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# THINKING THROUGH THE BIBLE

BY  
REV. JOHN McNICOL, D.D.

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Volume IV  
THE NEW TESTAMENT  
ROMANS TO REVELATION  
*Revised*

In this volume, which completes the series, the final purpose of the whole Biblical revelation is brought to light. In this part of the Scriptures we reach the essential reality at the heart of Christianity, and the triumphant consummation of redemption comes into view.



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# THINKING THROUGH THE BIBLE

BY

JOHN McNICOL, D.D.

*Principal Emeritus of Toronto Bible College*

VOLUME IV

THE NEW TESTAMENT  
ROMANS TO REVELATION

SECOND EDITION

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TO MY WIFE  
LOUISA BURPE MCNICOL  
"The College Mother"



## PREFACE

THIS volume, which deals with the Epistles and the Book of Revelation, completes the series on "Thinking through the Bible". In this part of the Scriptures, and especially in the Epistles of Paul, the final purpose of the whole Biblical revelation comes to light and the unity of the Bible is manifested.

It was the special mission of the great Apostle, not only to carry the Gospel out into the Gentile world, but also to explain the real nature of Christianity. The mind of the former Pharisee had been steeped in the Old Testament; and when the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ broke in upon his soul, then the inner meaning of the old dispensation dawned upon him. With this background of training and experience, he gained an understanding of the new Christian system which was beyond that possessed by any of the other Apostles. His remarkable intellectual gifts, quickened as they were by Divine inspiration, enabled him to expound it with great clearness and fulness. For this reason his Epistles occupy a place of peculiar importance in the Word of God.

What Paul had come to see was, that the Old Testament had its consummation in Jesus Christ. The Law had been given for a temporary purpose and was to have a subsequent development. The religion of the Old Testament was concerned with salvation from sin and moral guilt, and this salva-

tion had finally been achieved through the Cross of Christ. The Kingdom of God, which the prophets had foretold as the hope of Israel, belonged to the realm of moral and spiritual life. It was meant to have a supernatural character and to belong to a heavenly order. It was not to compete with human kingdoms by the use of worldly power, but was to be a source of light and blessing for all mankind. All this had now come into actual realization through Jesus Christ.

The essential reality in Christianity, as Paul saw it, is a new creation which is not of this world. The Gospel is not a code of ethics or a theory of religion. It is the way into a new life which transcends the old life and belongs to another world. This new world is not less real for being spiritual and invisible. It is not a subjective creation, due to the change that takes place in the heart and mind of the believer. It cannot be apprehended by the senses, but that does not mean that it belongs to the realm of abstract ideas. That zeal for the Gospel, that passion for Christianity, which throbs all through Paul's Epistles, was no mere enthusiasm for an abstract ethical ideal, no mere subjective conception of religious principle. It arose from an overmastering conviction of the new thing God had done when, in Christ, He reconciled the world unto Himself. Paul was possessed of a profound sense of the reality of the new creation which lies at the heart of Christianity.

This part of the Bible also reveals the essential nature of the Person of Christ. The Gospel which the Apostles preached was based on the historic facts of His life on earth; but the Saviour whom

they presented in the Gospel was the living Christ, the ascended Lord, who now occupies the most exalted place in Heaven. A manifest glow comes into their Epistles when they refer to the exalted state of their Master. Paul frequently goes off at a tangent when he mentions the name of the Lord, seeking for words with which to express his sense of the glory of Him whom he had seen in the Damascus vision. The Book of Revelation, which is also a kind of Epistle, draws aside the veil and discloses the Son of Man occupying the heavenly throne. Then it brings the whole series of Epistles, and the whole Biblical revelation itself, to a splendid close. Over against the first heaven and the first earth, into which sin entered, it sets the new heaven and the new earth, in which sin is found no more. And in the midst of this beatific vision, "the Lamb is all the glory".

He who approaches this part of the Bible across the outer court of scientific criticism must take his shoes from off his feet when he enters here. Otherwise he cannot see the wealth that lies within. A reverent heart and a spiritual mind are the primary requisites for the apprehension of the revelation it contains. The scientific method can no more discover it than the botanist can explain to us the secret of a flower.

The critical and scientific approach to the sacred Canon of the Christian faith, which has occupied so much of the scholarly thinking of the Church during the past generation, has its own value. But how little it has really contributed to the understanding of Divine truth, or to the spiritual forces of Christianity! What the Bible needs most of all,

in order to bring out its value for the cause of Christ in the world, is that devotional and exegetical approach which enters into the inner shrine of the Scripture revelation and summons all the resources of the human mind to the reverent study of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. There can be no higher science than this. It is the occupation of those angelic intellects in Heaven unto whom "the manifold wisdom of God" is being displayed through the operation of His redeeming grace on earth (Eph. 3:10). It evoked from the heart of the greatest of the Apostles in the profoundest of his Epistles his wondering and adoring praise: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out! For of him, and through him, and unto him, are all things. To him be the glory for ever. Amen" (Rom. 11:33, 36).

December, 1947.

J. McN.



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THE NEW TESTAMENT

THE EPISTLES

## INTRODUCTION TO THE EPISTLES

THE doctrinal part of the New Testament is composed of a collection of letters. In the Gospels we are given the foundation upon which Christianity rests. In the Acts we are told how it spread from Jerusalem out into the world of the nations around. In the Epistles we see how it began to express itself in a doctrinal form.

And yet this was not the primary purpose of these documents. What we find in them is not so much a system of Christian doctrine as a description of Christian experience. The new kind of life into which the Gospel of Jesus Christ had brought the men and women of the New Testament churches is explained in all its manifold relations, with great fulness and richness of language, in these apostolic letters. This kind of writing was especially fitted for the purpose. In a letter a subject is given much freer treatment than in a formal treatise. The personality of the writer finds fuller expression. More use is made of the circumstances of the readers. There is scope for vividness, warmth, and personal interest. Letters could thus deal most effectively with the varied needs of the Christian communities as these needs arose from time to time. They could best serve the purpose of the Holy Spirit in teaching and training the members of the Church of Christ as it spread throughout the world.

The Epistles were written with special reference to the conditions of the time. They were occasioned

by particular incidents and definite circumstances, and were written for various specific reasons. The purpose of the writers was to explain more fully in writing what they had already taught orally, to correct errors into which some Christians had fallen, to meet difficulties and reform abuses which had arisen in some churches, and to comfort and strengthen the believers under trial and persecution. While they were specially intended for particular churches and particular individuals in the apostolic age, they contain the principles of faith and conduct designed by the Holy Spirit for all Christians and all churches in every age.

The authorship of the Epistles is divided among five, or probably six, different writers. Thirteen of the twenty-one letters bear the name of Paul. Another (Hebrews) has been ascribed to him by tradition, but does not bear his name. It cannot be proved to have come from his hand, though it bears the stamp of his teaching and must have come from the circle to which he belonged. These fourteen are known as the Pauline Epistles. Two epistles bear the name of the Apostle Peter. Three were written by the Apostle John, but do not contain his name. One was written by James, the Lord's brother, who was the pastor of the mother-church in Jerusalem. The last epistle bears the name of Jude, the brother of James. These seven are called the General Epistles, because most of them have in view the Church in general, and not some local church.

The readers for whom the Epistles were first intended are widely representative. They include organized churches, scattered groups of Christians, and individual believers. Nine of them were adres-

sed to particular churches in specific localities, seven churches in all (Romans to Second Thessalonians). Two were written for Jewish Christians exclusively (Hebrews and James), and two others for Jewish converts chiefly (First and Second Peter). Two epistles were intended for believers in general, and not for any particular church or Christian group (First John and Jude). Three epistles were addressed to pastors in charge of churches (First and Second Timothy, and Titus), and three others to private Christians (Philemon, and Second and Third John).

The Epistles are not arranged in chronological order in the New Testament. The order in which they do occur, however, bears manifest evidence of the providential guidance of the Spirit of God in the collection and arrangement of the New Testament Canon. As they stand, there is a progressive development of Christian doctrine running throughout. This is shown in the following classification:

I. The Pauline Epistles. These contain the fundamental truths of the Christian faith.

1. The Epistles to Churches. These explain the doctrines on which the Church rests and by which it lives.

(1) The First Group:—Romans, First and Second Corinthians, and Galatians. These epistles explain the significance of the Cross, and deal mainly with the way of salvation from sin.

(2) The Second Group:—Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. These epistles explain the significance of the Resurrection and Ascension, and deal mainly with the believer's spiritual union with the Lord.

(3) The Third Group:—First and Second Thesalonians. These epistles have to do with the Second Coming of Christ, and deal with the end of the believer's life on earth and the consummation of the Christian age.

2. The Epistles to Individuals. These deal with the practical side of the Church's life and work in the world.

(1) The Pastoral Group: — First and Second Timothy, and Titus.

(2) The Private Epistle: — Philemon.

3. The Epistle to the Hebrews. This document, with its hidden authorship, explains the relation of the New Covenant to the Old, and deals with the finality of Christianity and its superiority to Judaism.

II. The General Epistles. These seven letters, written by four other apostolic authorities, confirm and supplement the teaching of the Apostle Paul. James shows that faith manifests itself in works. Peter emphasizes hope, and John emphasizes love. Jude deals with the need of maintaining the purity of the Gospel message of the grace of God.

## THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

NOTHING is known of the origin of the church in Rome. It had come into existence before Paul, or any other Apostle, visited Rome. Probably some of the "sojourners from Rome, both Jews and proselytes", who were in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost and heard Peter's sermon (Acts 2:10), carried the Gospel back with them and started a Christian fellowship. This would lay the foundation of the church. Rome was the capital of the Empire, and the roads of the world led there. Christian travellers from other parts of the Empire, visiting Rome in the interests of business and trade, would encourage the believers and help the development of the church. The story of their faith was already well-known to the other churches throughout the world (1:8).

The Christians in Rome had no central meeting-place, for it seems that groups of believers assembled in private houses in different parts of the city (16:5, 14, 15). Both Jews and Gentiles are addressed in the Epistle, but the general impression it gives is that its readers were mainly Gentiles. Probably the nucleus of the church in Rome, like the nucleus of most of the churches in the Gentile world, was composed of Jewish proselytes, or Gentiles who had been in the habit of attending the synagogue. This would account for the large use that Paul makes of the Old Testament in the course of the Epistle.



Even the Gentiles among his readers would be familiar with it.

The Epistle was written in Corinth during the winter of A.D. 56-57, at the time of the Apostle's second visit to that city. This is gathered from a comparison of Acts 20:2-3, 1 Cor. 16:5-6, and Rom. 15:23-26. What gave Paul the occasion for it was his desire to visit Rome, coupled with the intended visit of Phoebe of Cenchreæ, the port of Corinth (Acts 19:21; Rom. 1:11-13; 16:1-2). The fact that she was going to Rome and needed a letter of commendation to the Christians there, gave Paul the idea of sending with her a deliberate letter addressed to the whole church. His friends Aquila and Priscilla had already gone back to Rome (Acts 18:2; Rom. 16:3).

The Apostle's purpose in writing the letter was to set forth for the Christians in the world's capital a full statement of the Gospel of God which he was preaching among the nations. It probably represents the system of Christian instruction that he had been giving in the school of Tyrannus in Ephesus during the two preceding years (Acts 19:9-10). His general theme is the Gospel as God's way of salvation. The special aspect of the Gospel that filled his mind as he wrote is the righteousness of God which it offers to unrighteous man. This theme is unfolded throughout the Epistle in such a systematic way as to make it the most closely reasoned of all the apostolic writings. The plan of its argument may be outlined as follows:

- I. The Introduction—Ch. 1:1-17.
- II. Righteousness Needed—Chs. 1:18—3:20.
- III. Righteousness Provided—Chs. 3:21—5:21.



- IV. Righteousness Applied—Chs. 6—8.
- V. Righteousness Refused—Chs. 9—11.
- VI. Righteousness Realized—Chs. 12:1—15:13.
- VII. The Conclusion—Chs. 15:14—16:27.

