and the dead shall be raised, and we shall be changed" (51, 52). And this new Christian truth he connects with Isaiah xxv. 8 and Hosea xiii. 14, the heavenly things with the earthly; for the Kingdom of God, as our Lord shows (John iii. 12), comprehends both. All is wound up with a call to his beloved brethren to be firm, unmoveable, abounding in the work of

the Lord always, knowing that their labour is not vain in Him.

This is fitly followed by the various details of chap. xvi. As he directed the assemblies of Galatia to collect for the poor saints in Jerusalem, so he wished those in Corinth to do. Each first of the week is a most proper day for the Christian, in the sense of his blessing and of that infinite grace which is its source, to lay by him in store as he may have prospered. The apostle would not use personal influence when he came; but whomsoever they should approve, these he would send with letters to carry their bounty to Jerusalem; and if well for him also to go, they should go with him. How incomparably better is God's way than man's societies and their machinery or devices! Christ and His work is the centre of all. It was only when restoration wrought, that in his Second Epistle he explains why he did not then visit them. But while tarrying at Ephesus, he would have no despising of Timothy if he came. And he lets them know how much he besought Apollos to go to Corinth, who, though not now, would come when he had good opportunity (1-12).

The apostle then charges them to watch, stand fast in the faith, play the man, be strong. "Let all ye do be done in love." They had failed in all: he despaired in nothing (13, 14). They knew the house of Stephanas, that it was the first-fruits of Achaia, and that they devoted themselves to the saints for service; so he besought them to be subject to such, and to every one working together

and labouring. This is the more notable, as we never hear of elders in the two Epistles to the Corinthians; for if there had been, they must naturally have incurred special blame. Apart from elders (who needed appointment by those who had discernment and full authority) there were, as we learn, labourers to whom the subjection of the saints was due, as we also find in other Epistles: a fact of the utmost importance for the present circumstances of the church. Any unbiassed reader may satisfy himself of this, who will consider the import of Rom. xii. 6-8; of 1 Thess. 12, 13, 19, 20; of Heb. xiii. 17; of James iii. 1; and of 1 Pet. iv. 10, 11. Elders or no elders, it is clear that the door was open for ministrations to edification where gift existed without official designation of any kind. Ministry in the N.T. is the Lord's service, and far more varied than what has been so called since the apostles, who sanctioned it to the largest extent if exercised in the fear of God and love of the saints.

Further, he speaks of Stephanas, with two others whose names are subjoined, coming and by their practical love refreshing his spirit "and yours" he graciously adds. "Own therefore such" (15-18). Salutations of assemblies and individuals follow, as he affixes his with his own hand (19-21). But while desiring the fullest flow of holy affections with one another, he pronounced an unsparing curse on any one that loved not the Lord [Jesus Christ]: "Let him be anathema Maranatha" (our Lord cometh). This assuredly was no

licence for such to be in their midst (22). Not content, in the face of much he had suffered from them, with the prayer "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you," he concludes with "My love be with you all in Christ Jesus, Amen" (23, 24). What more Christlike!

## THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

THE Second Epistle does not admit of sections so defined as in the First, being less ecclesiastical and dogmatic. It is restorative rather than corrective, and overflows with the sense of God's compassion and encouragement in the midst of tribulation and sufferings. The address here, "to the church of God that is in Corinth," adds, not "with all that in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours," but quite appropriately "with all the saints that are in all Achaia." It is less external and more intimate: not thanks for gifts and power, but blessing for delivering grace.

The apostle's heart was full. He had drunk deeply of Christ's sufferings; but now his encouragement also abounded through Christ; and both, he assures them, were for their encouragement and salvation. If they had passed through sufferings, he would have them know what had been his in Asia, "when excessively pressed beyond power, so as to despair even of living." Having the sentence of death within to trust in the God of resurrection, he yet confides, counting now on their prayers for thanksgiving also. And as conscience had begun its good work in them, he can speak of his own,

and explain, as he did not in the First Epistle, why he had not gone to Corinth. Their state forbade it, not his levity, nor aught of fickleness, as some said. This leads on to a wondrous assertion of God's immutable word of grace in His Son, and the no less power of our establishment and enjoyment by the Holy Spirit, with which he ends chap. i., assuring them now of his love in desiring to see them at Corinth only with joy.

Little did the Corinthians conceive his grief and earnest desire for joy from them (chap. ii.). Not only had he and they grieved, but sufficient to the one who had caused it by his evil was "this punishment" by the many. They should show grace now, lest he should be swallowed up with grief, and their obedience too in confirming love as they had in judging. In blessed grace and ungrudging maintenance of the church's place the apostle says, "To whom ye forgive anything, I also; for what I also have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, [it was] for your sakes in Christ's person, that no advantage be gained over us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his devices." What a contrast with either the assumption or the indifference of worldly religion! What a defeat he anticipates of Satan's aim! This again gives occasion for their learning how his heart yearned over them right through. At Troas, though a door was opened in the Lord and he came for the gospel, he had no rest for his spirit at not finding Titus, but went on to Macedonia, where he met him and got good tidings of Corinth. Was this a loss? "Thanks

be to God who always leadeth us in triumph in Christ and manifesteth through us the savour of his knowledge in every place." The apostle identifies himself with the gospel, a sweet savour to God in the saved and in the perishing. And who is competent for these things? He was not as the many, trading with the word of God; he gave it as purely as he received it from God.

Chap. iii. contrasts the law with the gospel, and in particular exposes the mixture of the two, the favourite device of those who misread Christ. For did he begin to commend himself? Did he need letters of commendation to them or from them? *They* were his letter, written on his heart, manifested that they were Christ's letter. What grace for the apostle so to write of them! What an honour for them so to hear! His competency was from God Who made us competent as new covenant ministers, not of letter but of spirit; for letter kills, but spirit quickens. Then in a parenthesis, which includes from verse 7 to the end of verse 16, he sets out the law graven on stones, as a ministry of death and condemnation, introduced with glory but annulled; whilst the ministry of the Spirit and of righteousness is the surpassing glory, and the abiding in glory. The Lord is the spirit of what in the letter only kills; but where His Spirit is, there is liberty. Law was a veiled system like Moses' face; whereas in the gospel "we all with unveiled face looking on the glory of the Lord are being transformed according to the same image from glory unto glory as by the Lord the Spirit."

Therefore having this ministry, and being shewn mercy, we faint not. Grace banished fear and dishonesty, and gave by manifestation of the truth to commend oneself to every conscience of man in the sight of God. So chap. iv. begins. All is out in the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ. Man is lost, man under law most guilty and blinded by the god of this age; God in the glory of His grace has the believer face to face without a veil. Self is not our object, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves your bondmen for Jesus' sake. But we have this treasure yet in earthen vessels, that the surpassingness of the power may be of God and not out of us; in everything afflicted, but not straitened, always bearing about in the body the putting to death of Jesus that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body. Such is the principle; then comes the fact: "For we that live are ever delivered unto death on account of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be manifested in our mortal flesh." This life works in others: we believe, and therefore speak, knowing Him Who raised up the Lord Jesus and will raise and present us with those we serve for His sake. Far from our fainting, the inward man is renewed day-by-day. Our momentary light affliction works for us a surpassingly eternal weight of glory, looking as we do at, not the seen, but the unseen and eternal things.

In chap. v. we have the power of life in Christ tested not only by death but by judgment. The Christian is shewn more than conqueror thereby,

as, if dead, rising like Christ, and if living, mortality swallowed up of life (vers. 1-4). Nor does Christ's judgment-seat abate the constant confidence; for our manifestation before Him will only prove the perfectness of His redemption, though there may be loss also. The glory begun abides. Then the love of Christ constrains, besides the sense of the terror of the Lord for such as meet judgment in their nakedness, so that we persuade men to receive the gospel. The judgment of charity is, that "One died for all: therefore all died;" and He died for all "that the living [which is only by faith in Him] should live no longer to themselves but to him who died and was raised." Even Christ after the flesh is known no more, but dead, risen, and glorified. So if one be in Christ, there is a new creation; the old things are passed, behold, they are become new; and all things are of the God Who reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ and gave us the ministry of the reconciliation. This he explains to the end, characterised by God in this way and now based on Christ's work.

Chap. vi. describes this ministry of God's grace; not only in its source and distinctive properties and glorious end, but in its irreproachable character and its deep exercises through all circumstances. Assuredly the Corinthians were not straitened in Paul, as he could now freely tell them; it was in their own affections. But true largeness of heart goes with thorough separateness from all evil. The exhortation follows against any incongruous yoke with unbelievers. What has a

Christian to do with helping to draw the world's ear? Righteousness, light, and Christ forbid such a part. What agreement too has God's temple with idols? The saints are a living God's temple, more deeply than the O.T. expressed; wherefore the call to come out of their midst and be separate and touch no unclean thing was the more imperative. How they knew themselves received, God's Fatherhood, and their own sonship, the gospel had already proved. "Having then these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every pollution of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in God's fear" (chap. vii. 1) is the real close of the chapter.

In chap. vii. 2-16 the apostle concludes what had been interrupted by the marvellous exposition of the Spirit's ministration of the gospel, the matter of grief which grace had turned into blessing. He enlarges on what chapter ii. only touched, and lets them know what his letter cost him, when he knew its effect on them. It was grief according to God working out repentance to salvation unregrettable. Love is of God, and creates happiness rising above self, sorrow, sin, and Satan. The grief of the world works out death. The teaching is highly valuable, not only in a moral way but in the light of God cast on the assembly's clearance of itself from the evil which it is bound to judge in the last resort. "In every thing ye proved yourselves to be pure in the matter." Thus it is not by any means enough, if we desire God's will, that the offender be truly penitent, but that also the saints, having to do with a grievous case,

should humble themselves and in grace bear the shame as if it were their own. How awful the state of such as rebel against the Lord in refusing its judgment, and in shameless sympathy that tends to harden and destroy the guilty one! No wonder that party spirit is so odious to the Spirit of God.

The way was now clear for the apostle happily to treat fully of that collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem, which he had briefly introduced in the last chapter of his First Epistle. Now that grace was doing its work, he can speak of the grace bestowed on the Macedonian assemblies in their own deep poverty and trial. And beyond hope it was; for they gave themselves first "to the Lord, and to us by God's will." Taking nothing himself from the rich Corinthians, Paul was the more earnest for others; not as commanding, but, through the zeal of others, proving also the genuineness of their love. As they abounded in much, let them abound in this grace too. What a motive and pattern is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ! He simply gave in this his mind—he would not say more. It was expedient, or profitable, for those who purposed a year ago, to perform. A willing mind was the great thing without burdening any. Titus too was jealous for them; and Paul sent with him the brother whose praise was in the gospel through all the assemblies and chosen by them as "our fellow-traveller with this grace." For the apostle was careful to provide things honest not only before the Lord but also before

men. Hence he sent a second unnamed brother (22) of oft proved diligence, but now much more diligent "through his [not, I think, Paul's] great confidence as to you." They were to show the proof therefore (chap. viii.).

Yet another chapter (ix.) is devoted to the theme. He knew their ready mind, of which he boasted to the Macedonians, that Achaia (of which Roman province Corinth was the metropolis) was prepared a year ago; and he would not that "we, not to say, ye," should be put to shame. Nor does he fail, in awakening their souls to the joy of grace practically, to remind them that God loves a cheerful giver, and would have us abound to every good work, with thanksgiving to God as the result. Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift, the spring of all grace by us.

In the later chapters (x.-xiii.) he vindicates his authority, entreating them by the meekness and gentleness of Christ; let others boast of natural appearance or of fleshly arms. His arms were powerful according to God for overthrowing strongholds, and leading captive every thought unto the obedience of Christ. He was ready to avenge all disobedience when their return to it was fulfilled. If boasting somewhat more abundantly of what the Lord gave him, he would not be put to shame. As strong by letters when absent, so he would be present in deed. He had not gone beyond the measure God had apportioned, but hoped, their faith increasing, to be enlarged among them, and yet more to evangelise beyond them, instead of

boasting in another's rule as to things ready. He that boasts, let him boast in the Lord; for not he that commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends (chap. x.).

Jealous over the beloved Corinthians, whom he had espoused (he says in chapter xi.) as a chaste virgin to Christ, he fears lest their thoughts should be corrupted from simplicity as to Christ. In the most touching way he asks if he committed sin in abasing himself that they might be exalted, and in every thing kept himself from being burdensome to them, though Macedonian brethren supplied his wants. God knew whether it was lack of loving them; but so he did to cut off occasion from some wishing it, against whom he thunders as deceitful workers. To speak of his own devotion, labours, and sufferings, he counts to speak as a fool; but we are indebted to that unworthy occasion for details of the deepest interest. They had compelled him in their folly. Was there any heroism in being let down in a basket through a window by the wall?

In chapter xii. he glories in what "a man in Christ" he knows (without saying who, for flesh had no part in it) experienced when caught up to the third heaven. Otherwise he gloried, not in any thing man loves to attach to his name, but "in his infirmities." He knew not even whether it was in the body or out of the body; so completely was it apart from all living associations or nature, before God in the glory of His Paradise. Yet was it as a check to this unequalled distinction (of the

deepest moment to all subsequent life and service), lest he should be exalted by the exceeding greatness of the revelations, that there was given a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him. Nay more, he tells us that he prayed the Lord thrice for its removal, but had the answer, "My grace sufficeth thee, for power is perfected in weakness." It is dependence in faith, the true and signal secret of all Christianity in practice. "Behold, this third time I am ready to come to you." He had been at Corinth once and long. Only their state, and his desire to come when they were restored, hindered him when ready to come a second time. This is the true force of coming a "third time." How painful to such a heart to rebut the imputation of craft, when they could not deny his personal unselfishness! or of their supposing he was excusing himself to them! All was really in love for their edifying; but he feared lest perhaps on coming he should find them not as he wished, and be found by them such as they did not wish.