## THE INTRODUCTION

(1:1-17)

Writing to a church that he had not founded and had not yet visited, Paul begins with a formal and deliberate salutation. He presents the credentials of his apostleship, and gives a brief outline of the faith which he preaches among the Gentiles. He has been set apart unto the Gospel of God, which was foretold in the Old Testament Scriptures, and concerns His Son, "Jesus Christ our Lord". Thus the full title of the Saviour is brought before the readers of the Epistle at once. He is declared to be both human and Divine. He was a descendant of David in respect of His bodily nature, and was marked out as the Son of God in respect of His spiritual nature, a nature essentially holy, by the omnipotent miracle of the Resurrection (vs. 1-4).

Then Paul goes on to say that it was from Him that he received his commission as an Apostle among all the nations, and that its sphere extends to his Roman readers. They are "beloved of God", because reconciled to Him through Christ; and they are "called to be saints", because converted by the Gospel that they might become holy. The prolonged salutation comes to a head with a benediction of "grace and peace", the characteristic words of the Apostle's salutation in all his Epistles (vs. 5-7).

Paul expresses his thanksgiving to God for what he has heard of the faith of the Roman Christians,

and assures them that he constantly mentions them in his prayers, asking that it may be God's good pleasure for him at length to visit them (vs. 8-10). He has long desired to see them that he may share with them some spiritual benefit, and that he, too, may be encouraged by their faith. He would have them know that he often planned to visit them, in the hope of having some result of his labour among them as among other Gentiles, but hitherto he has been hindered by one thing and another (vs. 11-13). He has a debt to discharge both to civilized Greeks and uncivilized Barbarians, both to the cultured and to the uncultured; and so for his part he is ready to preach the Gospel to those also who dwell in Rome (vs. 14-15).

Thus the Apostle has approached his theme, which he now defines as the righteousness of God revealed in the Gospel (vs. 16-17). God's way of saving men, Jew and Gentile alike, is by the gift of a righteousness provided by Himself and received by faith alone. The subsequent argument of the Epistle shows that what Paul means by the righteousness of God is not the holiness of His character, or His justice in punishing sin, but the perfect fulfilment of the Moral Law, wrought out first by Jesus Christ, and now offered as a free gift to unrighteous man.

#### RIGHTEOUSNESS NEEDED

(1:18—3:20)

Paul begins the exposition of his theme by showing the need of the Gospel. This is seen in the guilt and moral ruin of the whole race. The world is lost without it. The Apostle takes up the case of the

Gentiles first, before he goes on to deal with the special case of the Jew.

1. The Guilt of the Gentiles (1:18-32). In this passage three facts stand out regarding the moral responsibility of the heathen world.

(1) Natural revelation (vs. 18-20). The moral failure of man is traced to his neglect of the revelation of God as the Creator of the world. The existence of God is revealed to men through the works of nature. Although He is invisible Himself, yet the natural world bears witness to His power and benevolence. In His works of creation God has given enough knowledge of Himself for adoration and gratitude. The wickedness of men is due to ignoring God and suppressing the truth about Him. Hence "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men". By "ungodliness" Paul means absence of reverence for God. He implies that this is the root of "unrighteousness", by which he means iniquity or wicked conduct between man and man.

(2) Heathen sin (vs. 21-23). Men ignored the revelation of God that was given them in nature. They did not glorify Him by giving Him worship, nor did they give Him the thanks that are due to the Creator. They followed futile speculations, and lost the sense of the spiritual. As a result, their wisdom turned to folly. The religious history of mankind has been a downward course from a primitive knowledge of God into gross idolatry.

(3) Divine judgment (vs. 24-32). Paul now goes on to explain how "the wrath of God is revealed". The principle of Divine judgment is contained in the statement, "God gave them up", which occurs three

times in this passage (vs. 24, 26, 28). Refusing to acknowledge God or keep Him in their thoughts, He gave them over to their own thoughts. The consequence of this was the degradation of the whole man—body, mind, and spirit. One evil led to another, till men sank into utter depravity. God's wrath is manifested in giving man his own way. He punishes sin with the consequence of sin. Thus does Paul throw into striking contrast the "revelation" of the righteousness of God in the Gospel (v. 17) and the "revelation" of the wrath of God in idolatry and in the moral state of the pagan world (v. 18).

2. The Righteous Judgment of God (2:1-16). Having shown the guilt of the Gentile world, the Apostle now turns to the Jew, but does not name him at first. The argument at this point takes the form of a dialogue with an imaginary Jewish hearer who poses as a judge of the Gentiles. His judgment recoils upon himself, because he is guilty of the same practices, and the principle upon which God judges men brings him under the same condemnation (v. 1). Then Paul goes on to explain the principle of God's judgment in its various aspects.

(1) The judgment of God is "according to truth". That is, it deals with realities, not with appearances; with what a man is, not with what he professes to be (v. 2). God's goodness and forbearance form no ground of hope for escape from judgment, for His purpose is to give men time for repentance (vs. 3-4). There is a day coming when His forbearance to the impenitent will come to an end and His righteous judgment will be revealed (v. 5).

(2) In that day God will judge every man "according to his works" (v. 6). The fervour of the Apostle's spirit as he poured out his thought has involved his style in some irregularity in the phrases that follow this statement. The balance of the construction would be preserved, and the meaning of the passage clarified, if "eternal life" were taken as an explanation of the preceding words and a full stop put after "unrighteousness".

Then we should read as follows:—God "will render to every man according to his works: both to them that by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honour and incorruption, (that is,) eternal life; and also to them that are factious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness. Wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish (shall be) upon every soul of man that worketh evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory and honour and peace (shall be) to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (vs. 7-10). God shows no respect of persons in judgment, and regards no distinction of race, except in giving priority to the Jew (v. 11).

The principle of Divine judgment set forth in these verses is not inconsistent with the Gospel principle of justification by faith which Paul explains afterwards. It is true of the believer that God deals with him according to his works, for the true works of a believer are the evidence of his union with Christ and the manifestation of the righteousness of God in his life.

(3) God will judge men according to the light they have enjoyed—the Jews by the Moral Law and the heathen by the light of nature and the law of

conscience. Although the heathen have no prescribed law, yet their conscience bears witness to the Moral Law by reflecting its work in their hearts (vs. 12-15). The word "justified" occurs for the first time in the Epistle in the statement, "the doers of the law shall be justified", and its use here determines its meaning. It cannot mean "pardoned", for "the doers of the law", by which Paul means those who fulfil the law, have nothing for which to be pardoned. Nor can it mean "made just", for the doers of the law are just already by so doing. It must therefore mean, "accounted just", or "declared to be just".

(4) When the day comes for this judgment of the secret thoughts of men, God will execute it through Jesus Christ (v. 16). In adding the phrase, "according to my gospel", Paul did not mean that he had a different Gospel to preach from that of the other Apostles, but that the very Gospel itself implied a background of judgment. It is part of the Gospel message to declare that a day is coming when God shall judge the world by Him whom He has given to be the Saviour of the world (Acts 17:31; Matt. 7:22-23; 25:31-33; John 5:27-29).

3. The Failure of the Jews (2:17-29). The Apostle now takes up the special case of the Jew, and addresses him. As a Jew he may boast of the peculiar privileges that are his through the revelation of the Law, and of his superior position because of it (vs. 17-20). But his conduct shows that he is no better than the Gentile. The list of sins with which Paul goes on to charge the Jews is a revelation of the low state of Jewish moral conduct in that age. So far from fulfilling their true function



in the world, they were dishonouring God. They prided themselves on their aversion to idolatry, yet in many places they were guilty of stealing treasures from the temples of the heathen (Acts 19:37). The name of God was blasphemed among the Gentiles because of them—"even as it is written", adds Paul, referring to such passages as Isa. 52:5 and Ezek. 36:20-23 (vs. 21-24).

The circumcision of the Jew was of value only if he kept the Law. He is not a true Jew, Paul explains, who has only the outward mark. A true Jew is one who has the inward character, whose circumcision is moral and spiritual (vs. 25-29). This is only emphasizing what the Old Testament has already taught about spiritual circumcision (Deut. 10:16; Jer. 4:4; 9:26). In the closing words of the passage, "whose praise is not of men, but of God", there is an allusion to the fact that the word "Jew"—a descendant of Judah—means "praise" (Gen. 29:35; 49:8).

4. The Objections of the Jew (3:1-8). Paul has shown that the judgment of God is concerned with character, and not with the outward form of religion. This puts the Jew who breaks the Moral Law in the same class with Gentile sinners. His Judaism goes for nothing. This raises a series of objections from the Jew's point of view, and these Paul now takes up and answers.

(1) If circumcision does not save, what is the advantage of being a Jew? Much every way, replies the Apostle. The chief advantage is that the Jews have been entrusted with the sacred Scriptures, which contain the revelation of God and the promise of the Messiah (vs. 1-2).

(2) Does the fact that some Jews disbelieve cancel the promises God gave to the Jews as a whole? Does their want of faith mean that God will not keep faith? That can never happen, is the reply. God is always true to His word, but no man can be relied upon. This is what David's confession means in Psa. 51:4 (vs. 3-4).

(3) Well then, if our unrighteousness sets God's righteousness in a clearer light, is not God unjust in punishing wrong-doing? Away with the thought, exclaims Paul. It would mean that God has no right to judge the world. It would also mean that we may do evil that good may come. Some, indeed, lay the slanderous charge against us Christians that we teach this doctrine; but they will be justly condemned (vs. 5-8).

5. The Verdict of the Scriptures (3:9-20). The need of salvation is universal. This has been shown in the sin and guilt of both Gentiles and Jews. Now comes the summing up of the whole case in the light of the Old Testament. This argument from Scripture may be stated as follows: The definite charge is made that all are under sin (v. 9). Then the Scripture proof is adduced. The character of man is described generally, by quoting Psa. 14:1-3, and 53:1-3 (vs. 10-12); then more particularly, by quoting Psa. 5:9, 140:3, and 10:7 in reference to their words (vs. 13-14), and Isa. 59:7-8 in reference to their deeds (vs. 15-17).

Finally, the fundamental cause of their sin is found in Psa. 36:1: "There is no fear of God before their eyes" (v. 18). Man's moral failure is due to his neglect of God. Then comes the general conclusion of the whole argument (vs. 19-20). All the



world is under the judgment of God, and the Jew can claim no exemption. His own Law condemns him, for its only effect is to show man's inability to obey it and to prove that man is a sinner. The Law cannot save; salvation must come in some other way.

## RIGHTEOUSNESS PROVIDED

(3:21—5:21)

Having concluded the preliminary stage of his argument by showing the need of salvation in the moral ruin of the whole human race, Paul now proceeds to show that God has provided salvation Himself through Jesus Christ, in the free gift of His righteousness to all who believe.

1. God's Gift of Righteousness (3:21-31). This passage contains the germ of the rest of the Epistle. It is marked by intense concentration of inspired thought. Into it the massive mind of the great Apostle has condensed the whole truth regarding the righteousness of God as revealed in the Gospel. Its meaning may be unfolded under two main ideas, by dividing it in the middle of v. 25.

(1) The fact of the Cross (vs. 21-25). In these verses the Apostle explains the central significance of the Cross in human history. His conception is that the Cross of Christ stands, as it were, on the border of the unseen world, at the meeting-place between man and God. It has a two-fold aspect. It is related both to man on the one side and to God on the other. The passage may be paraphrased as follows:

But now, since Christ has come, a righteousness has been provided by God quite independently of the

Law. It has been manifested in the facts of the Gospel history, having been foreshadowed and foretold in the Law and the Prophets (v. 21). That is, over against the failure of all human righteousness, Jesus exhibited the righteousness of God by doing the will of God throughout His earthly life and completely fulfilling the Law. The character of Christ is the manifestation of the righteousness of God.

This righteousness which God provides is obtained by personal trust in Jesus Christ on the condition of faith alone, no distinction being made between Jews and Gentiles (v. 22). For all have sinned and have failed to attain to the Divine likeness which man was intended to bear (v. 23). All those that believe are "justified freely by his grace". That is, they are accounted righteous without any cost to themselves, all the cost being borne by God. This is made possible "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"—the transaction that He accomplished for our ransom and wrought out in His own Person (v. 24).