Chapter xiii. closes this part and the entire Epistle with an overwhelming appeal, not only spoiled by false punctuation in the Authorised and Revised Versions, but making way for wrong doctrine at issue with the gospel. "Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me (who is not weak toward you but is powerful among you,\* for he was

\* Any person of intelligence ought to see the impossibility of the sentence ending here, as in the version of 1611. An answer to the "since" or "seeing that" is required, in order to make any tolerable sense. As this is not furnished by the close of ver. 3, nor by ver. 4, we

crucified of weakness, yet he liveth of God's power; for we too are weak in him, but we shall live with him by God's power toward you), try yourselves whether ye be in the faith, prove yourselves. Or recognise ye not as to yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you? unless indeed ye be reprobate" (3-5). As *this* alternative was the last thought which could occur to the carnal vanity which questioned Paul's apostleship, the application turns on their own standing in the faith. As surely as they were in it, he was an apostle to them. If Christ were not in them, they were reprobates and not entitled to speak on such a question. Where was their vapouring now? But his prayer was that they might do nothing evil, and his joy to be weak if they were powerful, praying also for their perfecting, and writing thus when absent that when present he might spare severity. He adds a farewell message of suited tenderness and care, with a commendation which speaks to the hearts of all believers ever since. Who, accepting it from God, has not profited?

have it really supplied by ver. 5. And this answer is not only simple and satisfactory but full of gracious force and a serious rebuke to their ungrateful and thoughtless vanity. The version of 1881 yields evidence that the Revisers perceived the lameness of the sense afforded by the A.V., but of their own total failure to seize the true connection. For they hang vers. 3 and 4 on to ver. 2, though there is no trace of a link with what goes before to warrant it. Ver. 2 appropriately follows ver. 1, as both do the closing vers. 19-21 of chap. xii. But xiii. 3 opens a fresh and distinct appeal to the hearts of those who ventured to question his apostleship. "Seeing that ye seek a proof of Christ that speaketh in me,.....try your own selves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Or know ye not as to your own selves that Jesus Christ is in you? unless indeed ye be reprobate." The R.V. is purposely cited to show how excellent is the sense, when the erroneous punctuation is corrected, and the true connection is allowed. Otherwise the appeal is robbed of power, and a spurious meaning is suggested, to the injury of souls ever open to man's mistake rather than God's truth.



## THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS.

Who can doubt the special aim of the Holy Spirit in this characteristic letter? It is not, like that to the Roman saints, a systematic establishment of God's righteousness in the gospel, on the plain and full proof of man's universal failure. Here we have the vindication of Paul's apostolate and of the gospel of grace against the Judaisers. It is a standing witness, on the one hand, how quickly the professing Christian is apt to surrender even the foundations of his blessedness to legalism; and on the other, of the Holy Spirit's care to raise the divine standard against the enemy, and rally men of faith around it. For God has here given us His own refutation of that early encroachment, so ruinous to the enjoyment of His grace, of Christ's work, and of the believer's standing and power. The Epistle is characterised by unusual severity of warning from first to last, and a total absence of those individual salutations in brotherly kindness which abound wherever it was possible. Not even the loose levity of the Corinthians troubled the apostle's spirit so profoundly, as the fall of the Galatians from grace.

Chap. i. opens with Paul, "apostle not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ,

and God the Father who raised him out of the dead, and all the brethren with me." The legal party objected that he was not of the twelve, nor yet ordained by them in due succession. The apostle confronts this with the fact, that the Lord Jesus and God the Father expressly called him to the apostleship in an immediate way and with resurrection's associations; and that all the brethren with him joined in his words now. Even his wonted form of general salutation has the stamp of the truth the Galatians were imperilling. "Grace to you and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us out of this present evil age according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory unto the ages of ages." In vers. 6-10 he bursts like lightning on their central error. "I wonder that ye so quickly change from him that called you in Christ's grace unto a different gospel, which is not another: only there are some that trouble you and desire to pervert the gospel of Christ." Such as preached aught else, were it himself or an angel or any, he anathematises. It were but pleasing men, which would make him not to be Christ's bondman as he was.

Next, he asserts direct revelation for the gospel he preached, affirmed already for his apostolic authority. It had shone on him, when devoted to the law and a persecutor of the church of God. But His grace revealed His Son in him, that he might preach Him among the Gentiles. The essential design was that he should not take

counsel with flesh and blood, not even with the apostles before him. So he went elsewhere, and even when he did go up to Jerusalem, it was but for a short visit to Cephas, and seeing only James the Lord's brother, as he solemnly averred. Afterwards he went to Syria, and Cilicia; so that he was only known in Judea by the report, to God's glory by him, that the persecuting Saul now preached the faith he once ravaged.

In chap. ii. the apostle furnishes fresh light in this connection on his memorable visit with Barnabas to Jerusalem, when he took Titus with him. Assuredly it was to receive neither authority nor truth. He went up by revelation, which is nowhere else intimated, but characterises his special place. Nor was it apostles who laid before him the gospel, but he before the chiefs, privately, what he preached among the Gentiles. Could any say he was running or had run in vain? Nor was it entertained to circumcise Titus, whatever bondage false brethren might desire to impose. Add to the gospel, and its truth continues no more. It was seen by the reputed pillars that He, who energised Peter for the apostleship of the uncircumcision, energised Paul also for the Gentiles. God's order for both and grace given to Paul being recognised, James and Cephas and John gave Paul and Barnabas right hands of fellowship, only with due remembrance of the poor, in which Paul was zealous too.

But from ver. 11 he goes farther, and recounts his open resistance of Peter at Antioch because he

was condemned. What a rock for the church, if Christ had really resigned His place to His servant! Away with a pretension so blasphemous, ignorance so deplorable. Christ alone was and is the Rock. Peter shilly-shallied when certain came from James; "and the rest of the Jews dissembled likewise with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their dissimulation." How solemnly instructive for the Galatians, for all other Christians, for ourselves also! "They did not walk uprightly according to the truth of the gospel" is the unsparing censure of the apostle. What a withering rebuke of their own folly in listening to the adversaries of him and the gospel! His argument is unanswerable, and stands in abiding record. "If thou being a Jew livest Gentilely and not Jewishly, how forcest thou the Gentiles to judaise?"

It was grievous inconsistency in Peter, who on a most critical occasion proved himself not only feeble as a reed, but false to the Lord's charge in Acts x. and his own faith, afraid of those he ought to have fed and guided aright. It was finching from the common standing of justification by faith, and not by law-works even for born Jews. But the worst of all remained; for he had left law for grace in Christ to justify him, and, in turning his back on this now, he not only made himself a transgressor, but in effect Christ a minister of sin! Paul on the contrary for the Christian says, Through law I died to the law, for all was met in Christ crucified. The sinner was in Him condemned, that he should go free, the flesh only and

utterly dealt with by God for him who believes ; and himself living, no longer the old I, but a new life, Christ living in him : a life in faith of the Son of God " Who loved me and gave Himself up for me." Adding law makes void the grace of God ; for if righteousness be through law, Christ in this case died gratuitously.

As chap. ii. ends with the great truth of Christ living in the Christian by faith in the Son of God, in contrast with the law, so chap. iii. shows that the reception of the Spirit was not by works of law but by report of faith. How senseless then to perfect in flesh, with which law deals, what they began in Spirit ! Thence he turns in ver. 6 to Abraham who believed and had not the law, but the promise, " In thee all the nations shall be blessed," but solely by faith. For as many persons as are by works of law are under the curse ; for which Deuteronomy xxvii. is cited. There, when the two mountains were taken by six tribes on each for blessing and curse, only Ebal had the curses, and not a word of the blessings on Gerizim ! Granted that in fact the blessings were pronounced on the appointed mountain ; in effect, as God knew, it must fail ; and hence the silence of that inspired book. On the principle of law there is no blessing but curse for sinful man. " The just shall live by faith," as Habakkuk ii. 4 testifies when all was ruin ; where in vain law held out life to him that shall have done its demands. But Christ has redeemed from out of the curse by having become a curse, as elsewhere Deuteronomy attests (xxi.) ;

that the blessing might come unhindered, the promise of the Spirit through faith (1-13).

Then in a deep unfolding the notion of annexing law to promise is excluded. For the promises were addressed to Abraham, and to his seed, 430 years before the law, and hence cannot be annulled by it. The promise was in grace. Law was added for the sake of transgressions till the Seed came to Whom was made the promise, which has no mediator like the law with Moses between God and man. There are two parties in law, one of them sinful; there is but one in promise, God, and therefore all is sure in the end. They are not against each other, as they must be if joined: each serves its proper aim. There is no righteousness by law; but the promise by faith of Jesus Christ is given to believers. Law was but a servile child-guide; but we are all, Gentiles as well as Jews, God's sons by faith in Christ Jesus; and Him it is, not law, we put on in baptism, in Whom there can be no distinction in the flesh; and if of Christ, we are Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise (14-29).

In chap. iv. the apostle points out the immense change wrought for the saints through Christ's work and the sending of the Spirit. Previously the heir, a child or infant, did not differ from a slave under the elements of the world; but now he was redeemed by the Son and became a son. And so were the Gentile believers sons, with the Spirit in their hearts crying, Abba, Father. Such is the true relationship of the Christian (1-7). For

Gentile saints, after being known of God, to turn to the weak and beggarly elements (*i.e.*, of the law) was really a return to their idolatry in principle. "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you lest I bestowed upon you labour in vain. Be as I [am], for I [am], as ye, brethren, I beseech you : ye have not injured me at all" (8-12). He was freed from law by Christ's death. They as Gentiles had nothing to do with law. They inflicted no wrong in saying so of Paul. Compare Romans vii. 6 and Galatians ii. 19. How the new delusion had alienated them from him! Had he become their enemy by telling them the truth? Their zeal should not be only in his presence (13-18). They needed that he should travail again in birth to have Christ formed in them (19).

"Tell me ye that desire to be under law, do ye not hear the law?" Then he speaks of Abraham's two sons: one by a bondwoman, the other by a free woman, one born after the flesh, as the other by promise, allegorising the two covenants, and answering respectively to Jerusalem in bondage, and to free Jerusalem which is above, our mother, entitled to rejoice after desolation. We then, as Isaac, are children of promise, and persecuted by him born after the flesh as of old. "Nevertheless 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 free woman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free" (21-31). How

convincingly the tables were turned on these retrogradists from grace to the law!

The beautiful use, which the apostle drew according to divine design from the story of Sarah and Isaac on the one hand, and on the other of Hagar and Ishmael, leads into the teaching of chapter v., the freedom with which Christ freed us. So, therefore, is the Christian to stand, and not be entangled again in a yoke of bondage—the enemy's effort. To receive circumcision was to become debtor to do the whole law and to fall from grace: Christ would profit nothing in that case. We, believers, are justified by faith; and by the Spirit on the same principle of faith we await, not righteousness but its hope, even the glory into which Christ is gone. For in Him neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails aught, but faith working through love; as of God it ever does. Who stopped them when running well, that they should not obey the truth? The persuasion was not of Him that called them. It was a corruption tainting the lump as a whole. For his part, his confidence as to them was in the Lord, that they would have no other mind; and their troubler whosoever he be shall bear the judgment (or, guilt). "And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why am I yet persecuted? Then is done away the offence of the cross." For Judaism was ever his sleepless foe. Indignantly he adds, "I would that those who unsettle you would even cut themselves off" (vers. 1-12).

"For ye," he says emphatically, "were called

for liberty"—on that condition. "Only [use] not liberty for occasion to the flesh, but through love serve one another"—the gist of the whole law. Were they fulfilling it in biting and devouring one another? To walk in the Spirit (which grace gave, not law) is to fulfil in no way flesh's lust. No doubt the flesh opposes, but so does the Spirit, that we may not do the things which we would: a scripture perverted in the A. V. But if led by the Spirit, they are not under law: grace is the spring. "Now manifest are the works of the flesh, which are fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, angers, contentions, divisions, sects, envyings, [murders], drinkings, revels, and such like; of the which I forewarn you, as I forewarned you, that they who do such things shall not inherit God's kingdom." Could they not recognise these sad traits of late? Law acting on flesh provoked them. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, self-control: against such things is no law." Did they really know this fruit familiarly? "And they that are of Christ Jesus crucified the flesh with its passions and its lusts. If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also direct our steps. Let us not become vainglorious, provoking one another, envying one another." What can approach these burning words which close the chapter? The Spirit is the power of good, not the law, moral any more than ceremonial. Law's power is to slay sinners.

The next chap. (vi.) follows it up. Even if a

man be overtaken in some fault, does the remedy lie in the law? In nothing but grace. "Ye that are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted." The general rule is to bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfil the law of the Christ, if they desired a law. The flesh boasts, and only deceives itself while burdening others. Faith proves its own work without claiming that of another. Each shall bear his own burden. Meanwhile there is ample room for love, as for the learner in the word toward the teacher in all good things (ver. 6). God holds to His order: whatever a man sows, this shall he also reap,—corruption from the flesh, from the Spirit life eternal. Let us not be faint-hearted then in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not. So then as we have opportunity (season), let us work good toward all, and specially toward the household of faith.

The conclusion is touching. "Ye see in how great letters I write to you with my hand." He habitually employed an amanuensis, as was usual in those days. To the Galatians he would write himself; and so in large uncouth letters he wrote the entire Epistle. (Contrast with the acrostic here the present in 2 Thess. iii. 17). Once more he thunders against those who would revive flesh and restore law and circumcision to the denial of the cross of Christ. In that cross only would he glory, which put shame on the world; and he accepted its shame with Christ. In Him is new creation. This is the rule for our steps; and peace be on

such and mercy, and upon those of Israel who are really God's. Let none trouble him henceforth: he bore in his body the marks of suffering for Christ, whose grace, he prays, to be with their spirit. It is controversial throughout, yet with the deepest feelings of love underneath.



## THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS.

IN writing to the Ephesians the apostle takes his stand on ground wholly different from the Epistle to the Galatians. There he combats return to law in every shape, ceremonial or moral, and insists on grace in Christ crucified and risen, on promise before the law and accomplished only in Christ, so that blessing should flow even to Gentiles, and the promise of the Spirit be received by faith. But to the Ephesians he shows divine and eternal counsels.