This now brings Paul's argument to the Cross (v. 25). In the transaction of the Cross, "God set forth" Jesus Christ on the stage of human history "to be a propitiation"—strictly a place of propitiation, a place where man can meet God and be reconciled to Him. The word contains an allusion to the mercy-seat in the Holy-of-holies where forgiveness was obtained under the Old Covenant. This reconciliation with God is obtained "through faith"—sheer trust in God alone without any human claim.

The phrase, "in his blood", should be connected with the words, "set forth to be a propitiation". It

indicates the central significance of the Cross, which consisted in Christ's voluntary offering of His own life as an atoning sacrifice. It was through the Cross that the righteousness of God manifested in the life of Jesus was made available to the faith of men. By suffering death as the voluntary end of His own righteous life, Jesus Christ accepted for Himself the inevitable end of man's moral failure. Having achieved a perfect righteousness, He accepted the wages of sin. On the Cross He was "set forth" for all men to behold as the one sacrifice for the sin of the world.

But the Cross looked out also on the Godward side. The form of the original word implies that God "set forth" Christ for Himself also. In the preceding part of the Epistle Paul has pointed out that the wrath of God is the Divine attitude toward all human sin (1:18; 2:5). On the Cross the Righteous One was set forth in the sight of God as the representative of sinful man. And there, in that supreme hour, the righteousness of God met the wrath of God and accomplished "the redemption that is in Christ Jesus". It was an objective achievement, entirely outside the sphere of subjective human experience. But now that it has been accomplished, men may share "the righteousness of God". The Gospel may now be proclaimed to the world. The sinner may be justified "freely"—by way of a gift. Righteousness has now become "the gift of God", which God gives "by his grace", and man receives "through faith in Jesus Christ".

(2) The effect of the Cross (vs. 25-31). In these verses Paul shows how the Cross manifests and vindicates the righteousness and justice of God. It

is the key to His moral government of the world. It is the central fact in human history, and casts a revealing light both backward and forward. It explains the forbearance of God in "the passing over of the sins done aforetime". This means that God passed over the sins of His people in the Old Testament dispensation without adequate punishment, because of the redemption that He was going to accomplish through the Cross. It also vindicates His justice "at this present season", that is, in the New Testament age, when He accepts the sinner as righteous who believes in Jesus (vs. 25-26).

The righteousness of God humbles the pride of man. Justification by faith without works leaves no room for human merit (vs. 27-28). It puts Jews and Gentiles on the same footing before God (vs. 29-30). It confirms and fulfils the Law (v. 31). The Law is not abrogated by this method of saving men, for its requirements are fulfilled and its majesty is honoured (Isa. 42:21). It is the moral aspect of the Law, and not its ceremonial aspect, that the Apostle has in mind in all the discussion of righteousness throughout the Epistle.

2. The Faith of Abraham (Ch. 4). Paul now takes up the case of Abraham, the founder of the chosen race, who might plead privilege and merit as the ground of his acceptance with God. He shows that Abraham was accepted because of his faith in God, and not because of any works of his.

(1) Abraham justified by faith alone (vs. 1-8). That he was not justified by works is proved by the statement of Scripture which Paul quotes (Gen. 15:6). The expression, "it was reckoned unto him for righteousness", does not mean that Abraham's

faith was accepted instead of righteousness, or as equivalent to it, but that it put him in the right relation with God, so that God could regard him as a righteous man. Compare the phrase "unto salvation" in 1:16, where the preposition in the original is the same (vs. 1-5). The same principle is found in Psa. 32:1-2, where David pronounces blessing upon those to whom God attributes righteousness without any reference to works. Righteousness, therefore, is put to our credit because of our faith; it is not achieved by us because of our works (vs. 6-8). The significant word in this statement about Abraham's faith occurs eleven times in the chapter. It is rendered "counted", "reckoned", and "imputed" in the A.V., but always "reckoned" in the R.V.

(2) Abraham justified before he was circumcised (vs. 9-12). Abraham's personal state or religious standing at the time when he was justified was in uncircumcision; he was in the same position as the heathen. The story in Genesis (ch. 17) shows that circumcision was introduced fourteen years after Abraham was accepted with God. Circumcision was only a sign or seal of the righteousness which he had already received by faith. Thus Abraham is the father of all that have faith and believe in God, whether they be circumcised Jews or uncircumcised Gentiles.

(3) The promise to Abraham based on his faith (vs. 13-16). It was not based upon the Law. Under the general phrase, "the promise that he should be heir of the world", Paul sums up the whole series of promises given to Abraham—that he should inherit the land, and that he should have

seed and through his seed blessing should come to the whole world. It included an inheritance in the land of Canaan. But Canaan was only an emblem of the heavenly country, in which alone he could have an eternal inheritance; and this was what the patriarch understood it to be (Heb. 11:8-10). This promise was given to Abraham as justified by faith. Its fulfilment turns on faith, and will be shared as a matter of grace by all who have Abraham's faith, whether they be Jews or Gentiles.

(4) The nature of Abraham's faith (vs. 17-22). It was sheer trust in God to fulfil His own promise. It was not merely the conviction that God exists and that He is good. Abraham believed in God as the One "who giveth life to the dead, and calleth the things that are not, as though they were". That is, he believed that God could introduce a new creation. His faith was superior to all the hindrances and apparent impossibilities that nature put in the way. It gave all the glory to God, believing that He had supernatural power to fulfil what He had promised. Therefore it was reckoned to him for righteousness.

(5) Abraham's faith a type of Christian faith (vs. 23-25). The kind of faith by which Abraham was justified is the model of our faith. Saving faith rests upon the supernatural transaction that God has accomplished in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It believes that God wrought this for our salvation, Jesus Christ having been crucified to atone for our sins and raised from the dead because of our justification. His resurrection proved that He was accepted as our substitute, and therefore that we are accepted in Him.

3. The Security of the Justified (5:1-11). Paul



now goes on to explain the security and permanence of this method of salvation. Those that are justified by faith in Jesus Christ stand in a new relation to God. If the righteousness of God is put to our account, it means that there is reconciliation on God's part toward us and all life is changed for us. The privileges of the justified, and the results that follow from having righteousness imputed to us, are set forth in this passage.

(1) Peace with God (v. 1). The past is changed. There is no hostility on God's part toward us because of our past sin. This brings peace in every sense—peace of mind, heart, and conscience.

(2) Favour with God (v. 2). The present is changed. We stand in a new position before God. We have been introduced by Jesus Christ into a place of favour with God. This means the privilege of access to His presence at any time.

(3) Hope of glory (v. 2). The future is changed. We have the hope of sharing the glory of God—the glory that shall be revealed in us when we are made like Jesus Christ. This is a hope we should rejoice in.

(4) Joy in tribulation (vs. 3-4). Our circumstances are changed. Tribulation seems to be the Christian's lot in the world. But tribulation, says the Apostle, works out Christian character. "We also rejoice in our tribulations" — tribulations considered in their effects, not in themselves. "Tribulation worketh steadfastness" — endurance, the habit of waiting on God and submitting to His will. "And steadfastness, approvedness": it proves the genuineness of the Christian's faith and the reality of the Lord's faithfulness. "And approvedness,

hope": our hope of enjoying the glory of God is confirmed when the genuineness of our Christian faith is tested by experience. From the hope of glory in v. 2 the Apostle swings round the circle through tribulation to the hope of glory again in v. 4.

(5) Realization of God's love (vs. 5-8). The inner life is changed. The sense of God's love to us is shed abroad—literally, "poured out"—in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. This is the first mention of the Holy Spirit in the Epistle. In the figure of pouring out water, Paul may be alluding to the promise in Isa. 44:3: "I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed". He points out the wonderful nature of God's love as manifested in the way Christ died for us, when we were neither righteous nor good, deserving neither respect nor affection. Thus God commends His own love toward us as something different from and above all human love.

(6) Assurance of salvation (vs. 9-10). If we have been justified and reconciled to God by the death of Christ when we were enemies, "much more" now shall we be kept safe from the wrath of God by sharing the life of Christ. The emphasis lies on "much more", which occurs twice.

(7) Joy in God (v. 11). This is the final issue of our justification—rejoicing in God Himself, who is the Author and Giver of our salvation. It is joy in God, "through our Lord Jesus Christ". How often the name of the Saviour is mentioned in this passage! It begins with "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ", and ends with "joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ". Every privilege possessed by the justified is secured through Him.



4. The Headship of Christ (5:12-21). This passage draws out the parallel and the contrast between the results of Christ's work and the results of Adam's fall. The general meaning will be seen if we connect v. 12 at once with vs. 18-19, dropping out the intervening parenthesis in the meantime. In Christ, whom God has provided as a new Head for the race, the results of Adam's fall have been overcome and put away. Adam and Jesus Christ are the two representative men of the race. Each is the head of a system or solidarity. Adam was the type of Christ, "a figure of him that was to come" (v. 14); and he sustains a vital relation to those that are united to him.

The destinies of mankind are bound up with these two men because they are corporate personalities. We are descendants of the first Adam by our natural birth, and we inherit the sin and death which his disobedience brought into the world. By our faith we become united with Christ, "the last Adam" (1 Cor. 15:45), and thus we are born by a spiritual birth into a new system of which He is the Head. In Him we recover all that was lost in the first Adam, and much more. The argument is based on the story of the Fall in Gen. 3.

(1) The results of Adam's fall (vs. 12-14). "Through one man"—by Adam's act of disobedience—sin and death entered the world. By "sin" Paul means the tendency and disposition to sin, the active principle of human self-will, working like a malignant force through all mankind. The inevitable effect of sin was death—physical death, carrying with it spiritual death and eternal separation from God. The clause, "for that all sinned", is explained

in vs. 13-14. The fact that death prevailed during the age from Adam to Moses shows that even before the Law was given sin was universally present in the race. All died, even those whose sin was not the transgression of a definite command like Adam's, because they had inherited something from Adam that made them sinners by nature.

(2) The power of God's grace (vs. 15-17). "But not as the trespass, so also is the free gift": the gift is very different from the trespass. The grace of God is much more powerful than the sin of man. The good that comes by Christ does "much more" than repair the evil that came by Adam. "By the trespass of the one the many died": by Adam's act of disobedience all his descendants passed under death. "Much more did the grace of God, and the gift by the grace of the one man, abound unto the many": all who belong to Jesus Christ receive all that was lost under Adam, and much more. These verses dwell on the fact that salvation is a gift. It is "the gift of righteousness", and comes by grace. The word "gift" is used five times.

(3) The results of Christ's work (vs. 18-21). These verses sum up the whole comparison between Adam and Christ. The resemblance is set forth in vs. 18-19, and the contrast in vs. 20-21. The results of Christ's redemptive work are available for all mankind; and they are effective for all them that are united to Him by faith. As by one man's disobedience, "the many"—all that are united with Adam as their representative head—were made sinners; so by the obedience of One, "the many"—all that are united with Christ as their representative Head—shall be made righteous. Paul uses

the future here because he is thinking of the process of being made righteous as taking place in one after another of "the many" as they believe.

He then goes on to show that the Law resulted in magnifying the sin, but grace more than met the Law—it provided a glory and bliss which even the keeping of the Law could not give. Finally, the ultimate result in each case is contrasted. The reign of sin issues in death: the reign of grace bestows righteousness and issues in eternal life. Grace reigns "through righteousness"—not merely by the gift of righteousness to them that believe, but by working out righteousness in their lives and enabling them to fulfil the Law "through Jesus Christ our Lord". And with the full name of the Saviour again, the whole section dealing with the salvation which God provides in the gift of His righteousness comes to a close.

#### RIGHTEOUSNESS APPLIED

(Chs. 6-8)

Now Paul deals with the kind of life that is to be lived by those who are justified by faith and receive the righteousness of God as a gift of grace. In these chapters he shows that God's method of salvation not only justifies, but also sanctifies and glorifies. The principle by which salvation is secured through the work of Christ as our representative Head, which has been explained in the foregoing passage, is also the principle by which salvation is applied and carried out. The righteousness of God, secured by Jesus Christ and put to our credit, is wrought out in our lives by spiritual union with Him as our representative Head.

1. The Believer's Union with Christ (6:1-11). Although this passage begins a new step in the argument of the Epistle, it is closely connected with the last verses of ch. 5. Under Adam sin abounded; under Christ grace much more abounds (5:20). If that is the case, some might say, let us continue in sin that grace may abound. Certainly not, says the Apostle, for in our new representative Head we have died to sin (vs. 1-2). Then he goes on to show how union with Christ gives us complete victory over sin. In the present passage he explains how this union operates. By our spiritual union with Christ we are identified with Him at each stage of His redemptive work. Just as all that happened to Adam passed to us at our natural birth because of our identification with him, so all that happened to Christ passes to us at our spiritual birth because of our identification with Him.

This passage is one of the profoundest in Paul's Epistles. Here he takes us to the inner secret of the Gospel, and describes the spiritual activity that operates at the heart of the Christian system. It is the supernatural reality in Christianity, that element in it which makes the Gospel "the power of God unto salvation" (1:16). His meaning will appear if we understand the four leading ideas which emerge as he goes on with his explanation.

(1) Baptism into Christ Jesus (vs. 3-4). This baptism is the work of the Holy Spirit in uniting us with Christ our federal Head. It takes place when we are born again, or "born from above" (John 3:3 marg.). Paul is referring to the special action of the Spirit of God in regeneration. It is the transcendent operation of the new creation. It began

when the Spirit was poured out at Pentecost, and it goes on continually as the Gospel is preached and believers are added to the Lord. He mentions it again and again in his Epistles (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:5). Having been "baptized into Christ" in this way, we become identified with Him in all that happened to Him. We died in Him when He died, and we were raised to newness of life in Him when He rose. That being so, Paul argues, we are dead to sin and should no longer walk therein.

(2) The likeness of His death (vs. 5-7). This is not death in the general sense, but "his death", the particular death that Jesus died. The first clause of v. 4 rendered literally is, "We were buried therefore with him through the baptism into the death"—through the baptism of the Spirit into the death of Christ. The death of Christ was different from any other death in that it took place by the consent of His own will. He died to Himself, or gave Himself to death. "If we have become united with him in the likeness of his death", means, if we share His way of dying and consent to die to ourselves. "We shall be (united with him) also in the likeness of his resurrection", means, we shall share His new way of living and live in the power of His resurrection.

In the next verse Paul explains how this can take place: "our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away". "Our old man" and "the body of sin" both mean our old nature, the nature in which sin has its seat. As Christ's human nature was put to death on the Cross, so, by virtue of our union with Him, our human nature was crucified there. Thus the body of sin, or sin

embodied in human nature, has been rendered powerless for the believer.

(3) Living with the risen Christ (vs. 8-10). Here Paul carries out more fully the thought expressed in v. 5, that if we share His way of dying we shall also share His way of living. This means that if we give ourselves to die to self as He did, we shall be quickened by His risen life. We shall live with Him a life over which death has no power. "He died unto sin once"—once for all. Being made sin for our sake, the power of sin culminated in His death; and in His death it came to an end once for all. Now He lives unto God.

(4) Reckoning oneself dead (v. 11). The word "reckon" used here is the same as that so often used in ch. 4 of God's reckoning righteousness to those that believe. There it means that God regards them as righteous, and here it means that we regard ourselves as dead. We reckon ourselves to be dead unto sin but alive unto God when we think of ourselves as having passed through the experience of the Cross with Christ, when we treat our old self as a dead thing and give ourselves to a new life in dependence on Him. Then we find that the life of the risen Christ is supplied to us and gives us life indeed, Paul puts the same thought in other forms in 2 Cor. 4:10, and Phil. 3:10.

2. The Christian's Release from Sin (6:12 — 7:6). This section is an expansion of the injunction in v. 11. Our deliverance from sin is realized, not by our own efforts to overcome it, but by reckoning ourselves dead unto sin in Christ. The Apostle explains that our union with Christ in His death

means that we have been transferred from the old order of life to a new order of life.

(1) A new order of life—under grace (6:12-14). By the death of Christ we have passed from the sphere where sin reigns and the Law is the rule of life to the sphere where grace reigns and the Holy Spirit is the principle of life. Therefore let us not go on yielding to the old tyranny, but dedicate ourselves once for all to the new liberty. Paul then goes on to illustrate the new position of the Christian by means of two analogies, one from the state of slavery and the other from the state of wedlock.

(2) A new service—the service of righteousness (6:15-23). The Christian was a slave of sin; his business was iniquity and his wages were death. But by his union with Christ he has been emancipated from this service to enter another service, that of righteousness, where the end is eternal life. The phrase, “that form of teaching” (v. 17), does not mean a formal statement of doctrine, but the Gospel itself in its power to save from sin. When Paul says, “I speak after the manner of men” (v. 19), he means that he is using a human illustration to express a spiritual truth (Gal. 3:15). There is a significant difference between the two expressions in v. 23, “the wages of sin” and the “gift of God”. The sinner earns his wages: the believer receives God’s gift.

(3) A new marriage—marriage with the risen Lord (7:1-6). The marriage contract binds a woman only while her husband lives. If he dies, she is free to contract another marriage. So it is with the Christian. Formerly he was married, as it were, to his old nature, the flesh or the self-life, and was



subject to the law of that nature. But this old nature has been put to death in the death of Christ. Now the Christian is free to contract a new marriage, a marriage with the risen Christ, the fruits of which will be a life quickened by the Spirit.

3. The Failure of Life under Law (7:7-25). Paul closed the last section by saying that as Christians "we serve in newness of the Spirit, and not in oldness of the letter". He now goes on to describe these two different ways of life, taking the last first. By the phrase, "in oldness of the letter", Paul means, according to the old Law. He is thinking of the Law as a standard of moral authority. The profound analysis of the work of the Law in the heart which this passage contains must have been based on Paul's own experience; otherwise it would have no practical value. It is not only his experience, but the experience of all men who try to overcome sin by their own efforts. Any man, saved or unsaved, regenerate or unregenerate, who tries to become righteous by obeying the Moral Law will be beaten back by the power of sin in his own nature. The passage describes what the Law does for the man who lives under it.

(1) It reveals the fact of sin (vs. 7-8). The Law itself is not sin, but it shows up the presence of sin. Paul would not have known that it was wrong to covet if the Law had not said, "Thou shalt not covet". The very fact that the Ten Commandments are set in prohibitions implies the presence of sin in human nature.

(2) It exposes the sinful nature (vs. 9-11). Paul refers to his experience as a child, before he was conscious of what the Law commanded, as typical



of the nature of man when unrestrained by the Law. The commandment of the Law wakens up the sin in man's nature and leads him into the way of death.

(3) It produces conviction of sin (vs. 12-13). The Law in itself is holy and righteous, and intended for man's good; but its effect is to stir up his human nature to sin. Thus it shows him the enormity and exceeding guilt of sin.

(4) It cannot prevent one from doing wrong (vs. 14-17). The secret of the Law's failure in this respect lies in the fact that man by nature is carnal, while the Law itself is spiritual and accords with the Spirit of God. Man by nature is of the flesh, and the flesh is under the power of sin. A carnal man is one who lives by the power of the flesh or the self-life, and not by the power of the Spirit.

(5) It cannot help one to do right (vs. 18-20). When Paul says, "in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing", he does not mean that there is nothing good in human nature, but that there is nothing entirely good. All parts of man's nature have been affected by sin, and it is powerless to achieve righteousness, even with the good that is in it. Paul approves of the commands of the Law, but finds in his human nature no power to get those commands obeyed.

(6) It reveals the bondage of sin (vs. 21-23). Paul mentions four laws here, which fall into two pairs in constant conflict. The Law of God and the law of his mind or higher nature agree, for his mind recognizes the righteousness of the Law of God. The law of his members or lower nature and the law of sin agree, for sin finds something in his lower nature to correspond with it. As the Law of

God is opposed to the law of sin, so the law of his higher nature is opposed to the law of his lower nature. There is, therefore, this constant conflict within him, bringing him into bondage to sin.

(7) It drives one for deliverance to Christ (vs. 24-25). At this point Paul utters a heart-rending cry as he recalls the unavailing struggle that he went through as a Pharisee; and then he throws the light of his victorious Christian experience back on it. By union with the Lord Jesus Christ he has been delivered out of the bondage of his old sinful nature, which he calls "the body of this death" as being subject to death. Then he closes with a compressed summary of the state of life under the Law, which reflects the deep feeling with which he has been describing it. In the whole passage the first personal pronoun occurs nearly fifty times. It is a picture of the self-life at work trying to save itself by the Law.

4. The Victory of Life in Christ (8:1-17). The Apostle now turns to the other kind of life referred to in 7:6, "in newness of the Spirit". This phrase means, in a new way which the Holy Spirit makes possible. By our union with Christ in His death and resurrection, the power of sin has been dethroned in the heart and the Spirit of Christ rules there instead. The name of the Holy Spirit, which has been mentioned only once before (5:5), now becomes prominent, being used here fourteen times. Those who are in Christ Jesus live in the power of His Spirit, and not under the Law. They walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. They do not follow the mind of the old nature; they respond to the mind of the Spirit of Christ.

(1) They fulfil the Law by the power of the Spirit (vs. 1-4). "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus", means the power exercised by the Spirit of the risen Christ. "The law of sin and of death", means the power of sin operating in the old nature and resulting in death. God interposed by sending His Son to free us from this power by taking the condemnation of our sin in His own human nature, so that hereafter the same Spirit who fulfilled the Law in Him might fulfil it in us when we walk after the Spirit.

The phrase, "and for sin", looks back to the Old Testament, where it is constantly used for the sin-offering in the Mosaic ritual, occurring more than fifty times in the Book of Leviticus alone. Paul saw in the sin-offering a type of the sacrifice of Christ as the one decisive act by which the sinner is acquitted of the guilt of sin and delivered from its power. The result is stated in v. 4. Those who are in Christ Jesus fulfil the requirement of the Law, not by the outward compulsion of the old commandment, but by the inward constraint of the Spirit of Christ.

(2) They are delivered from the power of the flesh by the power of the Spirit (vs. 5-9). There is a running contrast here between the mind of the flesh and the mind of the Spirit. The reference is to the active principle in each case, the general bent of thought, affection, and motive. The mind of the flesh is self-will: the mind of the spirit is the will of God. The Christian is not controlled by the mind of the flesh, for in Christ he has passed out of the sphere of the flesh into the sphere of the Spirit.

The real test of the Christian is the possession of the Spirit of Christ.

(3) They are assured of immortality by the presence of the Spirit (vs. 10-13). The contrast in v. 10 is between the body and the human spirit, not the Holy Spirit. "The body is dead because of sin": our physical nature is a dead thing because Adam's sin of self-will is rooted in it, and it must suffer the consequences. "But the spirit is life because of righteousness": our spiritual nature is a living thing because the righteousness of Christ has been imparted to us by His Spirit. Our present possession of the Holy Spirit is a pledge of our future resurrection. The same Spirit who raised up Jesus from the dead will also give life to our mortal bodies, because His Spirit dwells within us. With such a destiny before us, we are under obligation to follow the rule of the Spirit and put our bodily tendencies and habits to death.

(4) They became children of God by receiving the Spirit (vs. 14-17). In this passage Paul gives four marks of the sons of God:—being led by the Spirit of God (v. 14); having the spirit of sonship, the spirit that does not fear God but approaches Him as a Father, instead of the spirit of bondage and fear which is produced by the Law (v. 15); the inner witness of His Spirit in our hearts (v. 16); and sharing the sufferings of Christ, that is, suffering because we are Christians (v. 17). If we are children of God, it follows that we are heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ, destined to share His glory. This thought leads on to the final issue of life in Christ, which Paul deals with next.

5. Glorification with Christ (8:18-39). This

passage takes us to the consummation of salvation. The final issue of life lived in union with Christ is sharing His glory. The possession of the Holy Spirit is the earnest of our glorification. The passage may be analyzed under five leading ideas.