The Christian is blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ (i. 3); and this by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who was both man and Son of His love. The same God and Father chose us in Him before the world's foundation, far above earthly ways and beyond promise. He chose us that we should be holy and blameless before Him in love (4). If He would have us there, He could not but have us like Himself. But He was pleased to fore-ordain our relationship, even for adoption or sonship, through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will (5) for the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved (6). In Him (for we were evil) we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of

offences according to the riches of His grace (7), which He made to abound toward us (not like Adam for the earth) in all wisdom and intelligence (8). He also made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself (9) for administration of the fulness of the fit times : to head up the universe in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things on the earth ; in Him in Whom we also were given inheritance, for if sons of God, we were heirs. We were thus fore-ordained according to the purpose of Him Who works all things according to the purpose of His own will, that we should be to the praise of His glory. " *We* " are the believing Jews that had pre-trusted in the Christ (12). In Him *ye* too (Gentile saints), having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, in Whom, having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, Who is earnest of our inheritance for the redemption of the possession, for praise of His glory (14). Jew and Gentile are alike thus blessed in the highest degree, far beyond the promises to the fathers.

So delicate and precious and rich is the apostle's preamble, that one does best to give it just as it is. The glory of His grace embraces the whole sweep of the purposed blessing ; the riches of His grace, what more than meets all our need now ; the praise of His glory, when we enter on the inheritance. But the choice of God and fore-ordaining go back into eternity before there was a universe to inherit with Christ. The summing or heading up in Him.

of the whole heavenly and earthly, will be administered when the various seasons run out, and the inheritance, heavenly and earthly, will be displayed; and we, of all others, share Christ's glory over all, and have the earnest as well as seal already, in the Holy Spirit given to us.

Then we have from verse 15 and at least to the end of chap. i. the apostle's prayer for them, founded on the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory (17), of Whom he desires the enlightenment of the eyes of their heart to know what is the hope of His calling, what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of His power toward us that believe, according to the working of the might of His strength which He wrought in the Christ, when He raised Him out of the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenlies, far above the most exalted of creatures now and ever, and subjected all under His feet, and gave Him [to be] head over all things to the church which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all (23).

The prayer almost imperceptibly passes into the teaching of chap. ii. To the hope of God's calling as in chap. i. 3-6, with its accompaniments in verses 7, 8, and the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints (for He takes it in them as in the Christ) in verses 9-11, with the way Jews and Gentiles come in, and the Holy Spirit's relation to both blessings, he adds the wondrous power displayed in raising and exalting Christ. Now in

chapter ii. 1-10 he shows it to be the same power that wrought in the Ephesian saints, and so in all Christians, quickened with the Christ, raised up together, and made sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus, that God might display in the coming ages the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Thus were and are they saved by grace through faith, His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God before prepared that we should walk in them. All were alike dead in offences and sins. God thus wrought to bring believers into this new estate of living association with Christ on high.

From verse 11 the apostle would have those once Gentiles remember their then far off condition, without one of Israel's privileges. Now they were made nigh by the blood of the Christ; and in the same nearness were the believing Jews. For Christ, our peace, not only took away all obstacles, but made both one, forming the two in Himself into one new man, one body. Though Jews had once been outwardly nigh, and Gentiles afar off, through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Strangers and foreigners the Gentile believers were no more, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of God's household, all alike being built on quite a new foundation—that of the apostles and prophets (of whom he speaks in chap. iv. 11), Jesus Christ Himself (not Peter) being the corner-stone. In Him all the building framed together increaseth unto a holy temple in the

Lord; "In whom ye also," he says, "are builded together for God's habitation in the Spirit."

Thus we have the church viewed as Christ's body, and God's house, in which distinct respects Paul's Epistles often regard it. The article seems necessarily wanting in verse 21, though excellent old MSS. insert it; but according to correct usage, as the building is not complete, it could not be there. Yet this does not warrant "each several," as in the R. V. For, though as the ordinary rule, *πᾶσα* without the article, requires "every," there are known exceptions, as "all Jerusalem" (Matt. ii. 3), "all the house of Israel" (Acts ii. 36), "all Israel" (Rom. xi. 26). It is not a proper name that really accounts for this; a whole viewed in its parts excludes the article, yet means "all." The mistranslation is therefore not only superficial, but directly upsets the unity of the building on which the apostle here insists as everywhere else.

Chapter i. revealed the counsels of God in Christ risen and seated on high, followed up by the apostle's prayer to the God of our Lord Jesus; and chapter ii. showed us how grace has brought us in, not only as individuals but collectively, and the temporary setting aside of Israel, believing Jews and Gentiles alike to be Christ's body and God's habitation in the Spirit. Chapter iii. connects with the subject Paul's special administration of this mystery or secret.

Therefore are the Gentiles the objects of grace in a way wholly unheard of in other generations, as now revealed to His holy apostles and prophets

in the Spirit—the same power which builds all the saints together for God's dwelling. It was by revelation made known that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which Paul was become minister according to the gift of His grace given him according to the working of His power. This of course could not be, nor be revealed, till the cross had closed the Jewish system and opened the door in Christ ascended for the Creator of all things to make known heavenly counsels and ways in Him to any and everybody that believed. Equally clear is it that when Christ comes for His own to be with Him in the Father's house, and subsequently appears to execute judgment on the Beast and his vassals, on the Antichrist and all other enemies, He will restore Israel specially and bless the Gentiles in general under His blissful reign over the universe.

Meanwhile the gospel where these distinctions are obliterated and unknown goes forth, and the unsearchable riches of the Christ announced, as Paul did pre-eminently and far beyond all prophecy. This was in order that now to the principalities and the authorities in the heavenlies might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God according to a purpose of the ages (or, eternal) which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, in Whom we have boldness and access in confidence through the faith in Him. The apostle would not have them discouraged at

his tribulations for them: it was their glory, which roused the enemy (iii. 1-13).

“For this cause” (repeating the phrase which opens the chapter, and carrying out the parenthesis into a new prayer founded on its wondrous intimations) he bows his knees to the Father [of our Lord Jesus Christ, an addition favoured by many MSS., Vv., etc.] of Whom every family in heaven and on earth is named. Here, however, it is not as in chapter i. that a spirit of wisdom and revelation might be given to the saints to know the hope of His calling and the glory of His inheritance and the greatness of His power in Christ risen and exalted; it is to be strengthened with power by His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ might dwell in their hearts through faith, rooted and grounded in love, that they might be able to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height (he does not say of what, but evidently of the mystery), and to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge; that they might be filled unto all the fulness of God. This is not for spiritual intelligence of God’s counsels and of what God had wrought in Christ to give them effect, but for present power of the Spirit in realising Christ dwelling in their hearts, and thus entering into fellowship with all the saints into the boundless glory, and His love deeper than the glory which will display it another day. Now to Him that is able to do far exceeding above all we ask and think, according to the power that worketh *in* us (and not only *for* us), to Him

be the glory in the church in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen (vers. 14-21).

Paul, the prisoner in the Lord, beseeches the saints on the ground of all he has made known, to walk worthily of the calling wherewith they were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the joint bond of peace. This leads him fully to set forth unity: "one body and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all, and in you [or, us] all" (iv. 1-6). The relationship determines the duty: what then must be ours, so blessed of God? It is easy to see that verse 4 sets out the vital, as verse 5 the professing, unity; while verse 6 is universal in its early clauses, yet the most intimate grace in the last. We are exhorted to be faithful in every case.

Next, the various workings in each for the blessing of all to Christ's glory are shewn in verses 7-16. All is founded on Him ascended on high, as this depended on His descending into the lower parts of the earth, and also ascending to the highest, that He might fill all things. He it is Who gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some shepherds and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, unto work of ministry, unto edifying of the body of Christ. What is the term of this? Until we all arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God,

at a fullgrown man, at the measure of stature of the fulness of Christ. For His gracious aim is that we be no longer babes, tossed and carried about by every wind of the teaching [that is] in the sleight of men for the spread of error; but, holding truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, Who is the head, the Christ; from Whom the whole body, fitted and compacted together by every joint of supply, according to the effectual working in measure of each one part, works for itself the increase of the body unto its own edifying in love.

It is not here, as in 1 Corinthians xii., the Holy Spirit testifying in this creation (and hence by tongues, healings, etc.) to God's glory in Christ, Who has defeated Satan before the universe. It is Christ in His love to His own, sending down from His heavenly seat the gifts of His grace to His body and to every several member. Thus here only we have the assurance that, while His members are on earth, His supplies of grace cannot fail. The foundation has been laid so well that it were folly to expect it relaid; but all that perpetuates and edifies, it were unbelief to doubt till He come. With this goes the promise of the other Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, to abide for ever in and with us (John xiv.), Who guides into all the truth. Hence the very babes in Christ are said (1 John ii. 20) to have unction from the Holy One. No Christian need distrust.

Thereon the general exhortations proceed. They are warned against any allowance of their

former walk as Gentiles, alienated from God's life in every way, inward and outward. Not so did they learn the Christ, if albeit they heard Him and were taught in Him according as truth is in Jesus. What is this? Their having put away as to their former behaviour the old man corrupt as to its lusts of deceit, and their being renewed in the spirit of their mind, and their having put on the new man which according to God was created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. Therefore putting away falsehood (this goes beyond lying) they were to speak truth, as being members one of another. They were not to allow continued anger. Instead of stealing they were to give, and to speak what was good for edifying, and not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God by Whom they were sealed for redemption's day. So all bitterness and heat, wrath, clamour, and abusive language, with all malice, must be put away from them; and they were to be kind one to another, compassionate, forgiving each other, even as God also showed them grace (vers. 17-32).

Grace toward faultiness, however, is not all. Chapter v. opens with the more positive call to be imitators of God as children beloved, and walk in love; as Christ also loved us and gave Himself up for us, an offering and sacrifice to God for an odour of sweet smell. It was perfection in Him—for us, but to God; and it is our express pattern of love. But the danger of uncleanness is as carefully urged as of violence just before; and this in the levity of speech as in lust. Thanksgiving is a great

antidote ; as is our sense that those who so indulge are incompatible with the kingdom of the Christ and God. Grace to believers in no way precludes God's wrath on the sons of disobedience. We, who were once darkness but now light in the Lord, should be far from such partnership, and walk as children of light, the fruit of which is in all goodness and righteousness and truth. The Spirit comes in, not in verse 9 but later in verse 18 as power, after love and light have been fully treated as the source, principle, and character of the walk for the new creation, proving what is agreeable to the Lord. Are any disposed to sleep? The Christian is therefore to awake and rise up from among the dead, and Christ shall shine upon him : an evident allusion to Israel's portion by-and-by. Hence the need of walking carefully as wise, buying up the fit time, intelligent in the Lord's will, and filled with the Spirit in songs of praise of a Christian sort, certainly not with the world's dissolute excitement. Entitled as we are always and in all things to give thanks to Him Who is God and Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, let us not fail in doing thus, submitting ourselves to one another in Christ's fear (v. 1-21).

This leads to the application of the same principle in our relationships ; where the subject one is regularly first exhorted in each pair, wives to husbands, children to parents, and slaves to masters (verses 22—vi. 9). The wife and husband give occasion to a grand unfolding of Christ's love for the church or assembly as the model. He "loved

the church and gave himself up for it, that he might sanctify it, purifying it by the washing of the water in virtue of the word, that he himself might present to himself the church glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any of such things; but that it might be holy and blameless." Christ thus loved the church before He gave Himself up for it; and not content with this infinite self-surrender to sanctify it, He purifies after a divine fashion, as He will consummate His love in the glorious issue. His love sees to it all, and He uses the word now, as He will personally at length present it to Himself according to His own perfectness. So is the husband to love his own wife, and the wife to fear the husband.

Children are not only to submit but to "obey" their parents in the Lord. If the law bade them pay honour, how much more the gospel? But fathers are not to irritate their children, but bring them up in the Lord's discipline and admonition. So were slaves to obey their masters according to flesh, but "as to Christ." What a privilege, and beyond all other emancipation! Masters were to do the same things, in the equity they expected, forbearing threat, and knowing they had a common Master in the heavens.

Then follows (vers. 10-20), after the call to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, the whole armour of God we are to put on. It is not the righteousness we become in Christ, but practical as against the enemy. The sword of the Spirit, being God's word, is our one offensive weapon. That panoply we need that we may be able to

stand against the schemes of the devil. "For our wrestling is not against blood and flesh, but against principalities, against authorities, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual [hosts] of wickedness in the heavenlies." We are contrasted with Israel arrayed against the Canaanites. Wherefore he bids us to take up the whole armour of God that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, as it is now till the Lord take His great power and reign. First, we are to be girt about our loins with truth, the inward movements thus braced before God; then, to put on the breast-plate of righteousness, the confidence of an irreproachably right course; next, the walk animated by the gospel's peaceful spirit; besides (or, in) all, we must take the unwavering faith in God, which is the shield to quench all the inflamed darts of the wicked one; and receive the helmet of salvation in the assurance of what God wrought for us.

But even God's word will not avail against the foe unless the Spirit guide us in wielding it. Thus all demands simple and constant dependence on God. Hence "praying at all seasons with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints, and for me," added the blessed apostle, "that utterance may be given me in the opening of my mouth with boldness to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am ambassador in a chain, that I may be bold in it as I ought to speak." In what a place of nearness to God stand the faithful—in common interest with Him, and hence with the

greatest of apostles as with the weakest of saints, for Christ's glory! Hence as the apostle shared Christ's love to them all, so he was assured they in their love would delight to hear all particulars of him; he sent Tychicus therefore to comfort their hearts, as a joint and band in the body.

The salutation is in keeping: "Peace to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace with all that love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruptness." Without the Father and the Lord, what is anything else? Without incorruptness, even the love, or rather what is called love, were vain.

## THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS.

No where is special aim more evident than in this Epistle. In saluting the Philippian saints the apostle associates Timothy with himself as "bondmen of Christ Jesus," and them "all," with overseers and deacons (i. 1, 2). For the assembly there was not immature like that in Corinth; it possessed those local charges, for which experience was due, such as apostolic authority set over the saints in due time. But the absence of the apostle, a prisoner in Rome and object of their loving remembrance, gave occasion to much that is characteristic in it for the Christians, soon to lack that care altogether. No epistle breathes so distinctively of confidence in God and joy in all his remembrance of them; and this, not founded on the enriching powers of the Spirit as to the Corinthians, nor on the heavenly counsels of God as to the Ephesians, nor on the fulness of the Head as to the Colossians, nor yet on the broad and deep foundations of the gospel as to the Romans. This letter surveys and reciprocates what Christ is for every day's communion, conduct, worship, and service. It is therefore in reality, and in all forms, and in the highest sense, Christian experience from first to last. Their state

warranted, as it called forth, the full opening of his heart to them.