(1) Through suffering to glory (vs. 18-22). "The sufferings of this present time", are the sufferings that believers have to endure in the present dispensation of distress and tribulation, which is to end with Christ's second coming. "The glory which shall be revealed to us-ward", is the likeness of Christ which is to be manifested in us at His coming, called in the next verse, "the revealing of the sons of God". "The earnest expectation of the creation", means the longing outlook of the whole natural world. The figure is that of an animal stretching its neck eagerly forward because of something it sees in the distance.

"The creation was subjected to vanity": it was put under the curse of futility, so that it could not realize the purpose for which it was created. This seems to refer to the Fall (Gen. 3:17-19). Some change for the worse passed over nature then. Man's sin infected the world around him. This took place "not of its own will", that is, not because of any wrong on its own part. The change took place "by reason of him who subjected it", that is because of the curse which God pronounced on the ground for the greater punishment of man.

"In hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God": the natural world is to be released from the curse of futility, and is to share in the glorified state of the

children of God. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now": nature groans in all its parts, expressing a sense of something wrong which it longs to set right, and of something wanting which it strives to supply. We bear witness to the truth of this statement when we speak of the "sighing" of the wind and the "moaning" of the sea. Even the songs of the birds are often in a minor key.

(2) The Christian's hope (vs. 23-25). We Christians, too, who possess the Spirit as a foretaste of future glory, painfully long for the full recognition of our sonship, which will come when our bodies are delivered from their present state of decay and are changed into glory. Our full salvation still lies in the future; it is an object of hope, and we patiently wait for it. It will come with "the redemption of our body" (Luke 21:28; 1 Cor. 15:49-53; Phil. 3:21), the final salvation of that part of our being that links us with the natural world.

(3) The help of the Spirit (vs. 26-27). In our weakness we have the help of the Holy Spirit, who puts a meaning into our groans and aspirations, and brings them into harmony with the will of God. The Searcher of hearts reads the mind of the Spirit in the prayers of the saints.

(4) God working in all things for good (vs. 28-30). God is working through all things toward one end in the lives of those that love Him. The chain of His providential care stretches back into the eternal past and onward into the eternal future. He had a purpose in their call, and He is the Author of every step in the process of their salvation. His purpose is that they should bear the image of His



Son, so that the Son may be the first-born of a great brotherhood, the Head of a vast family of the redeemed. The last step in the whole process is their glorification.

(5) Assurance of God's love (vs. 31-39). With God doing all this for us, we have nothing to fear. Having given His own Son to die for us, He will surely provide everything necessary for our final salvation (vs. 31-32). Who will accuse those whom God has chosen? When God acquits, who can condemn? Will Christ? He died for us, and is now exalted in Heaven as our representative there (vs. 33-34). No troubles or sufferings of any kind can separate us from His love. Though the words of the Psalmist (44:22) might be applied to us, yet all these things turn to our glory, for we triumph over them through His love (vs. 35-37).

Then the Apostle closes this part of his argument with a magnificent sweep of sublime assurance. He is convinced that nothing in all human experience or in the hierarchy of the spiritual world, nothing in the present or in the future, nothing in the heights above or in the depths beneath, nor anything else in the whole creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God which has come to us through Jesus Christ our Lord (vs. 38-39).

#### RIGHTEOUSNESS REFUSED

(Chs. 9—11)

Paul has finished his main argument and now faces the problem of Jewish unbelief. If this method of salvation is true and is in accordance with the Old Testament, how are we to account for the Jews' rejection of it? Having refused the righteousness

of God offered in the Gospel, God has excluded them from its benefits. How can this be consistent with His election of Israel in the past? It seems to mean that His promises to them have failed. The Apostle discusses this question in these three chapters.

1. Paul's Sorrow Over Israel (9:1-5). The glorious prospect of life in Christ which he has been describing brings home to his heart with deep sorrow the fact that his own countrymen are excluded from it. Excluded from it in spite of all the special privileges and promises that were given to them, in spite of the fact that Christ, who is none other than the Lord God Himself, came from them.

The whole passage is one continuous sentence. The phrase, "for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh", should be connected directly with v. 2. The first part of v. 3 is a parenthesis, in which Paul refers to his old attitude to Christ as a Pharisee (cf. Acts 26:9), and it should be rendered literally: "For I myself was wishing (used to wish) to be accursed from Christ". The original contains no sign of a conditional sentence; and besides that, it is inconceivable that after Paul's Damascus vision he could have wished himself accursed from Christ under any condition.

2. The Fact of Israel's Exclusion (9:6-33). The Apostle deals with this question first from the point of the view of the Divine sovereignty, He vindicates God's character from any charge against it.

(1) It is not inconsistent with God's promises (vs. 6-13). Israel's exclusion does not mean that God's word has failed; for the promises to Israel were not based on descent from Abraham, but had in view a true Israel within the nation (vs. 6-7).



This is illustrated by the case of Abraham's children (Gen. 21:12; 18:10). It was no breach of God's promise to Abraham when Ishmael was rejected and Isaac was chosen (vs. 7-9). It was the same with the children of Isaac, who were both born of the same mother. Even before their birth, before they had done anything good or bad, the younger was chosen and the elder rejected (Gen. 25:23). This shows that the purpose of God is independent of man; it depends upon God's choice, and not upon man's works (vs. 10-13). Paul quotes Mal. 1:2-3, where the Jews were reminded of God's unmerited choice of Jacob over Esau to inherit the land.

(2) It is not inconsistent with God's justice (vs. 14-18). Can it be said in view of this that God is unjust? By no means. The Scriptures show that He has the right to confer His favours on whom He will, as He did on Moses, and to withhold them from whom He will, as He did from Pharaoh (Exod. 33:19; 9:16). In v. 18 the emphasis is on the words, "whom he will", in each clause.

Paul's aim is to assert the unconditional sovereignty of the Divine will over against all human arrogance, and he deals with only one aspect of the matter. His argument does not require him to explain how God's will takes man's will into account. As the same sun softens wax and hardens clay because the property of the one is to yield and the property of the other is to resist, so the same Divine will "hath mercy" on the man who yields to it and "hardeneth" the man who resists it. The story in Exodus describes God as hardening Pharaoh's heart (7:3; 9:12; 10:20, 27; 11:10; 14:4,

8), but it also describes Pharaoh as hardening his own heart (8:32; 9:34).

(3) It is not inconsistent with God's mercy (vs. 19-29). Again it may be urged, why should God find fault with one who fulfills His will by refusing His offer? But the creature may not complain against the Creator any more than the vessel against the potter. The Creator is free to do as He pleases and does not explain the ground of His action (vs. 19-21). He uses His freedom for beneficent ends, showing His longsuffering to sinners and His mercy toward us, whom He has called both from the Jews and from the Gentiles (vs. 22-24). Here Paul quotes a number of passages from the Prophets (Hos. 2:23; 1:10; Isa. 10:22-23; 1:9) to show that God had promised to extend His mercy to the Gentiles and to exclude all but a remnant of the Jews (vs. 25-29).

3. The Cause of Israel's Exclusion (9:30—10:21). The Apostle now turns to the other side of the question, and deals with it from the viewpoint of human responsibility. He shows that the Jews have been rejected because of their own fault. They chose the wrong method of salvation, and refused the righteousness that God offered them.

(1) They sought righteousness in the wrong way (9:30-33). While Gentiles came upon a righteousness which they did not seek after, the righteousness of faith, Israel failed to attain to the righteousness which they did follow after, the righteousness of the Law. Instead of accepting righteousness by faith, they tried to accomplish righteousness by works. Instead of believing in the Messiah when He came, they regarded Him as a cause of offence,

as the Scriptures had already foretold (Isa. 8:14; 28:16).

(2) They refused the righteousness of God (10:1-4). Paul pauses here to reaffirm his intense desire that his own people should be saved. He can testify to their zeal for God, but it is a zeal without spiritual knowledge. Ignoring the righteousness of God by the method of faith, they sought to establish their own righteousness by the method of law; thus they produced self-righteousness. They did not know that the righteousness of the Law has been realized in Christ, that He has fulfilled the Law, and that righteousness may now come to every one who believes in Him. In rejecting Him the Jews have refused God's way of salvation.

(3) God's way of salvation is free and easy to find (10:5-10). Over against the method of righteousness by the Law described by Moses (Lev. 18:5), which is beyond our reach and impossible to attain, Paul shows that the righteousness of faith is within the reach of all and is easy to obtain. He does this by appropriating to his own use language which Moses used of the Law (Deut. 30:11-14). One does not need to ascend into Heaven, for Christ has come down. Nor does one need to descend into the grave, for Christ has been raised from the dead. All one needs to do is to believe with the heart in Christ Jesus and confess with the mouth that He is Lord (Jehovah).

(4) God's way of salvation is universal and is offered to all (10:11-15). The Apostle goes on to support what he has said about God's method of salvation, by quoting some Old Testament passages, to show that it was intended for all without dis-

inction of Jew or Greek, on the one condition of faith (Isa. 28:16; Joel 2:32). In order to believe in Christ, men must hear about Him; and in order to hear about Him, the Gospel must be preached. By introducing another Old Testament quotation (Isa. 52:7), Paul implies that the messengers of the Gospel have been sent out, and that the conditions necessary for the salvation provided by God have all been fulfilled.

(5) God's way of salvation has been refused by Israel (10:16-21). Paul now proceeds to show that the Jews, having had opportunity of knowing the Gospel, are themselves to blame for not believing it. Even when the Gentiles found God through the Gospel, the Jews persisted in their unbelief, and stubbornly refused all the pleadings of their God. Here Paul continues to weave into his argument further quotations from the Old Testament Scriptures (Isa. 53:1; Psa. 19:4; Deut. 32:21; Isa. 65:1-2).

4. Israel's Exclusion Only Partial (11:1-10). The Apostle now comes to the question that has been behind his whole argument. Has God really cast away His people? In this passage he shows that God has not rejected His chosen people, for there has always been a remnant of believing and God-fearing Israelites. This is proved, to begin with, by his own case (v. 1). Each of the three chapters in this division of the Epistle begins with a reference on the part of the writer to his own profound sympathy with Israel. In the time of Elijah, when he thought that all the nation had apostatized and he alone was left (1 Kings 19:10, 14, 18),

there was a kernel of seven thousand in Israel still loyal to the Lord (vs. 2-4).

So now there is a remnant of loyal Jews, chosen by His free grace through the Gospel (vs. 5-6). The mass of the nation failed to attain the righteousness which it sought, but those whom God selected have obtained it. The rest have been hardened. These same conditions have prevailed throughout Israel's history, according to the Scriptures quoted (Isa. 29:10; 6:9-10; Psa. 69:22-23). All through their history the mass of the people have been destitute of spiritual insight. Spiritual blindness is God's judgment for unfaithfulness (vs. 7-10).

5. Israel's Exclusion Only Temporary (11:11-16). Having shown that God has not rejected Israel completely, the Apostle now goes on to say that He has not rejected them finally. Israel will yet be restored and saved. Israel's refusal of the Gospel ("their fall") has resulted in its extension to the Gentiles, and Israel's return to God ("their fullness") will bring still more abundant blessing to the world (vs. 11-12). Paul explains to his Gentile readers that he takes pride in his ministry as an Apostle of the Gentiles, not only that the Gentiles may be saved, but also that the Jews may be stirred up to emulation and be saved too (vs. 13-14).

Then he repeats the statement of v. 12 in a stronger form. If the rejection of the Jews has opened the offer of salvation to the world, their restoration to God's favour will mean new life for the world (v. 15). His confidence in the future of Israel is based upon the holiness of the patriarchs from whom they are descended. This he expresses

in two different metaphors—that of the first fruit consecrating the whole lump of dough in the offering (Num. 15:20-21), and that of the root of a tree consecrating the branches (v. 16).

6. The Figure of the Olive Tree (11:17-24). The Apostle now takes up his second figure and enlarges upon it to show how Israel is the stock through which life comes to the Gentiles. The figure of the olive tree is taken from the Prophets (Jer. 11:16; Hosea 14:6). The good olive tree is the Israel of the Old Covenant with Abraham as its root, because of whose faith the nation was chosen. The wild olive tree is the Gentile world. Some of the branches of the good olive tree have been broken off. That is, part of Israel has been rejected because of unbelief; but the true Israel remains. A branch from the wild olive has been grafted into the good olive tree, and shares the life of the root. That is, Gentiles have been united to the true stock of Israel because of their faith, and they share the promises and benefits of the covenant made with Abraham (vs. 17-20).

This gives the Gentile Christians no ground for pride, but rather for awe and fear. If God showed His severity by cutting off the Jews who rejected His goodness, He will show His severity by cutting off the Gentiles who do not continue in His goodness. If the Jews turn from their unbelief, He will graft them in again. The Gentile branch was grafted in "contrary to nature", for the natural process is to graft a branch from a cultivated tree into a wild one. How much more easily then will the Jewish branches be grafted into their own olive tree. The restoration of Israel should be an easier process than the calling of the Gentiles (vs. 20-24).



7. A Prediction of Israel's Conversion (11:25-32). Paul now brings his great theme to a close by declaring that a bright future is in store for Israel, notwithstanding the present failure of the nation. Having shown that God's rejection of Israel is only partial and temporary, and that Israel's restoration would take place easily if the nation gave up its unbelief, Paul now foretells the future conversion of the nation. He has received a Divine revelation to this effect, which he now discloses: "I would not, brethren, have you ignorant of this mystery". The present partial blindness and hardening of Israel is to last only "until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in". This does not mean, till all the Gentiles are converted, but until converts are gathered in from the Gentile world and from all nations, and all the Gentile races are represented in the Church of Christ. "And so all Israel shall be saved": this means Israel as a whole, national Israel, but not necessarily every individual Israelite (vs. 25-26).

The Apostle supports his statement by another quotation from Isaiah (59:20-21), saying that the present alienation of Israel from God does not alter the fact that they are still His people, chosen for their fathers' sake. The promises which He made to them still stand (vs. 26-29). Then he draws a parallel between the case of the Gentiles and that of the Jews, to show that mercy is the general principle upon which God deals with all (vs. 30-32).

8. A Final Ascription of Praise to God (11:33-36). Paul has concluded his whole argument—his unfolding of the righteousness of God revealed in the Gospel, and his discussion of God's method of dealing with Israel—and he has been carried away

by it. He now breaks out in an impassioned utterance of adoring wonder and praise, and, with a noble doxology, he brings the doctrinal part of his letter to an end.

#### RIGHTEOUSNESS REALIZED

(12:1—15:13)

This section contains the most complete and elaborate treatment of Christian conduct in all Paul's Epistles. It is the practical application of God's method of salvation to the life of the believer. Though given in the form of precepts and exhortations, it is not a code of ethics or a system of morals. It is a description, rather, of the way the Christian should react to the various conditions of life in which he finds himself. It is the righteousness of God as realized by those who live by faith and walk after the Spirit. It is the kind of behaviour the Gospel produces.

1. The Christian's New Life (Ch. 12). The Apostle begins with an appeal to his readers to surrender their lives to God on the ground of this wonderful redemption His mercy has provided (vs. 1-2). They are not to fashion themselves according to the world's manner of life. They are to be transfigured by the entire inward renewal of their mind through the Holy Spirit, that they may prove by experience what the will of God is—how good, and acceptable, and perfect.

Then Paul goes on to urge them, on the ground of his inspired authority as an Apostle, to cultivate spiritual humility (vs. 3-8). The Church is the body of Christ, and every member in it has some function to perform. Let him not value himself



unduly, but remember that his position in the body is dependent, not upon his own merit, but upon the faith by which he received his salvation from God. We should not forget our brethren, and our mutual relation to one another and to Jesus Christ. Paul follows this appeal with a list of spiritual gifts bestowed on different members of the Christian community, telling how each is to be used, in accordance with the renewing of their minds, in the spirit of true humility.

The surrender of life to God for which Paul has appealed will manifest itself also in a spirit of genuine love. This will express itself in brotherly affection and sympathetic understanding among fellow Christians, and in corresponding qualities of character and conduct (vs. 9-16). It will also show itself toward those that are not Christians in not returning evil for evil or avenging themselves against wrong. They are to leave their vindication with God and treat their foes with kindness. In support of these instructions Paul quotes Deut. 32:35 and Prov. 25:21-22. They are not to let the evil of the world get the better of them, but meet the evil by doing good (vs. 17-21).

2. The Christian's Relation to the State (Ch. 13). Surrender of life to the will of God carries with it the fulfilment of one's duties toward the state.

(1) Obedience to civil authority (vs. 1-7). Civil government is a Divine institution, and to resist it is to put oneself in opposition to God (vs. 1-2; 1 Pet 2:13-17). The principle is not invalidated by the abuse of human government, for any government is better than anarchy. The function of civil

authority is to restrain and punish evil, and to defend the good (vs. 3-4). It is a moral obligation to be subject to it, to pay the taxes required to support it, and to give to all in authority the tribute, respect, and honour that is due to their office (vs. 5-7).

(2) Love the fulfilment of law (vs. 8-10). There is one debt which the Christian must always be paying but can never succeed in discharging, the obligation of love. All particular precepts are summed up in that of love. This makes injury to any man impossible. He who loves his neighbour will fulfil all the commands that concern his duty to his neighbour.

(3) The Christian citizen's motive (vs. 11-14). The Apostle now brings in the supreme motive for the believer's life in the world, the hope of the coming of the Lord. "Now is salvation nearer to us than when we first believed"—in the sense of its completion. "The night is far spent": the corrupt age under the present form of human government is passing. "The day is at hand": the new age of the Kingdom of God is soon to appear. "Let us walk becomingly as in the day"—as if it were now the day of the Lord. "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ": walk in the power of His risen life.

3. The Principles of Christian Fellowship (14: 1—15:13). In this section Paul applies the principles of the new life to the sphere of Christian fellowship, and deals with matters which in themselves have no moral quality, but about which some members of the Christian community might have conscientious scruples. He points out the way that true Christian fellowship will manifest itself in these matters. Three principles are to be kept in mind.

(1) Personal liberty (14:1-12). In matters of indifference, where no moral issue is involved, the believer is free to follow his own conscience, but he is not to offend those who have scruples. The general Christian principle is stated in v. 1. Conscientious scruples are to be respected and not criticized. The convert who is "weak in the faith" is one who does not fully understand the fundamental principle of faith, and thinks he will make his salvation more certain by the scrupulous performance of something in addition. Paul gives two examples of such scruples, one regarding the eating of certain kinds of food (vs. 2-4), and the other regarding the observance of certain days as religious festivals (vs. 5-6).

The fundamental principle in these cases is that each person must be fully assured in his own conscience that he is doing right. Every Christian is directly responsible to the Lord alone in life and in death (vs. 7-9). By His death and resurrection Christ has become Lord over all alike, both the dead and the living. We must all stand before His judgment seat, and every one shall give account of himself, not of his brother, to God. There is therefore no place for judgment of one another.

(2) Brotherly charity (14:13-23). The Apostle has already addressed himself to those who have no conscientious scruples, and now he points out that the highest and noblest use of personal liberty is to give it up for the good of others. Higher than the principle of personal liberty is the principle of brotherly charity; and this demands consideration for the feelings and consciences of others. Paul applies this to the case of eating meat ceremonially unclean

(vs. 13-15). "Let not then your good be evil spoken of": let not your Christian freedom become a cause of reproach in the Christian community. Life in the Kingdom of God does not consist in the personal enjoyment of material things, but in the manifestation of those spiritual qualities of character that spring from the presence of the Holy Spirit. He who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and stands the test with his fellow-men (vs. 16-18).

We should follow the things that make for peace and mutual edification, and not pull down the work of God. All things are ceremonially pure, but it is evil for that man who puts a stumbling block in his brother's way by what he eats (vs. 19-20). Let not him that is strong lead him that is weak into sin by following some course of action that his weak brother is not sure is right. The faith that is strong is not for display, but for oneself and God alone. Then Paul states the principle that should guide the Christian in all matters of conscience: "whatsoever is not of faith is sin". To perform some action merely because someone thinks I should do so, while I am not convinced it is agreeable to the will of God—that would be sin for me (vs. 21-23).

(3) Mutual forbearance (15:1-13). The Apostle now reaches the highest reason why the strong should bear with the weak. The strong should act toward the weak in the spirit of Christ, who pleased not Himself. "To bear the infirmities of the weak", is to put oneself under their limitations and to give up one's own rights for their good, as Christ did. Paul quotes Psa. 69:9 in support of this, and justifies his quotation by a statement about the abiding value of the Old Testament Scriptures (vs. 1-4).

Then he prays for unity of mind in the Christian community, and that it may result in unity and harmony in the worship of God (vs. 5-6).

The Apostle concludes his argument by generalizing the principles that he has laid down. All whom Christ has received should be received into His Church without distinction between the strong and the weak, in order to promote the glory of God (v. 7). This applies specially to the division between Jews and Gentiles in the Christian community. By saving both Jews and Gentiles, Christ promotes the glory of God, showing God's faithfulness in the one case and His mercy in the other. The Apostle supports his appeal by a series of passages from the Old Testament (vs. 8-12). His quotations are taken from the Septuagint (Psa. 18:49; Deut. 32:43; Psa. 117:1; Isa. 11:10). Then he brings the whole doctrinal part of his Epistle to an end with a benediction: "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing" (v. 13). This is characteristic of Paul. It is a beautiful habit of his in closing an argument.

NOTE:—The conduct which Paul describes in this section of the Epistle is essentially different from ordinary human righteousness. There is a different atmosphere about it. It is marked by the entire absence of self-will, self-interest, and self-love. Its point of view is always a tender and sympathetic interest in others, and it is pervaded by genuine love. Righteousness of this kind is not the product of natural ethics. Its secret is beyond the reach of psychological analysis. It is found by those alone who follow Christ in the way of the Cross.

Christian life is not self-culture. It is not the result of developing and perfecting one's own life. It is something immeasurably higher and nobler.

The Christian man escapes from evil habits and evil passions, not by the force of his own moral struggles, but by the power of the Spirit of the living Christ. He takes his place with other men in human society, but he holds in his heart a transcendent secret. He shares with other men the duties and tasks of common life, but the quality of his life is entirely different from theirs. While his feet are on the solid earth, the springs of his life are in a higher world.

#### THE CONCLUSION

(15:14—16:27)

God's way of salvation by the gift of His own righteousness having been fully explained, and the theme of the Epistle being finished, the Apostle goes on with a somewhat lengthened conclusion. It deals with some personal matters and contains some personal messages.

1. Personal Matters (15:14-33). Paul explains that his writing to the Romans does not imply that he is ignorant of their high Christian character and deep spiritual knowledge. But he is fulfilling the ministry with which God entrusted him as the Apostle to the Gentiles (vs. 14-17). His guiding principle has been to preach the Gospel where others had not done so and where Christ was not yet named. He has already fulfilled this ministry in the eastern part of the Empire (vs. 18-21). And again he describes the aim of his mission in words taken from the Old Testament (Isa. 52:15).

He goes on to tell of the desire he has had for many years to visit Rome. He plans a journey into Spain, and he hopes to visit the Romans on the way (vs. 22-24). But at present he must go to Jerusalem

with the contribution which the Gentile churches of the two provinces of Greece have raised for the poor among the Jewish Christians at Jerusalem. This gift of theirs is but a just recompense for the spiritual blessings which the Gentiles have received from the Jews (vs. 25-27). When that mission is accomplished, he hopes to visit the Romans on his way to Spain, "in the fulness of the blessing of Christ" (vs. 28-29). Meanwhile he earnestly asks for their prayers, that he may be delivered from the unbelieving Jews in Judea, that the gifts which he bears to Jerusalem may be accepted by the believing Jews, and that it may be the will of God that he should come to the Romans with joy, and find rest in their fellowship. Then comes another benediction: "Now the God of peace be with you all" (vs. 30-33).