In verses 3-11 he thanks his God because of their uninterrupted fellowship with the gospel, that He Who began a good work in them will complete it till Jesus Christ's day. It was right for him to think thus as to them all because they had him in their hearts. Both in his bonds and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, were they not all partakers in his grace? For God was his witness how he longed after them all in the bowels of Christ Jesus. And he prayed that their love might abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment, unto their proving the things that are excellent, that they might be pure and without a stumble for Christ's day, being filled with fruit of righteousness that is through Jesus Christ unto God's glory and praise. He looked for the due result of Christ and His work in them, not merely that they should be kept from inconsistency and failure.

Then from verse 12 to the end of the chapter he speaks of his bonds and how God had thereon wrought in His good way, as man in his evil. He would have them know that his matters, sad as they looked, had come rather for furtherance of the gospel; so that his bonds became manifest in Christ in the whole prætorium and to all the rest. Nor was this all. For the most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord by his bonds, dared more abundantly to speak the word without fear. It was not without alloy. Some indeed also preached

Christ for envy and strife, and some too for goodwill: these of love, knowing that he was set for the defence of the gospel; but those out of faction announced the Christ, not purely, thinking to arouse affliction for his bonds. But grace prevailed, and his heart had joy in Christ.

“What then? Notwithstanding [or, Only that], in every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is announced, and in this I rejoice, yea and will rejoice. For I know that this will turn to me for salvation through your supplication and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but in all boldness, as always, now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live [is] Christ, and to die gain; but if to live in flesh [is mine], this [is] to me worth while. And what I shall choose I know not. But I am pressed by the two, having a desire for departure and being with Christ, for [it is] very much better; but to remain in the flesh [is] more necessary for your sake. And having this confidence I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for furtherance and joy of faith, that your boasting may abound in Christ Jesus in me through my presence again with you” (vers. 18–26).

How clearly faith by grace made him, bondman though he was, master of the situation! His desire drew him away to Christ: the need of the saints detained him. God gave him, as it were, the decision for their sake. “Only behave worthily of

the gospel of Christ, that, whether coming and seeing you or absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand in one spirit, with one soul striving together with the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by the adversaries; which is to them evidence of destruction but to you of salvation, and this from God; because to you was granted on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him but also to suffer for him, having the same conflict as ye saw in me and now hear of in me." Living the gospel, living worthily of it, was his earnest desire for them, yea, suffering for Christ.

Chapter ii. Zeal was not wanting in Philippi, yet does it not endanger unity, lowliness, and love? Where is the corrective but in Christ? "If then any comfort [be] in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye have the same mind, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking one thing, nothing in faction or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind esteeming one another better than themselves, regarding not each his own things, but each those of others" (vers. 1-4). This brings in the image of Christ. "For let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who subsisting in God's form did not count it an object for seizing to be on equality with God, but emptied himself, taking a bondman's form, having come in likeness of men; and, when found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him and granted him the name

which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus should bow every knee of [beings] heavenly and earthly and infernal, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ [is] Lord to God the Father's glory" (vers. 5-11).

For the Philippians were in contrast with the Galatians (Gal. iv. 18), and obeyed not as in his presence only, but now much more in his absence. They are exhorted accordingly to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, now that they had not the apostle's care; for it is God that was working in them both the willing and the working for His good pleasure. What source of confidence so great, along with distrust of self! Murmurs and disputes were to be far from them, that they might be blameless and simple, God's children irreproachable in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom they appeared as lights in the world, holding forth life's word for a boast to the apostle against Christ's day that he ran not nor laboured in vain. Again he refers to death before him, but here as a libation poured on the sacrifice and ministration of their faith to his joy, and theirs also. Yet he hoped in the Lord to send Timothy to them, as he graciously felt for his refreshment by knowing how they got on; for only he shared Paul's care genuinely. Alas! even then all were seeking their own things, not those of Jesus Christ. They knew Timothy's service with Paul in the gospel work. Whatever the cost to himself, he would send one so dear to him and them, when he could report matters. Meanwhile

he sent Epaphroditus, his tried fellow-worker and fellow-soldier (what links of honour!), but their messenger and minister to his need (what communion!), not only as longing after them all, but distressed at their hearing of his sickness, So he was, adds the apostle, nigh to death; but God had mercy not on him only but on Paul also, that he might not have sorrow on sorrow. Yet him he had sent, that they seeing him might rejoice, and he himself be the less sorrowful. What unselfish love all round, the mind that was in Christ Jesus! Him therefore they were to receive in the Lord with all joy, and to hold such in honour; because for the work's sake (whether Christ the Lord, or God, were in question) he came nigh to death, risking his life to supply what lacked in their service toward Paul (vers. 12-30). Truly this is Christian experience.

Chapter iii. presents our Lord in a way quite different from that of chapter ii. It is not the uttermost humiliation in obedience of the Son's Person become man, emptying Himself and humbling Himself to the death of the cross: that service of love beyond compare, which creates, fashions, and maintains Christian devotedness in the saints. Here the central truth is Christ glorified, as the object set before the believer to detach him from every idol, to shine on the path with sure and heavenly light, to fill the heart with His own excellency, and to keep the glorious goal before him, whatever the trials of the way.

The apostle exhorts his brethren for the rest to

rejoice in the Lord. *He* deserves and desires it ; and well may we. Did any complain of sameness ? To write so was not irksome to this wondrously endowed soul ; for them it was safe. Yet he finds room with energetic contempt to denounce the Judaisers, as the dogs, the evil workers, and the concision, of whom they had to beware. He declares that the circumcision are we who worship by the Spirit of God, and who boast in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, though if any had such ground of confidence, the apostle had more. It is of fleshly religion he speaks here and throughout, not of fleshly licence (vers. 1-5).

Next, he states his own case. Was he not circumcised the eighth day, of Israel's race, of Benjamin's tribe, a Hebrew of Hebrews ? as to law, a Pharisee ; as to zeal, persecuting the church ; as to righteousness that is in or of law, found irreproachable ? But the Christ he had seen in glory made him regard this gain as a loss. Nor was it a hasty estimate, but so he counted all things because of the excellence of the knowledge of Him, his Lord, for Whom he suffered the loss of all things. He was still counting them dung, that he might win Christ and be found in Him, not having his own righteousness which is of law, but that which is by faith in Christ, the righteousness of God on condition of faith. The same Paul in Romans ix. would have the Jews know that, far from disparaging, he exalted the privileges of Israel beyond their estimate ; here he shows that the Christian has in Christ far better things than Israel's hopes (vers.

5-9). And so he continues, "that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformed to His death, if by any means I might attain to the resurrection from out of the dead" (vers. 10, 11).

Nothing then satisfied him short of that portion. Flesh and earth are quite left behind. Therefore he adds, "Not that I already attained, or have been already perfected, but I pursue, if I may apprehend (or, get possession of) that for which also I was apprehended by Christ." We shall then be like Him and in the same glory. Yet he carefully tells his brethren that, as this was not true of him yet, "one thing" (he does); "forgetting the things behind [not past evils, but present progress], and stretching forth toward those before, I press unto the mark for the prize of the calling upward of God in Christ Jesus" (12-14). All the fullgrown should have this mind; and, if in any thing they were otherwise minded, God would reveal this also to them; but whereto they were arrived, let them walk alike. How wholesome even for saints in good estate! Nor does the apostle hesitate to bid them imitate him and mark those that followed his example. Others, alas! did very differently, enemies of Christ's cross, and earthly-minded, whose god is the belly, whose glory is in their shame. For our citizenship subsists in the heavens, whence also we await the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, Who shall change the body of our humiliation and conform it to the body of His glory, according to the working of the power He

has to subject even all things to Himself (vers. 15-21). Salvation here looks on to that final change.

Chapter iv. opens with strongly expressed affection, and the call to stand fast in the Lord. Two sisters he exhorts severally by name to the same mind in Him; and he beseeches his true yoke-fellow, Epaphroditus probably, to help those women in that they shared his own conflicts in the gospel, with Clement too and the rest of his fellow-workers whose names are in the book of life. How sad their lot whose names were not there! They did not love the Lord, whatever their labours (vers. 1-3).

The saints in general here again he calls on to rejoice in the Lord "always," and again would say, "Rejoice." How blessed from Paul the prisoner in Rome under Nero to saints at Philippi suffering in Christ's behalf! Yet he would have their gentleness known to all (in view of the Lord at hand), their anxiety in nothing, their requests to God in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving; and he assures them that the peace of God (and it is constant), which surpasses all understanding, should guard their hearts and their thoughts in Christ Jesus (vers. 4-7). For the rest, he urges brethren to think, not on the dark side but on whatsoever things are true, honourable, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, if any virtue or any praise: what they both learned and received and heard and saw in him, let them do; and the God of peace, which is yet more than the peace of God, blessed though it be, should be with them.

This indeed would be Christian experience—to live Christ (8, 9).

Then, as we easily see from verses 10 to 20, he speaks of his joy in the Lord at their renewed thought for him, though he spoke not of want, having learnt to be content in whatsoever state he was. For he knew both to abound and to be in want, and declares he can do all things through Him that empowers him. But he appreciated their fellowship with his affliction, which they only had shewn him thus in the early days of the gospel: not that he sought the gift, but the fruit that increased to their account. He could say that he had all things, and abounded, that he was filled, having received from Epaphroditus their things, which he does not hesitate to call “an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.” On their part or on his, it was to live Christ. “And my God,” he adds, “shall fill up your every need according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Now to our God and Father [be] the glory unto the ages of the ages, Amen.” Then he salutes “every saint” in Christ Jesus, as he unites withal that of the brethren who were with him, and indeed of all the saints there, specially those of Cæsar’s household; for so did Christ work in His own. “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit” is the suited close.

## THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS.

THE distinctive aim is as legible here as elsewhere. It is not Christian experience as in the Epistle to the Philippian saints, nor the blessedness of the saints in the heavenlies in Christ as to those in Ephesus, but the glories of Christ in respect of both earth and heaven, as man and as God. Nor is any notion more contrary to truth than to conceive that to the Ephesians an amplification of this to the Colossians, even if both were admitted to be genuine. That they are in the closest mutual relation is apparent; for the body of Christ is as prominent in the Ephesian letter as is the Head in the Colossian. But for this very reason each has its own special object; and both are of the highest interest and importance, as giving the truth in question fully and without confusion. Why they were severed by the Epistle to the Philippians it is hard to say; for internal considerations point to the writing of the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians about the same time; whereas that to Philippians has no such link, and while it may have preceded them as Dr. Lightfoot contends, it rather seems from its tone to have been the later of the three.

However this be, which is comparatively immaterial, here we have the complement of the letter to the Ephesians, as it appears evidently written at nearly the same time. Here we learn the fulness of Christ for the saints, Christ in them; as there were revealed the privileges in Christ for the saints and the church. They thus lend one another the most necessary and remarkable help. But they also differ quite as strikingly; for to the Colossians the apostle dwells on Christ our life, even where the word may not be used, and only once (i. 8) speaks of the Spirit; whereas to the Ephesians he unfolds the Holy Spirit's functions as he does nowhere else.

The apostle did not write alone as to the Ephesians, but joins with himself "Timothy the brother to the holy and faithful brethren in Christ that are in Colosse." After the usual wish but curtailed, thanks are here given at once to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, continually praying for them, having heard of their faith and love on account of the hope that is laid up for them in the heavens (1-5), "of which ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel which came to you as in all the world, bearing fruit and growing, even as also among you since the day ye heard and rightly knew the grace of God in truth; even as ye learnt from Epaphras our beloved fellow-bondman, who is a faithful servant of Christ for you, that also declared to us your love in [the] Spirit."

The rich unfolding of God's call and inheritance found in Eph. i. 3-14 has no counterpart here,

because of the dangers which menaced those addressed. Nor here is it only "for the hope." "For this reason we also, since the day we heard, do not cease praying and begging that ye may be filled with the right knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, to walk worthily of the Lord unto all well-pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work and growing by the right knowledge of God; strengthened with all strength unto the might of his glory unto all endurance and long-suffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father that made us meet for sharing the portion of the saints in light; who rescued us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption the forgiveness of sins" (9-14).

Before proceeding into the setting forth of the glories of Christ's person that follow, remark that the walk, power, and thankfulness are directly, not of Paul and Timothy that prayed for them, but of the Colossian brethren. Thus then, while present fruit and growth are sought, thanks were to be that the Father qualified "us," not the writer nor those written to only but all Christians, for sharing His presence in the light. The Vulgate, followed by Roman Catholic theologians, &c., is utterly wrong in the perversion "made worthy"; as are most Protestants too in blotting out to faith this blessed standing to make it a gradual process.

"Who [Christ] is image of the invisible God, firstborn of all creation, because by [or, in virtue of] him were all things [or, the universe] created that

are in the heavens and that are on the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or lordships or principalities or powers; they all have been created through him and for him; and he is before all and by [or, in virtue of] him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, who is [the] beginning, firstborn out of the dead, that he in all things might be pre-eminent" (15-18).

"Image" observe, not likeness. The Word *was* God. Like would be only resembling; "image" represents, as Christ perfectly represented here below the invisible God. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," as He said to Philip. So, when born of woman, He was firstborn of all creation. Even Solomon, His type, was by sovereign grace made firstborn, though younger than many of David's sons. The glorious reason follows for Christ—because He created all. How conclusive! No matter when born, He was chief of creation. The A. V. is right: the R. V. dangerously wrong in giving "*in* him were all things created." It expresses not the instrumental means as near the end of the verse, but the intrinsic power by which the work was done, here of universal creation. The mystical idea of the Revisers, for which there is no ground, seems refuted also by the tense which points to historical fact, as distinguished from the abiding continuance of the past act in the latter clause. Besides it opens the door of universalism in opposition to all truth. Nothing can be clearer than the universality of creation here attributed to our Lord, heavenly

and earthly, visible and invisible: they, the whole of them, have been created "through" Him, and not only so but "for" Him as the end in view. And as He existed before all, so does the universe hold together by, or in virtue of, His power.