2. Personal Messages (Ch. 16). This chapter is a revelation of the brotherly love that existed in the early Church, and of the personal interest which Christians took in one another. In the course of these messages Paul names thirty-three persons, nine of whom are with him in Corinth and twenty-four are in Rome. He also refers to three groups of unnamed brethren and two unnamed women.

Paul begins the list by commending Phoebe to the Roman Christians, who was an active worker in the church at Cenchreæ, the port of Corinth. She was going to Rome, and probably carried the Epistle with her. Nothing else is known about her; but what is said here would indicate that she was a person of some wealth and position, and was thus able to help the Christian community (vs. 1-2).

Next comes a greeting to Priscilla and Aquila. Paul adds a special commendation about them



(vs. 3-5). This remarkable couple exerted a wide influence among the churches as they moved from place to place. Paul would doubtless learn a good deal about the church in Rome when he lived with them in Corinth (Acts 18:2-3). They went with him from Corinth to Ephesus, where they remained for some time, making their house a meeting place for the Christians there (1 Cor. 16:19). They were back in Rome now, and here again Paul mentions "the church that is in their house".

Then follows a list of the other Christians in Rome to whom Paul sends salutations (vs. 5-16). Seventeen men are mentioned and seven women, and about almost every one he has something particular to say, showing his sympathetic personal interest in people. When he calls some "kinsmen", he means fellow-countrymen, and not relatives. When he refers to them that are of the households of Aristobulus and Narcissus, he means slaves belonging to the household establishments of these wealthy Romans.

Then the Apostle introduces a warning against false teachers (vs. 17-19). He is probably not referring to teachers actually in Rome at the time, but to such as he knew existed in some of the churches he had founded, and who might yet appear in Rome. They are described as being self-interested in their motives and deceptive in their manners. He gives this warning because he would have the Roman Christians "wise unto that which is good, and simple unto that which is evil"—that is, discreet and wary, and therefore blameless. These teachers who cause divisions and break up the peace of the Church are not serving Christ, but are instruments of Satan.



In allusion to this Paul adds the assurance: "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly". Then he ends the warning with a benediction, as if he were closing the Epistle (v. 20).

Following this is a sort of postscript with the greetings of Paul's companions in Corinth, ending in another benediction (vs. 21-24). Tertius was the amanuensis who was writing the Epistle at Paul's dictation. It seems to have been the Apostle's general custom to dictate his letters and add a salutation with his own hand (1 Cor. 16:21; Col. 4:18; 2 Thess. 3:17). Gaius, who is described as the host of Paul and of the whole church, is probably the Gaius of 1 Cor. 1:14. The Christian assembly in Corinth met in his house. Erastus held the office of "the treasurer of the city"; which shows that there were at least a few important people among the members of the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 1:26).

The Epistle comes to an end with a noble doxology, which sums up all its great ideas—the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ which Paul preached, the revelation in it of God's eternal purpose, and the gift of salvation promised in the Scriptures, which God now offers through it to the faith and obedience of all the nations. To its Author, the only wise God, be ascribed through Jesus Christ, glory for ever. Amen (vs. 25-27).

## THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS

CORINTH was the largest and most important city in Greece in Paul's time. It had a population of more than half a million people, two-thirds of whom were slaves. It was a great commercial metropolis, lying on the direct route between Ephesus and Rome. For a hundred years it had been steadily growing in size and wealth, and it now occupied a position of great prosperity. It was also the centre of an immoral pagan worship. Its people lived in luxury, and it had the reputation of being one of the most profligate and corrupt cities in the Roman Empire.

The Gospel was introduced into Corinth, and the church was established there, by the Apostle Paul, who laboured in the city for a year and a half during his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1-11). Apollos came later and greatly helped the cause of Christ and the growth of the church (Acts 18:27-28). Its membership contained some Jews, but was composed mainly of poor and unlearned Gentiles who had been converted from paganism (1 Cor. 1:26; 12:2).

The First Epistle was written from Ephesus in the spring of A.D. 56, toward the close of Paul's three years' stay there, not more than five years after the Gospel had first been preached in Corinth. The note at the end of the letter in the A.V., saying that it was written in Philippi, is due to a misunderstanding of Paul's statement in 16:5. The Apostle

was already making plans to depart for Macedonia and go on through that province to Corinth, but he intended to remain in Ephesus till the early summer (Acts 19:21-22; 1 Cor. 16:5-9). A deputation from Corinth had visited him (16:17-18), bringing a letter from the church in which several matters were submitted to him for his judgment and advice (7:1). These had to do mainly with the social life and fellowship of the Christian community.

Besides the information contained in that letter, Paul had learned from other sources that serious troubles existed in the church (1:11; 5:1). The members were divided into factions by party spirit and rivalry. Moral disorders had crept in, and spiritual discipline was lacking. Misunderstandings about their social relations existed among them, and these had led to disturbance and confusion in their meetings for worship. The church was noted for its spiritual gifts (1:4-7), but many of its members were manifesting these in wrong ways. The fundamental Christian doctrine of the resurrection was being called in question.

All these matters combined to give Paul the occasion for writing this letter. It was not the first letter he had written to them, for in 5:9 he refers to an earlier one, which has not been preserved. The one comprehensive theme of this First Epistle is the practical application of the Gospel to the life and work of the Church. It falls into the following main divisions:

- I. Party Spirit in the Church—Chs. 1-4
- II. Moral Disorders in the Church—Chs. 5-7
- III. Social Relations in the Church—Chs. 8-11

- IV. Spiritual Gifts in the Church—Chs. 12-14
- V. The Fundamental Doctrine of the Church—  
Ch. 15
- VI. The Conclusion of the Letter—Ch. 16

#### PARTY SPIRIT IN THE CHURCH

(Chs. 1—4)

The letter begins with a brief introduction containing Paul's salutation to the church at Corinth (1:1-3), and his thanksgiving for the character and testimony of its members (1:4-9). Probably Sosthenes, whom he associates with himself in the salutation as a "brother", and who must have been well known to the Corinthians, was the ruler of the synagogue mentioned in Acts 18:17, who had played a part in the scene that took place when the Jews brought Paul before Gallio. If so, he was now a Christian and was living in Ephesus. He was probably Paul's host at the time the letter was written.

The Corinthian church was noted for the spiritual endowments which the grace of God had bestowed upon its members. They had been enriched "in all utterance and all knowledge"—inspired utterance and spiritual knowledge. They came behind other churches in no divine gift, while they watched for the coming of the Lord. Christ Himself would keep them steadfast, so that they should be without reproach in that day. God who had called them would not fail them.

After this introduction, the Apostle refers to the divisions among the Corinthians which he has been

told about, and appeals for the spirit of unity. He urges this on several grounds.

1. Christ is the Only Head of the Church (1:10-17). "Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ": this is the tenth time the Apostle has used the Saviour's name in ten verses. Party spirit dishonours Him. Factions arise in the Church when the members attach themselves to human teachers. The Church is the body of Christ, and Christ cannot be divided. It was into His Name, and not into the names of their teachers, that the members of the church were baptized. Paul himself baptized very few, for the mission on which he was sent was not to baptize but to preach the Gospel.

2. The Gospel Manifests the Power of God Alone (1:18—2:5). It leaves no room for glorying in men. Paul bases his argument on this point on three facts.

(1) The story of the Cross (1:18-25). In the eyes of the world the Gospel is an absurdity; but to us who are saved it is a manifestation of the power of God. The word of the prophet has been fulfilled (Isa. 29:14). God has shown the foolishness of worldly wisdom. When the world by its wisdom failed to find God, God Himself provided a way of salvation for those that trust Him, by the proclamation of what seems foolish (vs. 18-21). The Jews demand a miraculous sign, and the Greeks seek philosophical wisdom. The message that we preach is Christ crucified—an offence to the Jews and folly to the Greeks; but to those that believe and accept it, it is both the power of God and the wisdom of God. The "foolishness" and "weakness" of God sur-

pass all the wisdom and strength of men (vs. 22-25).

(2) The membership of the Church (1:26-31). It does not include many that are wise and learned and high-born. It is composed mainly of those that are lowly and despised by the world. Through them God has put to shame the things that are wise and strong. It was not through these things that the salvation of the Corinthians was achieved. Jesus Christ alone is made God-given wisdom for us, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption. And so there is no place for glorying in man (Jer. 9:23).

(3) Paul's ministry in Corinth (2:1-5). The Apostle came to the Corinthians not with oratory or philosophy. He determined to make no display of knowledge among them except of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. He appeared before them in bodily weakness and in timidity, and his message was delivered to them with no plausible arguments of human wisdom, but with the manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus their faith does not rest on human philosophy, but on the power of God.

3. The Gospel Contains God's Wisdom not Man's (2:6-16). Paul imparts this wisdom to those that are of ripe understanding. It is a wisdom that is not of this world, and is unknown to its rulers. It is a hidden spiritual truth revealed only by the Spirit of God. The rulers of the world showed their ignorance of it by crucifying the Lord of glory (vs. 6-8). At this point Paul refers to Isa. 64:4 in a free quotation, and goes on to explain that just as a man's secrets are known only by the man's own spirit, so the secrets of God are known only by the Spirit of God. And these are the things that have

been revealed to us, not by the spirit of the world, but by the Spirit of God (vs. 9-12).

It is of these themes that Paul speaks, not in terms of human philosophy, but in terms learned from the Holy Spirit, embodying spiritual conceptions in spiritual language. Man in his natural state cannot understand the revelations of the Spirit of God. They require a spiritual attitude for their appreciation, and only a spiritual man can discern them. The spiritual man is able to bring his own judgment to bear upon all things, while he himself is beyond the reach of the natural man's judgment. Paul then quotes Isa. 40:13 to support his argument that the natural man knows not the mind of the Lord God. It is known only by those who have the mind of Christ (vs. 13-16).

4. Party Spirit Hinders Spiritual Progress (3: 1-9). When Paul was with the Corinthians he could not treat them as spiritual and full grown men. He had to deal with them as "babes in Christ", as immature Christians in whom the carnal nature was still dominant. Their jealousy and strife in preferring one teacher above another arose from their carnal nature, and were marks of their spiritual immaturity (vs. 1-4). The various teachers through whom they believed are but instruments in God's hands, each of them doing the work that God assigned to him. Paul who planted the seed of the Gospel, and Apollos who watered it, are nothing in themselves; it is God who makes the seed grow (vs. 5-7). He who plants and he who waters work together as one instrument. Each shall receive his special wage according to the special work he has done, but the results are God's alone. The ministers



of the Gospel are God's fellow-labourers; but the husbandry, the building, is God's, and not theirs (vs. 8-9).

5. Jesus Christ is the One Foundation of the Church (3:10-23). According to the grace that God gave him, Paul laid the foundation of the church in Corinth, and another builds thereon. Each one is responsible for the material he puts into the building. The foundation, which is Jesus Christ, has been laid once for all (vs. 10-11). The work of each builder will be put to the proof in the day of judgment. It will be tested by a fire that will reveal the true quality of every man's work. If his work endures the test, he will receive a reward. A man's work may be destroyed while he himself is saved (vs. 12-15). The members of the church in Corinth form a sanctuary in which God dwells, and God will destroy the man who destroys His holy temple (vs. 16-17).

Let no man therefore deceive himself by boasting of his wisdom to judge between human teachers. The wisdom of the world is foolish and vain, says Paul, and to support his statement he quotes Job 5:13 and Psa. 94:11. Therefore let no one glory in a particular human teacher. All the teachers of the Church belong to the members of the Church. In God's purpose all things—life and death, the present and the future—are made to serve the members of the Church. This is so because they belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God (vs. 18-23).

6. The Lord is the Only Judge of His Servants (4:1-5). The teachers of the Church should be regarded as servants of Christ and stewards of God's revealed truth. They are responsible only to God,

and they will be judged according to their faithfulness. Paul is not concerned about man's judgment of him; nor does he judge himself, but leaves his judgment with the Lord. He warns the Corinthians against passing judgments before the Lord comes, who will lay bare the purposes of men's hearts. Then due praise will be awarded to each man from God.