But a wholly new glory succeeds, on which the church specially depends, and from which she derives her being and character. "And he is the head of the body, the church; who is [the] beginning [which is distinctive here, and not said of Him either when a divine person only, or when the Word became flesh, but only as risen], firstborn out of the dead." He rose the conqueror over sin and death to be the Beginning, and the suited Head of the body, that in all things He might become first in rank. Anything short would have dishonoured both Him and the Father.

Next comes His work of reconciliation in its future scope for the universe, and in its actual and complete application to the saints, due to the glory of His person. "Because all the fulness was pleased in him to dwell, and through him to reconcile all things to him- [or it-] self, having made peace through the blood of his cross—through him, whether those on the earth or those in the heavens. And you, once alienated as ye were and enemies in the mind by wicked works, yet now he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death to present you holy and unblemished and unimpeachable before him, if at least ye abide in the faith grounded and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel which ye heard, that

was preached in all the creation under heaven, of which I Paul became servant. Now I rejoice in the sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the tribulations of Christ in my flesh for his body, which is the church, of which I became servant according to the dispensation [or, stewardship] of God that was given me unto you to complete the word of God: the mystery that had been hidden from the ages and the generations, but now was manifested to his saints, to whom God would make known what [are] the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you the hope of glory, whom we announce, admonishing every man and teaching every man, that we may present every man perfect in Christ; whereunto also I labour in conflict, according to his working which worketh in me mightily" (19-29).

Here we have a twofold reconciliation (answering to His twofold personal supremacy over creation as a whole, and of the church), of which last not even His incarnation, however blessed and essential, but His death was the basis; for not till His cross was sin for ever judged before God. Again, the apostle mentions his twofold service, corresponding to Christ's person and reconciling ministry of the gospel in its unrestricted extent, ministry of the church in filling up the blank (left in the word of God) by the revelation of the hidden mystery, or secret unknown in Old Testament times. It here emphasises the Gentiles having part in it, not you in Christ, but "Christ in you, the hope of glory" on

high, instead of Christ reigning over the earth, with Israel His centre and all the nations blessed according to the promises and the prophecies. For that the apostle toiled mightily, as he also endured afflictions for the sake of Christ's body, the church (atonement His only, but those afflictions of holy love left for His own to share), that he might present every man full-grown in Christ, of which toil He was not only the object but the power, being Head.

So above man, so opposed to fallen nature, is the truth of Christ, as to involve conflict as well as toil, in such as serve Him. What can one do better than transcribe the apostle's burning words? "For I would have you know what conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea and as many as have not seen my face in flesh; that their hearts may be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding unto right knowledge of the mystery of God, in which are the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge hidden. And this I say that no one may delude you by persuasive speech. For though in the flesh I am absent, yet in the spirit I am with you, rejoicing and seeing your order and the firmness of your faith in Christ. As therefore ye received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in him, rooted and being builded up in him, and confirmed in the faith, even as ye were taught, abounding in [it] with thanksgiving. See lest there shall be one that leadeth you astray through philosophy and vain deceit according to the tradi-

tion of men, according to the elements of the world and not according to Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and ye are filled full [or, complete] in Him, who is the head of all principality and power, in whom also ye were circumcised with circumcision not done by hand, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ; buried together with him in baptism, in which ye were also raised together, through faith in the working of God that raised him out of the dead. And you being dead in the offences and the uncircumcision of your flesh, he quickened you together with him, having forgiven us all the offences, having blotted out the handwriting in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and hath taken it out of the way by nailing it to the cross; having stripped he made show of the principalities and powers, openly triumphing over them by it. Let none therefore judge you in eating or in drinking, or in respect of feasts, or new-moon, or sabbaths, which are a shadow of the things to come; but the body [is] of Christ. Let no one cheat you, in a voluntary humility and worship of the angels, treading on things which he had not seen, vainly puffed by the mind of his flesh, and not holding fast the head, from whom all the body, being supplied and knit together by the joints and bands, increaseth with the increase of God" (chap. ii. 1-19).

None on earth knew as the apostle how all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in the mystery, or secret, God now reveals in Christ.

Philosophy which flatters men's minds was as vain to penetrate and unfold it as the law which condemned his unrighteousness and left God in the dark. Man was thus exposed to worship of the angels, not those who beheld by faith all the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in Christ bodily, and themselves made full in Him Who is the head of all principality and power ; and this in virtue of a redemption which gives in Christ the fullest force to the old rite of circumcision and the actual sign of baptism. For the truth goes farther than His death and resurrection, and declares that God quickened ourselves together with Him, having forgiven us all our offences. Hence the reflected light of ancient ordinances, as but shadow, passes away for such as hold fast the Head, unfailing in His gracious supply.

And he thus applies it :—“ If ye died with Christ from the elements of the world, why as alive in the world do ye subject yourselves to ordinances (Handle not, nor taste, nor touch, which things are all for corruption with the using), according to the injunctions and teachings of men : things such as have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship and humility and unsparingness of the body, not in a certain honour, unto satisfaction of the flesh ” (vers. 20-23). But more, “ If ye then were raised together with Christ, seek the things above where Christ is sitting at God's right hand : mind the things above, not those on the earth. For ye died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye

also be manifested with him in glory" (iii. 1-4). The Christian is not only quickened, but quickened and raised together with Christ, and thus he has new life in its highest character. It is hidden because Christ is hidden, hidden with Christ in God. When Christ our life shall be manifested, then shall we too be manifested with Him in glory. How close and blessed is the association!

Practical consistency is next pressed. "Put to death then your members that [are] upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil lust, and covetousness, which is idolatry, on account of which things cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience; among whom ye also walked once when ye lived in these things. But now ye put off also all the things, wrath, anger, malice, blasphemy, shameful speech out of your mouth. Lie not to one another, having put off the old man with his deeds, and having put on the new that is being renewed into knowledge, according to his image that created him; where there can be no Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman, but Christ is the all, and in all (5-11)." Thus Christ and His work, and our association with Him dead and risen, become the standard of every-day walk for the Christian. Higher there cannot be, if our union with Him on high be added; lower is not acceptable to God Who thus blessed us in Him, but a slight to His grace.

Nor is it only deliverance from the corruption and the violence of the flesh, as we already ha

from its philosophy and its religion ; the positive is not omitted. "Put on then, as elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another and forgiving each other, if any should have a complaint against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also [do] ye. And over all these [put] love, which is the bond of perfectness; and let the peace of Christ rule [or, arbitrate] in your hearts, to which also ye were called in one body, and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing each other, with psalms and hymns, spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God. And every [thing] whatever ye do in word or in deed, do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus giving thanks to God and [the] Father through him" (12-17). It will be noticed that the peace and the word are Christ's; all here is to exalt Him, and detach from every rival.

Then from ver. 18 follow special relationships on earth, but in the Lord: wives and husbands, children and fathers; bondmen and masters; (the first verse of chapter iv. being strangely dislocated from the close of chapter iii.). The Lord, the Lord Christ, is the key-note. He is the masters' Master in heaven.

From ver. 2 is the call to perseverance in prayer and watching with thanksgiving, and prayers for him that he might speak the mystery of Christ, to which he attributes his bonds, that he might manifest it as he ought to speak. He

exhorts that we walk in wisdom toward those without, redeeming the fit time; and that their speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt. Tychicus and Onesimus would make known to them all about Paul and things at Rome; and the former would report their matters to him. Then follow from ver. 10 the salutations of many fellow-labourers by name, with instructive comments, greeting to the brethren in Laodicea and the assembly in the house of Nymphas, direction as to the Epistle and a companion one, and a charge to Archippus not to be slighted. And as in his early letters, so in this late one, Paul's salutation is with his own hand. He reminds them of his bonds, and prays that grace be with them. It is altogether a needed and noble Epistle.

## THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS.

THIS Epistle has an interest peculiar to itself, as being the first inspired writing of the apostle. It is addressed to an assembly gathered a short time before by his (with others') labours, fresh in zeal and all due spiritual affections, but necessarily immature in knowledge. This led, it would seem, to the remarkable character of the inscription, "Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, to the assembly of Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." There they are viewed in the closest and highest association, babes in the Father and the Son (1 John ii. 24). The workmen used toward them were giving thanks always for them, with mention in their prayers.

Could it be otherwise with those who remembered unceasingly, not their "work" only but its "faith," their "labour of love," their "endurance of hope of our Lord Jesus Christ, before our God and Father"? All the great springs of power wrought in their souls and ways, and this in God's sight: what a testimony, as brethren beloved by God, to their election (vers. 1-4), and to the power of the gospel, truly in the Holy Spirit and much assurance, according to the life of those who

preached it (ver. 5) ! Hence they became imitators of them and of the Lord, having accepted the word in much tribulation with joy of the Holy Spirit, so as to become a model to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia (ver. 7). Nay, more : the word of the Lord had sounded out from them, not only in these two Roman provinces, but in every place their faith God-ward had gone forth ; “ so that we have no need to say anything, for they themselves report concerning us what manner of entering in we had unto you.” What a wonder then, or at any time ! “ And how ye turned unto God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to await his Son from the heavens, whom he raised out from the dead, Jesus the deliverer from the wrath to come ” (8-10). Yes, it is the faith, the walk of love and truth, and the hope.

In chap. ii. the apostle depicts the true workman in guileless suffering and unselfish love, as pleasing God, seeking no glory from men, but gentle as a nurse and faithful as a father, that they should walk worthily of God, “ who calleth you unto his own kingdom and glory ” (vers. 1-12). “ And for this cause also we give thanks to God unceasingly that, having received God’s word reported from us, ye accepted, not men’s word but even as it is truly, God’s word, which also worketh in you that believe.” This only brings into living relationship with Him, and keeps there ; proved by endurance of suffering for it, as the assemblies in Judea, and the apostles, yea, in the highest degree the Lord Himself, from the envious hatred of the un-

believing Jews on whom is come wrath to the uttermost (13-16). It is true that Satan may hinder, and grace may call us elsewhere; but he presents the Lord's coming as the unfailing joy when all the fruits of love shall, without fail, bloom in His presence Who produced them. "For ye are our glory and joy" (17-20). We all then should look thus to His coming, which more than makes up for every drawback.

From chap. iii. we learn that as persecution followed the apostle, so it pressed on the young saints in Thessalonica; and Timotheus was sent by him to them, that none might be moved by these afflictions, though he had forewarned of all, and that the tempter might be foiled (vers. 1-5). But Timotheus on his return filled the apostle with good tidings of their faith and love (6-8), as the apostle attests his joy before God, and prays "our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus to direct our way unto you; and the Lord make you to increase and abound in love toward one another, and toward all, even as we also toward you, unto the establishment of your hearts unblameable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints" (9-13). When He comes *with* His saints, not before, will be manifested in perfection that holiness which flows from and is maintained by love.

In chap. iv. the apostle presses purity and love, proper to the disciples of the Lord Jesus, and called for by habits which ignored both. Not only is He the avenger of unclean wrongs, but God gave us

His Holy Spirit as power in sanctification (vers. 1-8). So the saints are themselves God-taught to love one another, ambitious of being quiet and doing their own affairs, and working with their own hands in order to a reputable walk and need of nobody. Not till here does the apostle correct the fancy that the dead saints would lose much at the Lord's coming (13-18). The Thessalonians were so absorbed by that hope as to conceive that only those who survived till then would be in its full blessing. Had they overlooked His own death and resurrection? Did they leave out of His triumph Stephen, James (John's brother), and many another fallen asleep, to say nothing of the Old Testament saints? The apostle assures that God will bring with Jesus those put to sleep through Jesus: so mistaken was it that we, the living that remain to His coming, shall anticipate those put to sleep. Then he explains as a new revelation how this is to be effected. "For the Lord himself with a shout, with archangel's voice, and with trump of God, will descend from heaven; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we, the living that remain, shall be caught up together with them in clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." What cheer so great, and all together too?

Chapter v. takes up the manifestation of the Lord with His own when He judges the world; that is, His day, which was no new truth but familiar in all prophecy. His day so comes as a thief in the night, and with sudden destruction. It does not so overtake Christians who are sons of

light and of day. Such then should watch and be sober, putting on suited armour; because God set us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, that, whether we wake or sleep, we may live together with Him. "Wherefore encourage one another," etc. (vers. 1-10). Then follow short but precious exhortations: to recognise those labouring and taking the lead; to be in peace among themselves; to admonish, encourage, sustain, and be long-suffering; none to render evil for evil, but always to pursue the good mutually and toward all. "Always rejoice; unceasingly pray; in everything give thanks, for this is God's will in Christ Jesus concerning you. The Spirit quench not; prophesyings despise not; but prove all things; the good hold fast; from every form of wickedness hold aloof. Now the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly, and your spirit and soul and body be preserved as a whole blamelessly at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who will also perform" (11-25).

Then the brethren are asked to pray for the apostle and those with him; as all the brethren were to be greeted with holy kiss. With remarkable solemnity he adjures them by the Lord that the Epistle be read to all the [holy] brethren, and wishes the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to be with them. None thought less of himself than the apostle; yet none had so deep a sense of the all-importance to the saints, everyone, of these special communications from the Lord as the Epistles;

and the first from Paul implies this in the highest degree. Compare also 2 Thessalonians iii. 17.

## THE SECOND

### EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS.

HERE the address is in substance as in the First Epistle, but a little modified to meet the need. Hope was enfeebled by a Judaizing error intended to alarm (ii. 2). Hence after the salutation the apostle with his two fellow-labourers says, "We ought to thank God always for you, even as it is meet, because your faith groweth exceedingly, and the love of each one of you all toward one another aboundeth." But there is nothing now to mark in their endurance of hope as before, though it is added that "we ourselves boast in you in the churches of God for your endurance and faith in all your persecution and the tribulation which ye sustain." They were still faithful, though their hope was darkened. Apprehension of the day of the Lord had displaced their longing joy in His anticipated coming.

Hence he thus early in this letter points out that those afflictions they were enduring had nothing to do with that day, but were an evident token of the righteous judgment of God, to the end of their being counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which they were suffering. That day is, on the contrary, to destroy the wicked and

usher in the kingdom of God, when those that suffer now shall reign with Christ. So he appeals to its indisputable principle: "If at least it is righteous with God to requite tribulation to those that trouble you, and to you that are troubled repose with us at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with angels of his power, in flaming fire rendering vengeance to those that know not God, and to those that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus [Christ]." For that day is directed against not one class but two, not only the nations ignorant of God, but the Jews who rejected the glad tidings of our Lord Jesus.

Why then fear? It was for both so described, who were such as should pay penalty in "everlasting destruction from the Lord's presence, and from the glory of his might, when he shall have come to be glorified in his saints, and to be wondered at in all that believed . . . in that day." Can anything be plainer than that here we have the retributive character of that day in correction of unfounded alarm? "To which end we also pray always for you that our God may count you worthy of the calling, and fulfil every good pleasure of goodness and work of faith in power; so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and [the] Lord Jesus Christ" (vers. 1-12). It will be apparent, the more the words are examined, that he does not speak thus far of our Lord's coming to meet the saints caught up, but of His judicial revelation (or, His day), when He and they shall

be seen together in glory, as to which they had been misled.

In chap. ii. the apostle directly refutes the false teaching; for this it was: not ignorant and mistaken inference about the Lord's coming or its issues, as in 1 Thessalonians iv. 13-15. Here it is a spurious notion for which the highest claim was made, bringing terror on the living saints; there it was a hasty deduction of their own as to the dead saints. "Now we entreat you, brethren, by [or, for the sake of] the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him, to the end that ye be not quickly shaken in [or, from your] mind, nor yet be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of the Lord is present" (vers. 1, 2). Thus the blessed hope of His coming to gather them to Himself is the motive for asking them not to be disquieted by the groundless notion, not without fraud, that His day had arrived with its terrors. How could it be? The saints were still here, not gathered up to Him; and the frightful evils which His day is to avenge were not yet manifested. "Let not any one deceive you in any manner; because [it will not be] unless there have come the apostasy first, and there have been revealed the man of sin, the son of perdition, he that opposeth and exalteth himself above every one called God, or object of veneration, so that he sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Remember ye not that while yet with you I told you these things" (vers. 3-5)?

Before that day there must be, first the falling away, or the abandonment of the truth, next the revelation of the lawless one, in contrast with the mystery or secret of lawlessness at work in the church even when the apostle wrote. These three must not be confounded. The man of sin is the future adversary of the Lord, the Man of righteousness, the Antichrist of the First and Second Epistles of John, the wilful king of Daniel xi. 36-39, and the second Beast of Revelation xiii., identical with the False Prophet of chap. xix., as he is the antithesis of the true Prophet of Deuteronomy xviii., if we heed the apostle Peter (Acts iii.). The restraining power and person (for both are true) is the Holy Spirit in His governing action providentially, not limited to the Roman empire (for He still restrains, though the empire exist not); and when it reappears under the dragon's influence, it is exactly when the Spirit ceases to restrain. Till then the powers are ordained of God; after it, Satan will be allowed to set up the lawless man as God even in His temple, whom the Lord Jesus will slay (or, consume) with the breath of His mouth and annul by the manifestation of His coming, having already gathered His saints to Himself on high.

No solid ground appears for regarding either the apostasy or the man of sin as successional, like the mystery of lawlessness. They are both future at the consummation of the age, the former preparing the way for the latter. Nor is it well founded to view the "consuming," if that word

were read, as gradual through the word : compare Isa. xi. 4, xxx. 33. The Lord's antagonist is unique and arrayed with portentous power and signs and wonders of falsehood, according to Satan's working retributively to deceive and destroy those who refused the love of the truth and had pleasure in unrighteousness (vers. 6-12).

In contrast with such, it drew out thanksgiving always that God chose the brethren from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and faith of the truth. This was shewn when He called them "through our gospel" to obtaining our Lord Jesus Christ's glory. So they are exhorted to hold fast what they were taught, whether by word or by "our epistle;" and as in closing chap. i., so here in chap. ii. he prays that our Lord, and our God and Father Who had so loved and blessed, might encourage their hearts and stablish them in every good work and word.

Chapter iii. opens with asking their prayers that the word of the Lord might run and be glorified, even as also with them, and for deliverance from unreasonable and evil men, for faith is not of all. But the Lord is faithful; what a strength to stablish the saints and keep from evil! And hence it was that the apostle trusted that what he enjoined they both were doing and would do, and prays that the Lord would direct their hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ. He was waiting above; let them wait here below. But the act of withdrawing from disorderly idlers, serious as it is, should not be confounded with

purging out the wicked person in 1 Corinthians v., which last only is excommunication. They were therefore not to esteem one that shirked work as an enemy, but rather to admonish as a brother. Leaven, on the contrary, has to be peremptorily purged out as unclean. Again, he prays the Lord of peace Himself to give them peace through everything in every manner, and Himself be with them; for such things are apt to disquiet and lead to errors if not judged. As he adjured them by the Lord to read the First Epistle to all the holy brethren, so here he salutes by his hand as the mark in every epistle, and wishes the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to be with them all.

## THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY.

THAT the Pastoral Epistles should have a common character distinct from those to the saints is easily understood; and that each has its own peculiarity is a plain matter of evidence to the attentive reader. The difference is conspicuous in the two letters to Timothy; for the first is as careful to insist on order as the second is to provide for a state of disorder, that the godly might even then have divine directions for their walk, bound as they were, and we are, to take account of so sad a change. That to Titus comes in character between the two extremes.

I. "Paul, apostle of Christ Jesus according to command of God our Saviour and of Christ Jesus our hope, to Timotheus, genuine child in faith; grace, mercy, peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord." The prefatory words, as usual, give a clear insight into the scope of what follows. The apostolic title is as important for authority here as for the truths of the gospel and of the church to the Roman and to the Corinthian saints, to the Galatians, Ephesians, and Colossians. "According to command" assimilates this letter and that to Titus, while it differentiates both from

the second Epistle to Timothy. "God our Saviour" is also very notable here and to Titus, bespeaking the universal testimony of God's grace in the gospel, and strongly contrasted with Judaism. God in love goes out actively to man in the death of the Mediator. Christ is the hope, and unfailing if cherished. The exhortatory injunction to Timothy was first and foremost to guard the truth from all alien teaching, and specially fables and interminable genealogies which are such as yield questionings rather than God's dispensation that is in faith (3-7), the end of it being love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and unfeigned faith. It is inseparable from Christ.

These then are the substantial blessings of the gospel, and missed by such as turned aside to vain discourse, wishing to be law-teachers. Therein was the early plague of imagination, and of legalism which assails grace as antinomian while itself tending to that evil, whatever its own contrary claim. It is not that the lawful use of the law is denied, which is to convict lawless and insubordinate persons (8-11). The gospel alone witnesses of Christ to save sinners, of whom the apostle specifies himself as first, to whom, in his ignorant unbelief, mercy was shewn—Christ's whole long-suffering (12-16). This draws out his praise, after which he repeats the injunction laid on Timothy, that he might war the good warfare, maintaining faith and a good conscience. For such as put away the latter make shipwreck of the former; of whom he holds up Hymenæus and Alexander, whom he had delivered

to Satan for their dishonour to God (18-20). How practical and personal it all is! And what is truth but a sham and a shame if it be not so?

II. Here we find the public attitude of Christianity. All should breathe of loving goodwill toward man and the chiefs of the world, even if heathen and persecuting. "I exhort therefore first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings be made for all men; for kings and all that are in authority, . . . for this is good and acceptable before God our Saviour, who wisheth that all men be saved and come unto full knowledge of truth. For there is one God, one mediator also of God and men, a man Christ Jesus who gave himself a ransom for all, the testimony in its own times; to which I was set preacher and apostle (I speak truth, I lie not), teacher of nations in truth and love" (1-7). Grace rises above all natural thoughts, feelings, and ways, and calls on those who believe to bear a living witness of "God our Saviour," Who is willing to save all that bow to Jesus, the ransom for all. Such is the testimony; and now that the cross on man's side proves the guilt of all (Jews and Gentiles), the same cross on God's side proclaims salvation to all that believe.

Paul was herald of this grace, but moreover apostle in full authority, and teacher in patient wisdom, that even besotted Gentiles might believe and know the truth. Yet reverence and divine order become those who profess the truth. "I will therefore that the men pray in every place, lifting

up pious [or, holy] hands, without wrath and disputation." All the faithful were holy brethren; and it was no longer the question of a Jewish sanctuary any more than of a Gentile high place. They were free and invited to pray elsewhere. The women were to cultivate modesty and discretion, instead of fashion and finery, with good works their true ornament. To learn is their place, not teaching nor authority, but quiet subjection; for which he cites the case of Eve, who, deceived, brought in transgression, whatever mercy may do even in her chief natural sorrow.

III. Then Timothy has directions for the local charges of bishops (or, overseers) and deacons. "Faithful is the saying: if one is eager for oversight, he desireth a good [or, comely] work." The requisite qualities (2-7) are moral or spiritual, rather than the possession of an express gift. Free from reproach, husband of one wife, sober, discreet, orderly, hospitable, apt to teach; not quarrelsome over wine, not a striker, but gentle; not fond of money; ruling his own house well, having children in subjection with all gravity (for how could one command respect in God's house who had it not in his own?). And again, not a novice, nor one destitute of a good report without. All this is of so much the more moment as it has been slighted habitually by the greatest systems down to the least. But we cannot wonder where the office itself is turned to ecclesiastical and even worldly show. Those to be entrusted with the diaconate are briefly described in 8-13, and in this case the women or wives, who might be useful or a hindrance.

Occasion is given, not here to a doxology, but to a solemn presentation to that church in which the apostle, Timothy, elders, and deacons, and indeed all saints, each called in his special place, have to walk. "These things I write to thee, hoping to come to thee rather soon; but if I delay that thou mayest know how one ought to behave in God's house, which is a living God's assembly, pillar and support of the truth. And confessedly great is the mystery of godliness: He who was manifested in flesh, was justified in Spirit, was seen of angels, was preached among nations, was believed on in [the] world, was received up in glory." Godliness depends on and is the fruit of the truth in Christ, the secret no longer hidden but revealed; which as a whole, therefore, is in ways wholly distinct from and above a Jewish Messiah reigning in visible power, but known as we Christians know Him. Compare 2 Cor. v. 16-18.

IV. With this the apostle draws a dark contrast. "But the Spirit speaketh expressly that in latter times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons by hypocrisy of legend-mongers branded as to their own conscience, forbidding to marry, [bidding] to abstain from meats which God created for reception with thanksgiving by those faithful and well acquainted with the truth; because every creature of God [is] good, and nothing to be rejected if received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified through God's word and prayer" (1-5). Asceticism is no more Christian than moral laxity, though it assumes a fairer form. It is a pretentious assault on the

Creator and Preserver of man by setting up a superior sanctity, which ends in turpitude against nature. Monachism is unconscious war against God. Timothy was called to be a good servant of Christ Jesus by laying the contrary good teaching of benign and faithful providence before the brethren, and avoiding what he calls profane and old wives' fables. For piety or godliness is profitable for everything, having promise of the present life as well as that which is to come: our God is Preserver of all men, especially of the faithful. He must not be deterred by such as objected to his youth, but meet the reproach by an example in word, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Reading, exhortation, and instruction are enjoined till Paul came. The gift that was conferred on him he was not to neglect, but to be diligent in these things, and wholly in them, that his progress might be manifest to all. A divided heart ruins the service of Christ. Self-vigilance, too, is imperative, to save both himself and others.

V. Here we have the proprieties of that work, which cannot be slighted without danger and harm. An elder he was not to rebuke but exhort as a father, younger ones as brethren, elder women as mothers, and younger ones as sisters, with all purity (1, 2). Widows were to have special and careful consideration (3-10), and younger ones to be shunned, in which case suited directions are laid down (11-16). Elders or bishops were to rule, and those who ruled well to be counted worthy of double honour, especially those labouring in word and teaching: a scripture important to bear in mind; as it is also

to receive no accusation against one, save with two or three witnesses. Those that sin should be convicted before all, that all the rest too should fear. He adjures Timothy solemnly to observe these duties without prejudice and without favour, cautious against haste in sanctioning others, lest it might compromise him. He even deigns to counsel liberty where his scruples might injure health, before he closes the warning he had begun, lest he should unwarily be a partaker of other men's sins.

VI. Christian slaves are not forgotten, as to whom grave and gracious counsels are given, in the face of different teaching, which is exposed sternly, though the last clause of verse 5 is a spurious accretion. Godliness or piety with contentment, the reverse of making it a means of gain, is great gain. For as we brought nothing into the world, neither can we carry anything out. Having food and covering, we will be, or let us be, content therewith. How true that those who will be rich fall into temptation, and a snare, and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition! For the love of money is a (not exactly "the") root of every evil, after which some, too eager, wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows. Timothy is then urged, as God's man, to flee these things and to pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, meekness, to combat the good combat of faith, to lay hold on eternal life, according to the good confession he confessed. Then follows a deep and lofty injunction which crowns this Epistle, and urges his keeping it spotless and

irreproachable till the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which in its own seasons the blessed and only Potentate shall show, the King of those that reign and the Lord of those that rule, Who only hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable ; Whom none of men hath seen or can see, to Whom be honour and might everlasting. Amen.

Thereon Timothy is told to charge the rich to rest, not in uncertain wealth, but on the living God ; to be rich in good works, laying up for themselves a good foundation for the future, that they may lay hold of what is really life. Timothy, in fine, is to keep the entrusted deposit, avoiding profane vain babblings and oppositions of falsely named knowledge. How trenchantly the apostle speaks before he wishes him grace !

## THE SECOND EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

THE second Epistle to Timothy assumes a deeper character because of the grave disorder of a general kind which was before the eyes of the Holy Spirit. The regular means would not meet that which already and most seriously disclosed departure from God. Hence in the address it is no longer "according to command," &c., but "by God's will according to promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus," anticipating in measure that on which the apostle John falls back for the last time. Individual fidelity is the more required, yet in no way giving up but maintaining the divine association of saints.

I. The value of unfeigned faith rises before the apostle's heart in this last word of his to his beloved child, to whom he again wishes grace, mercy, peace. He thanks God whom he serves from his forefathers in a pure conscience, with increasing remembrance of Timothy and his tears, and longing to see him that he might be filled with joy. He speaks even more decidedly of the faith which dwelt first in Timothy's grandmother and in his mother, as in his child also. He puts him in mind to stir up the gift of God in him through the imposition of the

apostle's hands, and bids him not be ashamed of the Lord's testimony, nor of Paul His prisoner, but suffer evil with the gospel according to God's power. He it was who saved us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace that was given us in Christ Jesus before everlasting ages, but now manifested through the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, annulling death as He did and bringing to light life and incorruption through the gospel, unto which Paul was appointed herald and apostle and teacher of Gentiles. For this cause he was suffering thus, but not ashamed; "for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to guard for that day my deposit." Hence he says, "Have an outline of healthful words which thou heardest from me in faith and love that is in Christ Jesus; the good deposit guard through the Holy Spirit that indwelleth in us." Scripture alone is reliable, as afterwards expressly said; not human tradition, of all things the most uncertain. Timothy knew the cowardice of many—that all those in Asia, specifying two, had deserted Paul. How different Onesiphorus, for whom and whose house he asks mercy, because he often refreshed him, and when in Rome the more diligently sought him out when a prisoner, besides his loving service in Ephesus!

II. Faithful as Timothy had been, the apostle is most earnest. "Thou therefore, my child, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things thou heardest from me among many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, such as

shall be able to teach others also. Thou therefore take thy share of suffering evil as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one on service entangleth himself with the businesses of life, that he may please him that enlisted [him]. But if one also contend [in the games], he is not crowned unless he have contended lawfully. The labouring husbandman must first partake of the fruits." These maxims need only to be correctly represented to carry their weighty sense. It was no rite, but truth which had to be communicated, yet suitably an earnest devotedness is pressed, and subjection to the Lord's will and, as the labourer, first to share the fruits. "Remember," says he, "Jesus Christ risen from the dead, of David's seed, according to my gospel, wherein I suffer evil unto bonds as a malefactor; but the word of God is not bound." Royal rights gave Him no exemption. On the contrary, death was His portion, and what a death! Him Paul followed and imitated as far as this could be, as he urges on all in verses 11-13, and on Timothy to put them in remembrance of these things, instead of wordy fights worse than profitless. His earnest zeal cut straightly the word of truth, warned by two others whom he names as samples who had strayed in asserting the resurrection as past, overthrowing faith under so spurious an exaggeration.

This gives occasion to an instruction of great and general value. "Nevertheless the firm foundation of God standeth, having this seal, The Lord knoweth those that are His; and, Let everyone that nameth the Lord's name depart from unrighteous-

ness." From individual comfort and responsibility he goes on to corporate condition and duty. "Now in a great house are vessels, not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earthenware, and some to honour and some to dishonour. If one therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel to honour, sanctified, serviceable for the Master, prepared unto every good work. But flee youthful lusts, and follow after righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." If the Lord's secret is with Himself, responsibility is mine as calling on His name: I am bound to have done with iniquity. No presumed usefulness can justify my persevering in wrong. But does not God's house abound in anomalies? Am I to leave it? No, I dare not cease from the public profession of the Lord's name with all the baptised; but I am here to purge myself from the vessels to dishonour in that house, and, instead of isolation, to follow every Christian duty with those that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. It may cost much, but it is plain and obligatory in all times and places. And while moral care is ever incumbent, He claims my soul also, with a peaceful and gentle bearing, "in meekness instructing those that oppose, if haply God may give them repentance unto acknowledgment of truth, and that they may wake up out of the snare of the devil, taken as they are by him, for His will."

III. Next comes a solemn warning of the outlook in Christendom, for many would expect progressive good on earth. "But this know that in

the last days difficult (or, grievous) times shall be there. For men shall be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, blasphemous, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, implacable, uncontrolled, fierce, haters of good, traitors, headstrong, puffed up, pleasure-lovers rather than God-lovers, having a form of piety (or, godliness) but deniers of its power; and these turn away from." One might have shrunk from a course so peremptory, had the apostolic charge been less plain. It was direct to Timothy, but for every Christian also. The evil was at work even then, and the apostle severely characterises not only the corrupt misleaders, like Jannes and Jambres, but the misled as silly women laden with sins, led by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to right knowledge of truth.

As the false or senseless teachers have their limit set, Timothy is told how he had closely followed Paul's teaching, course, purpose, faith, long-suffering, love, patience, persecution, sufferings. Such is the ministry of Christ the Lord, with persecution endured, and the Lord delivering out of all! What is more, the apostle assures that all who desire to live piously in Christ Jesus shall be persecuted, but wicked men and impostors shall advance for the worse, deceiving and being deceived. How sad, yet how true! What is the resource or safeguard for Timothy and for all saints? "Abide thou in those things which thou didst learn and wast persuaded of, knowing of whom thou didst learn them [they were no mere traditions of unknown source];

and that from a babe thou knowest the sacred letters [those of the Old Testament] that are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus. Every scripture [of New Testament or of Old] is God-inspired, and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction that is in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, furnished thoroughly unto every good work."

IV. Not less solemn is the apostle's direct charge. "I testify earnestly before God and Christ Jesus that is about to judge living and dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; convict, rebuke, encourage with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will be when they will not endure sound teaching, but according to their own lusts they will heap up to themselves teachers, having an itching ear, and will be turned aside unto fables. But be thou sober in all things, suffer evil, do evangelist's work, fully perform thy ministry." Be it observed that Christ's appearing, not His coming as such, is immediately connected with His Kingdom. He comes to receive His own to Himself and for the Father's house; He appears to establish His kingdom, and all shall see Him, and then in the same heavenly glory. "For I am already being poured out, and the time of my departure is all but come. The good combat I have combated, the course I have finished, the faith I have kept: henceforth is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the right-

eous judge, will award to me in that day; and not to me only, but also to all that love [have loved and do] His appearing." Here again, as His coming is the expression of sovereign grace, His appearing is the display of His righteous remembrance of faithfulness, and, of course, of the want of it.

Then the apostle bids Timothy be diligent to come unto him quickly; he valued his loving presence, and knew that Timothy reciprocated it. He speaks of Demas with grief. Whatever he might be as known to God, he deserted the apostle through love of the present age. Crescens and Titus had their work, and only Luke was with the apostle. He wished Timothy to take up on his way and bring Mark with him. There indeed he had joy, if sorrow over Demas. For Mark, says he, is useful to me for ministry. He had no longer Tychicus whom he sent to Ephesus. How interesting in these ministerial matters, to have the apostle—while writing an inspired pastoral epistle—telling Timothy to bring the cloak which he left behind in the Troad with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments! Hence we learn of the Christian liberty the apostle exercised as to these outward things of body and mind. He preferred to have the cloak brought than to buy another, and he asked for his books there, which had their interest or use for him, though looking for death he knew not how soon. He would not so speak of the scriptures. If he put special stress on "the parchments," or unwritten material of a costly and

durable nature, was it to have his Epistles correctly copied and multiplied ?

Next, he alludes to the hostility of Alexander the coppersmith, not in a prayer, but in the grave conviction that the Lord would render to him according to his works ; for he showed much evil against the apostle, who warns Timothy also to beware of him. He pathetically names how all deserted him on this repeated imprisonment when his first defence came on ; but the Lord stood by him, turned it for all the Gentiles to hear, and delivered him from most imminent danger, as He surely would from every evil work, and preserve him for His heavenly kingdom. He wishes salutations to his old friends Prisca and Aquila, and to Onesiphorus' house. He tells of Erastus at Corinth, and Trophimus left sick at Miletum ; for a sign of healing (as the rule) did not apply to a Christian, who came under the Lord's government. He gives the greeting of Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brethren ; he prays that the Lord should be with the spirit of Timothy, and grace be with him and others there.

## THE EPISTLE TO TITUS

**THERE** does not appear to be enough of external marks to decide when the apostle wrote this Epistle to his genuine child and fellow-labourer. But internally we may gather that it was after the First Epistle and before the Second to Timothy, with which letters it has closer links of connection than with any others. For on the one hand it treats like 1 Timothy of official government; on the other it speaks like 2 Timothy of the hope of life eternal which the God that cannot lie promised before times everlasting. As in the former, it is our Saviour God who commands; it is not the law, but faith of His elect, a common faith.

I. "Paul, bondman of God, and apostle of Christ Jesus according to faith of God's elect and acknowledgment of truth that (is) according to godliness in hope of life eternal, which the God that cannot lie promised before times everlasting, but manifested in its own seasons his word in a preaching wherewith I was entrusted according to our Saviour God's commandment, to Titus genuine child according to a common faith: grace and peace from God (the) Father and Christ Jesus our Saviour" (vers. 1-4). Truth according to godliness is to be acknowledged.

National or birth privileges, so prized in Israel as in the world, vanish before a revealed and believed Christ, in whom was life eternal before all ages, but now in virtue of His word preached in its own due time, as authoritatively entrusted by a God of saving love to the apostle, who writes to Titus with his usual Christian salutation. "For this cause I left thee behind in Crete that thou mightest thoroughly set right things remaining, and appoint city by city elders, as I directed thee: if one is unimpeachable, husband of one wife, having children faithful, not accused of excess or unruly. For the overseer must be unimpeachable as God's steward, not self-willed, not passionate, not a wine-sitter, not a striker, not a base-gainer: but hospitable, loving good, discreet, just, pious, temperate, holding to the faithful word according to the doctrine, that he may be able both to encourage with the healthful teaching and to rebuke the gainsayers. For there are many unruly vain-speakers and beguilers, chiefly those of circumcision, who must have the mouth stopped, who upset whole houses, teaching what they ought not for the sake of base gain. Said one of themselves, a prophet of their own, Cretans, always liars, evil wild beasts, lazy gluttons (or, bellies). This witness is true; for which reason rebuke them severely, that they may be healthful in the faith, not heeding Jewish fables and commandments of men turning from the truth. All things (are) pure to the pure; but to those that are defiled and faithless nothing (is) pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled. God they profess to know, but in works

deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and for every good work worthless " (vers. 5-16).

Thus we see that elders (not gifts) required apostolic establishment, direct or indirect; and that moral weight was sought, and a good report in themselves and their households, to cheer those who valued healthful teaching and to rebuke adversaries. For already disorder was at work largely, and evils had entered within like the world's without. Epimenides is cited as a prophet, not of God but of their own, frankly and unsparingly denouncing what Titus was to rebuke severely, helped on as it was by Jewish professors who set Jewish fables and human ordinances before them, not the truth. Thus man and his deceits cover impurity, while our souls are purified by obeying the truth unto unfeigned brotherly love. To the pure all things are pure; to the defiled and faithless is nothing pure, yea, both their mind and their conscience are defiled. Professing to know God only aggravates the case of those who deny him in their works, being loathsome in themselves, disobedient to God, and for every good work reprobate. What a picture of the Christian confession before the first generation passed away! How like that which we have to face to-day! There is yet more now and worse.

II. Titus, however, was not only to appoint elders, such as the apostle describes, and so to carry out the moral government which the Lord enjoins suitably to the need of souls; he is instructed also in his own charge to the same end. Hence his duties are laid down toward elder men and elder

women, young women and young men. Bondmen have a large place : and it is after dealing with them that the apostle speaks so grandly of the saving grace of God that appeared for all men, and its all-important teaching for such as received it meanwhile and await the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. Separateness and zeal for good works become those redeemed to Himself, a people purified. He was to deal out exhortation and rebuke with all authority. "But speak thou the things that beseem the healthful teaching, that elder men may be sober, grave, discreet, healthful in faith, in love, in patience; that elder women in like manner [be] in mien beseeming sacred things, not slanderers, not enslaved to much wine, teachers of comeliness, that they may train the young women to love husband, to love children, discreet, chaste, home-workers, good, subject to their own husbands, that the word of God be not reviled. The younger men in like manner exhort to be discreet, as to all things affording thyself a pattern of comely works; in the teaching incorruption, gravity, sound word not to be condemned, that he who is opposed may be abashed, having no evil to say about us; bondmen to be subject to their own masters, to be well-pleasing in all things, not gain-saying, not purloining, but showing all good faithfulness, that they may adorn the teaching of God our Saviour in all things. For the saving grace of God hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, having denied ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live discreetly, and righteously, and godlily

in the present age, awaiting the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all lawlessness, and purify for himself a people for his possession zealous for comely works. These things speak and exhort, and rebuke with all command: let no one despise thee" (vers. 1-15).

Here we learn how momentous it is, that those who are the objects of God's grace in the gospel should be to its praise by a walk in every relation of this life formed, strengthened, and guided according to Christ; and how inconsistency or disorder in these respects gives occasion for the enemy to blaspheme. How touching is that grace which is developed in its rich and direct bearing immediately after the exhortation as to slaves! Beyond doubt it was for all the faithful, and for every relation among them; but how considerate our Saviour God's care to tell it out at that point in the chapter! The law of God was imposed on one people; *the grace of God appeared* with its saving character to all men, as it teaches "us" who believe that, having denied ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live discreetly as to ourselves, righteously toward others, and godlily in the highest respect. Nor is this all; but awaiting the blessed hope and *appearing of the glory* of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. And how assuring for the heart to remind us here, that He gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all lawlessness and purify for Himself a people for His own portion, zealous for works good and comely!

III. But there are other relations more external which are not overlooked. The self-will, which breeds emulation and strife in the homes and in the assembly, is not less disorderly, evil and destructive in the world. "Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to revile no one, to be uncontentious, gentle, showing all meekness toward all men." It was not so always in our case. Grace it is that made the difference in us that believe. "For ourselves too were once senseless, disobedient, going astray, slaves to various lusts and pleasures, spending our time in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness and the philanthropy (or, love to man) of our Saviour God appeared, not from works in righteousness which ourselves did, but according to his mercy he saved us through washing of regeneration and renewing of Holy Spirit, which he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that, justified as we were by his grace, we should become heirs according to hope of life eternal. Faithful [is] the saying; and as to these things I would have thee insist that those that have believed God be mindful to maintain comely works. These things are comely and profitable to men; but foolish questions and genealogies and strifes and legal contentions shun, for they are unprofitable and vain. An heretical man after a first and a second admonition avoid, knowing that such a one is perverted and sinneth, being self-condemned" (vers. 1-11). It is sect-making, heterodox or not.

How mighty and worthy of admiration is the

goodness and the special affection of our Saviour God that appeared in Christ! What a contrast with man's philanthropy, which might be in Jew, Heathen, or Islamite, of whom either gives a little out of his abundance, or compounds for sins by a superstitious and self-righteous poverty to enrich the priesthood! The Christian was proved in himself utterly evil and ruined, when God's love wrought in saving goodness according to His mere and sovereign mercy: wherein He saved us through washing of regeneration, which totally changed our state from that of fallen Adam to the risen Christ, and renewal of Holy Spirit, not only in a sinless life given which loves holiness, but in the Spirit's power which He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour. But thus it could not be till He wrought redemption and was glorified; and thus it was that, being justified by His grace as well as purified, we should be heirs according to hope of life eternal. "Hope" it is, for that life has not its full consummation till the body is as instinct with it at Christ's coming as the inner man is already by faith; for only thus has hope its glorious fruition. The apostle would have Titus occupied with these things, which deliver from evil and give us communion, not only in the good and comely ways of divine mercy, but with God Himself. The conscience too is exercised that there might be moral conformity in good or comely works, the fruit of love, shunning the idle and barren speculations of gnostic philosophy and legalist battles, where peace with God is unknown.

But there is another evil to be avoided, not only

“heresy,” as a split from the unity of the Spirit is called (see also 1 Cor. xi. 19, Gal. v. 20), but any sanction of him who is self-condemned in leaving the church of God.

The close follows. “When I shall send Artemas or Tychicus unto thee, be diligent to come unto me at Nicopolis, for there I have decided to winter. Zenas the lawyer and Apollos zealously forward, that nothing be lacking to them; and let ours also learn to maintain comely works for necessary wants, that they be not unfruitful. All that are with me salute thee. Salute those that love us in faith. Grace [be] with you all” (verses 12–15). Paul desired the presence of Titus, but not at the expense of the saints and the work in Crete whither he was sending his fellow-labourers, Artemas or Tychicus. But jealousy of other workmen not so connected was alien to his heart; nay, he would have all learn to maintain comely works to help on this and other fruitful ways for the necessary wants. He gives the salutation of all, and wishes it to those who dearly loved them if in faith, and that grace should be with all, which all needed.

## THE EPISTLE TO PHILEMON.

HERE we have a letter of marked distinctiveness, placed after the pastoral Epistles though clearly written about the time when the great communications were made to the saints in Philippi, Ephesus, and Colosse. Its occasion was the return of Onesimus, a runaway slave, now a Christian brother, to his master Philemon ; which calls out by the Spirit the most admirable application of grace and truth in Christ. It stands in full contrast with law, and exemplifies the gospel in its practical power and effect, turning a once worthless man's wrong into the exercise of divine affections in consonance with redemption, the holy fellowship of the faithful, and the deep and delicate proprieties withal of their social relations.

“ Paul, prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timotheus the brother, to Philemon the beloved and our fellow-workman, and to the sister Apphia and to Archippus our fellow-soldier, and to the assembly at thy house. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and [the] Lord Jesus Christ ” (verses 1-3). Each word and the entire scope alike express grace, not official authority. It is as Christ's prisoner Paul introduces himself, as farther on he appeals.

Timothy figures simply as "the brother." Philemon is addressed as "the beloved" according to his known character (ver. 1), and honoured as a fellow-labourer in the Lord's work. And what is most unusual, his wife is associated in the address, not "the beloved" as in the A.V. and the later copies, but "the sister" as in the ancient and best MSS. That she should be addressed was most fitting in the circumstances, and the mode is no less becoming. Next is Archippus, designated as "fellow-soldier" in sharing the conflicts of the truth, and lastly the church at Philemon's, which the apostle includes in the address to fill up the communion his heart desired with the usual benediction.

From verse 4 he lays the ground for his appeal with thanksgiving. "I thank my God, always making mention of thee at my prayers, hearing of thy love and the faith which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus and unto all the saints, so that thy fellowship in the faith may become effective in acknowledgment of every good work that is in us Christward. For I had [the true reading] much joy and encouragement over thy love, because the bowels of the saints have been refreshed through thee, brother." He puts forward Philemon's love, but in no way omits to add his faith, so that his sharing in the faith might work every good, "not in you," which though true is commonplace and feeble, but "in us" according to the best authorities, that is, in other Christians from Paul to Onesimus as regards Christ, owning his joy and cheer in what Philemon had been shewn to be in refreshing the affections of the saints.

Then in the body of his letter (8—20) he tenderly presses his suit. "Wherefore, having much boldness in Christ to enjoin on thee what is fitting, for love's sake I rather exhort, being such a one as Paul, aged and now too prisoner of Jesus Christ, I exhort thee for my child whom I begot in my bonds, Onesimus, that was once of no use to thee, but now of use to thee and to me, whom I send back to thee\* in person, that is, mine own bowels; whom I would have kept with me, that for thee he might minister to me in the bonds of the gospel. But apart from thy mind I wished to do nothing, that thy good might not be as of necessity but of willingness. For perhaps for this reason he parted for a time, that thou mightest have him back for ever, no longer as a bondman, but above a bondman, a brother beloved, specially by me, but how much more by thee, both in flesh and in the Lord. If then thou holdest me as partner, receive him as me; but if aught he wronged thee or oweth, put this to mine account. I Paul write with mine own hand, I will repay: that I say not that thou owest me besides even thyself. Yea, brother, I would have profit of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in Christ. Being confident of thine obedience I write to thee, knowing that thou wilt do even more than I say."

"But withal prepare me also a lodging, for I hope that through your prayers I shall be granted to you. Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus, saluteth thee; Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow-workmen. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ [be] with your spirit."

The common text here reads, "Thou therefore [receive] him," &c.

The apostle in no way denies or forgets his position, but he prefers to exhort for love's sake, on one side as Paul the aged and now also prisoner of Christ, on the other for his child begotten in his bonds, Onesimus. Grant that he was once a useless slave to Philemon, was he not now of good use to both Philemon and Paul, and sent back to his master himself, as it were Paul's very heart, though he would have kept him with himself to do him service on Philemon's behalf in the bonds of the gospel? Only apart from Philemon's mind he would do nothing, that his good might be of free will, not of constraint. And how beautiful the turn that grace gives! "Perhaps for this reason he was parted for a time, that thou mightest have him back for ever, no longer as a bondman, but above a bondman, a brother beloved, specially by me, but how much more by thee, both in flesh and in the Lord." So simply is it urged in all its power that one can but repeat rather than explain. Then follows the point of fellowship. "If then thou holdest me a partner, receive him as me; but if aught he wronged thee or oweth, put this to mine account. *I* Paul write with mine own hand, I will repay: that I say not to thee, that thou owest me besides even thyself." For it would seem that Philemon too was indebted to the apostle for receiving the truth.

"Yea, brother, I would have profit of thee in the Lord," he says, referring to the name of Onesimus, "refresh my bowels in Christ." Would he refuse to Paul what he had done hitherto to the saints in general, as in verse 7, "Being confident of thine

obedience I write to thee, knowing that thou wilt do even more than I say"? Who can doubt that Philemon would receive Onesimus lovingly and set him free to the joy of all? But it is on no ground of human rights, or natural benevolence, but shewing him "the kindness of God," the grace of Christ, the fellowship of the faith. It is the counterpart of the riband of blue on the fringe of the garment, the heavenly ornament in our character on earth, grace governing in our relationships here below, as it reigns in God's dealings with us for eternity.



# THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

THE distinctive character of this Epistle is at least as plain and as important as that of any other. It is expressly anonymous; for he who wrote it, though himself an apostle, did so as a teacher, resting its authority on the Old Testament, supplemented by the Son of God come and deigning to be Apostle in the highest sense and rank. This gives a divine and heavenly character to the communications, which were to Israel, represented now by a believing remnant, and sanctified for glory with Him on high, till the new age arrive, when the then remnant shall become a strong nation, and the new covenant formally and fully comes into force with the two houses of Israel as such. Then the Lord Jesus, Who was Apostle and Prophet on earth, and is the Great Priest in the heavens and above them, shall reign as King not only in Zion but over all the habitable earth. It may be observed that even this Epistle, like the rest, says nothing of that royal position so amply revealed by the Old Testament Prophets. It dwells on the present and intermediate place of Christ above, and thence passes to the heavenly calling of the saints.

Chapter i. opens with His personal glory as Son of God, abundantly attested by the Psalms

and the Prophets; as chapter ii. 5 and onward follows with His glory as Son of Man, according to Psalm viii., in answer to His work of redemption, qualifying Him to be a merciful and faithful High-Priest as none else could be. Hence in chapter iii. the believers, addressed as holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling out of the chosen nation, are exhorted to consider Jesus the Apostle and High-Priest of our confession, before Whose worth, dignity, and power, Moses and Aaron were but shadows. The saints, like Israel, are passing through a wilderness of temptation and danger. Profession may be only profession, and thus many not only slip but fall and perish. Living dependence on God is essential; and the beginning of confidence to be held fast firmly unto the end. Unbelief is the great snare. Chapter iv. pursues this: we, who have believed are not in God's rest of glory but going on to it. Adam did not enter, though God sanctified the sabbath as its sign; Joshua did not lead into it, but only into a Canaan that typified it; for long after David spoke of it as still future. Meanwhile we have to fear even seeming to come short; and we need to give diligence, for the time still calls for this. The rest remains. And God has provided two invaluable means to bring us through: His word (answering to the apostleship), and Jesus the Son of God, a great High-Priest before God as He went through the heavens. Thus we may approach the throne of grace with boldness, that we may receive mercy and find grace for seasonable help.

In chapter v. the Aaronic priesthood is compared to show the incontestable superiority of Christ's. He Who erst commanded learnt obedience, not only as man, but in suffering beyond all. Perfected through death and resurrection, He is addressed or saluted of God as High-Priest after the order of Melchizedek. The danger for the saints here is of remaining babes, instead of growing to full age (or, perfection) by receiving the solid food of Christ. Chapter vi. solemnly warns against not pressing on to this status of majority, lest, even after great privileges were known, the mere elements\* expose to falling away and irretrievable ruin. But the writer was persuaded better things of those who had shewn life in love, as he desired for them full assurance of hope, for God had laid indefectible ground for strong consolation. Then chapter vii. expounds the surpassing excellence of Christ's office as Melchizedek priest, not in exercise (*this* is set forth as Aaronic) as it will be, but in its order. For this answers fully and now to what His prototype was in figure, His being one sole intransmissible priesthood in contrast with Aaron's order.

Chapter viii. gives a summary of the aforesaid, and adds the greater excellency of Christ's ministry as Mediator of a covenant better than the Mosaic; not man's failing to obey, but God's effectual work in grace, the very title of "new" writing death on the "old." In the earlier verses of chapter ix. is shewn that under the law the way into the

\* It is an unhappy rendering to say "first principles:" for these we never "leave." It is really "the word of the beginning of Christ"—what was known before His death, resurrection, and ascension.

holies was not yet manifested: man could not go in, as God had not come out. Christ has verified both. In Him God came out, in Him man is gone in. How transcendent is the Christian's blessedness who reaps the fruit of both by His sacrifice and priesthood! In this chapter the fact of a testator and "testament" is turned to good account (vers. 16, 17); everywhere else it is "covenant," as the context proves. Christianity is not man tested, but God who has wrought for His own glory in saving grace toward man. Chapter x. applies the blessing fully to those who believe, and this on the basis of Christ's one perfecting sacrifice. Hence He sat down in perpetuity at God's right hand, as He has perfected in perpetuity the sanctified. Why wonder? It is God's will, Christ's work, and the Holy Spirit's witness. The believers, with whom the inspired writer joins himself, are exhorted to act now on these precious privileges in verses 19-25, and warned of the peril of apostasy in slighting or abusing Christ's sacrifice by sinning wilfully, as they were in chapter vi. of not going on to full growth. But they are again reminded of better things, and told not to cast away their confidence, though they had need of endurance. It is not all the truth that the once unjust are justified by faith (Rom. iv. 5); for "the just shall *live* by faith."

Hence in chapter xi. we have the roll of faith differently but invariably displayed in God's noble army of confessors long before Israel, of whom the Lord Jesus is the Leader and Completer (chapter xii. 2). As to chastening, they were neither to

despise it nor to faint under it. The danger here is failing from, or lacking, the grace of God (*i.e.*, losing confidence) through unbelief in His love; and Esau's profanity stands as a beacon. Then we have a grand contrast of what Israel came to at Sinai, with our having come by faith to the entire scene of blessing flowing out of Christ and His redemption: first Zion the highest point of royal grace on earth; then the heavenly city, not the old but new Jerusalem; next the indigenious dwellers on high, myriads of angels, all their assemblage; further the assembly of firstborns enregistered in heaven; and God Himself Judge of all; then we come down to the spirits of just men made perfect (the Old Testament saints), and to Jesus with fullest mercy and joy for the earth as Mediator of a covenant that is not only "new" but as "fresh" as ever; and lastly to the blood of sprinkling in contrast with Abel whose blood brought curse, this Christ's everlasting blessing. He changes even a warning into a promise to faith. But let us have grace by which to serve God acceptably with reverence and awe. For our God is a consuming fire. What has not *His* grace done and given!

Chapter xiii. closes the Epistle with urging that brotherly affection abide, hospitality, and kindness to sufferers; that marriage be honourable in all (or, every way), and conduct be free from love of money. Next, departed guides are to be remembered; but if they were gone, Jesus is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. Hence they were to be set against various and strange doctrines. Grace con-

firms the heart, not meats which profit not devotees even. Jesus that suffered without the gate, Whose blood avails within the holiest, is the key of the Christian position. "Therefore let us go forth to Him without the camp, bearing His reproach." The middle place, beloved of Judaisers and philosophers, is the place of apostate Jews, and now of effete Christendom. "By Him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually;" yet sacrifices in doing good have also their real place. Next, living guides are to be obeyed. This is their use, to lead others who might not readily see the path of Christ. They shall give account, not of the souls led, but of how they led them. No one valued the prayer of saints more than he who here asks it, after his first imprisonment and before the second. With Timothy set at liberty he hoped to see them again. How suited is the prayer in verses 20, 21, not only to them and the writer, but to this Epistle! It seems to be beyond just question what Peter in his second Epistle refers to (iii. 15), as written by Paul to Christian Jews, to whom Peter addressed both of his (1 Peter i. 1, and 2 Peter iii. 1).

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