7. Party Spirit Springs from Spiritual Pride (4:6-13). In dealing with the relation of the Corinthians to their teachers, Paul has spoken only of himself and Apollos, that in them his readers may learn not to go beyond the authority of Scripture by glorying in men, and not to be inflated with conceit in their partisanship. Every gift and grace they possess has been received from God, and this gives them no ground for boasting (vs. 6-7). Then Paul proceeds to draw out an ironical contrast between the pride and self-complacency shown by the Corinthians and the labours and privations endured by the Apostles (vs. 8-13).

8. A Final Appeal for Unity (4:14-21). The Apostle's purpose in writing in this way is not to put his readers to shame, but to warn them as his dear children. He reminds the Corinthians that they are his own converts, and therefore they should follow his example. He has sent Timothy to them, his "beloved and faithful child in the Lord", who will remind them of his "ways which are in Christ"—how he conducts himself as a teacher in every church everywhere (vs. 14-17). Probably Timothy was going around by land, and the letter, being sent across the sea, would arrive before him.

They were not to infer from this that Paul was

not coming himself. Some of them had assumed an arrogant tone, thinking that he dare not come. But come he would shortly, if it was the Lord's will. And then he would test, not how great is the talk of the arrogant, but how great is their power. The Kingdom of God depends not on talk, but on supernatural power. Let them choose whether he should come with a rod of chastisement, or in love and a spirit of gentleness (vs. 18-21).

#### MORAL DISORDERS IN THE CHURCH

(Chs. 5—7)

The Apostle now turns to questions affecting the moral conduct of the members of the church. They were in danger of being contaminated by the corrupt state of heathen society around them.

1. The Need of Discipline (5:1-8). A case of gross immorality existed among them; and they were puffed up with self-satisfaction, when they should have been bowed down with grief and should have removed the offender from their fellowship (vs. 1-2). Paul states his own judgment in the matter: the church should solemnly deliver such a person into the hands of Satan, that his body may be afflicted in order that the spirit may be saved in the day of judgment (vs. 3-5). Satan was regarded as ruling the realm of disease and death, but as acting only by God's permission (Job. 2:5-6; Luke 13:16; 22:31; 2 Cor. 12:7). Paul refers to another case of the same kind of punishment in 1 Tim. 1:20.

The Corinthians have little cause for glorying when they allow contagion to remain which would defile their whole society. They should purge out

the old leaven, for the fellowship of the Church should be maintained with "the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (vs. 6-8). In using this figure Paul has in mind the removal of leaven from the houses of the Israelites at the time of the Pass-over (Exod. 12:15).

2. The Christian Principle of Discipline (5:9-13). The Apostle now turns from the particular case to general rules of conduct on the subject. He refers to what he had told the Corinthians in an earlier letter, now lost. He pointed out that it was impossible for Christians to avoid coming into contact with the immoral and wicked people of the pagan world, for then they should have to withdraw altogether from the active business of life. But if a member of the Church commit such sin, the Christians should refuse to have any fellowship with him. We are to leave the judgment of those that are without the Church to God; it is those within the Church that we are to judge. Therefore Paul commands the Corinthians to put away the wicked man from among themselves.

3. On Going to Law (6:1-11). Christians should settle disputes among themselves within the Church, and not go to law in the courts of unbelievers. The saints are finally to judge even angels; and surely they ought to be able to judge things pertaining to this life (vs. 1-3). Has it come to this that no wise man can be found among the members of the Corinthian church capable of judging between his brethren; so that brethren have to go to law before unbelievers (vs. 4-6)? It is better that Christians should bear wrong and be defrauded rather than go to law before the world (vs. 7-8).

This principle applies when no more important matter is at stake than one's own individual loss, or when the rights of others are not involved. On one occasion Paul used his right as a Roman citizen to appeal to Cæsar (Acts 25:9-11).

The Apostle then sums up what he has been saying in this section about moral questions (vs. 9-11). The unrighteous, and those living in wickedness and immorality, will not inherit the Kingdom of God. The Corinthians were once like that. But they have been "sanctified", set apart from sin to God; they have been "justified", freed from guilt and accounted righteous.

4. The Sanctity of the Body (6:12-20). It is true that all things are lawful for me (Paul is probably quoting a saying of his own which some have been misusing), but it does not follow that all things are good for me. All things that are not immoral are lawful for the Christian; but freedom is not licence. The question for him to answer is, are they expedient? He should not indulge in anything that brings his body under its power. Food is intended for the body, and the body is adapted for food; but both shall be destroyed by death. The body is not intended for fornication, for it belongs to the Lord, who gave Himself for our bodies. They have been sanctified by His resurrection, and are destined to be raised up as His body was raised up (vs. 12-14).

Your bodies are members of Christ. Therefore unchastity is to be abhorred; it is a sin against one's own body. Know you not that the Holy Spirit, which you have received from God, dwells in your body as in a temple? You are not your own; you were bought with a high price when Christ suffered.

Therefore glorify God with your body as well as with your spirit (vs. 15-20).

5. The Subject of Marriage (Ch. 7). A number of questions regarding this matter had been referred to Paul for his judgment. Many of them had to do with local conditions of life in Corinth. Paul's answers contain principles of permanent application, and may be summed up as follows:

(1) The unmarried state is good and has special advantages; but marriage is honourable, and should be the general rule in practice (vs. 1-9). Paul gives certain advice "by way of concession" (v. 6)—that is, by way of permission on his part to the Corinthians. He gives it as a concession to their weakness, not as an injunction. He wishes all had the gift of self-control that he has.

(2) The sanctity of the marriage bond should be preserved (vs. 10-16). The Apostle reminds his readers of the Lord's charge prohibiting divorce (Matt. 5:32; Luke 16:18). Then he gives his own advice regarding married couples when one of the parties is an unbeliever. An unbelieving husband or wife may be saved by the Christian life of the other. When one parent is a believer, the family should be taken into the Christian community and the children should be recognized as "holy"—set apart for God. Paul's teaching is, that the Church should recognize the solidarity of the family, and the children of Christian parents, though not yet believers, should be treated as members of the Christian fellowship. This principle holds even if only one parent is a believer. If, however, it is the unbeliever who desires a separation, let the separ-

ation take place; for we are called as Christians to live in an atmosphere of peace.

(3) Christianity does not interfere with existing relations in human society (vs. 17-24). Jews and Gentiles should remain Jews and Gentiles when they are converted; they should not abandon their former national and social customs. Bondservants should remain in the position they occupied before being converted, for they are now the Lord's freedmen. Those who were freemen before conversion should now be the Lord's bondservants. The general principle for the Christian is stated twice (vs. 20 and 24). Paul says in effect: do not aim at getting on and getting up in the world, but do God's will wherever you are and leave the rest to Him. This does not agree with the maxims of worldly ambition, but it is spiritual wisdom.

(4) The advantages of the unmarried state (vs. 25-40). Paul now returns to the subject of marriage, and takes up the question "concerning virgins", or unmarried daughters under parental care. Before dealing with their special case, which he does not reach till v. 36, he discusses the general principle that covers it. He begins his discussion of this part of the subject by saying that the Lord has left no command about it, but he will give his own judgment according to the light given him (v. 25), and he ends with a modest claim that his judgment is inspired of God (v. 40).

His judgment may be summarized as follows: There are circumstances in which it is better for men and women to remain unmarried, for in that condition they are better able to serve the Lord. The married state ties one to the things of this



world with its joys and its sorrows. The unmarried state leaves one free to "attend upon the Lord without distraction". Paul's advice is based upon the character of the time that is left before the coming of the Lord (v. 29). Christians have no longer anything assured in the present world. They are to live in the world, "as not using it to the full" as if their full enjoyment lay therein; "for the fashion of this world passeth away" (v. 31). It is in the light of this hope they should live, and from this point of view they should treat all earthly questions.

#### SOCIAL RELATIONS IN THE CHURCH (Chs. 8—11)

Difficulties had arisen among the Corinthian Christians in their social relations both with their heathen neighbours and among themselves. These had to do mainly with the eating of meat that had been offered in sacrifice to idols (chs. 8—10), and with the conduct of public worship in the church (ch. 11). In the one case Paul explains and applies the principle of Christian liberty, and in the other case the principle of Christian decorum.

1. The Use of Christian Liberty (Ch. 8). There is a general similarity between this chapter and Rom. 14. There the question has to do with the ceremonial difference between clean and unclean meats; here it has to do with eating meat offered in sacrifice to idols and afterwards sold in the market for food. Paul begins by pointing out the two principles that are to be kept in mind in all such cases—knowledge and love. Knowledge tends to spiritual pride; brotherly love leads to spiritual growth (vs. 1-3). Then he states the question in

the light of knowledge. Knowledge delivers the Christian from the bondage of heathen superstition. He knows that there is no reality in an idol, and that there is but one true God, the Father, and one Lord, Jesus Christ (vs. 4-6).

But some have not this knowledge, and so Paul goes on to state the question in the light of love. A Christian who acts from love will consider the effect his own conduct may have on his brother. He will limit his liberty so as not to offend the conscience of his weaker brother. To offend the weak conscience of one for whom Christ died is to sin against Christ (vs. 7-12). Finally Paul, speaking for himself, states the true use of Christian liberty in regard to the question under consideration: "If meat causeth my brother to stumble, I will eat no flesh forevermore" (v. 13).

2. The Apostle's Example (Ch. 9). Paul now illustrates the proper use of Christian liberty by describing his own conduct as an Apostle in another matter. Although others might question his apostleship, the very existence of the Corinthian church was a proof of it (vs. 1-2). As an Apostle of the Lord he had certain rights with the rest of the Apostles (vs. 3-6). One of these was the right to receive support from the churches that he had founded—to accept a ministry in temporal things from his converts for his ministry to them in spiritual things. He quotes Deut. 25:4 to show that this principle is recognized in the Law (vs. 7-12). But he did not use this right, even though the Lord ordained that they that proclaim the Gospel should be supported by the Gospel. Paul has been restrained from using this right by his thought of the needs of

others, and while preaching the Gospel he has supported himself (vs. 12-18).

His general principle in preaching the Gospel has been that of sympathetic approach. He put himself in the position of those to whom he preached that he might win them for Christ—becoming “all things to all men, that I may by all means save some” (vs. 19-23). He then goes on to emphasize the need of self-restraint in Christian life by an illustration taken from the Greek games, which were held on the Isthmus a few miles from Corinth. The athlete who contends in the race must observe self-control in all things. The crown of victory is won only by rigid discipline (vs. 24-27).

3. The Failure of the Israelites (10:1-22). Paul now turns to Old Testament history, and bases a warning for the Corinthians upon the failure of the Israelites in the wilderness. All the members of the nation shared alike in the high privileges bestowed on them when they were delivered from Egypt through Moses (vs. 1-4). The emphasis is on the word “all”, which is repeated five times. The Apostle treats the historic events of the Exodus as the frame of spiritual realities. He regards the salvation wrought for Israel through Moses as one and the same work with the salvation brought in by Christ. The principles of Divine action which were at work in the redemption from Egypt are the same as those that wrought out the final salvation from sin.

The means of grace provided by God—“the same spiritual food, and the same spiritual drink”—were enjoyed by all the Israelites after they came out of Egypt, but the majority of them perished in the

wilderness because of their self-indulgence (v. 5). Their fate is a type of the lot that threatens the Corinthians if they act in the same way (vs. 6-10). Their lot is a lesson and warning to us. The things that happened to them are historical types of spiritual realities belonging to the present Christian age (v. 11).

The Apostle proceeds to warn the Corinthians against the over-confidence that was too common among them, and adds a comforting assurance of Divine help to encourage their dependence on God (vs. 12-13). Then he returns to the main argument of ch. 8, and gives his converts a tender and solemn warning against taking part in the sacrificial feasts of their heathen neighbours (vs. 14-22). He draws a parallel between these feasts and the feast of the Lord's Supper. The Christian feast means communion with Christ and sharing the benefits of His sacrifice. The heathen feast means communion with demons, for although the idol is nothing in itself, there is a demonic power at work behind the worship of idols.

4. The Limits of Christian Liberty (10:23-33). The whole discussion of the question is now summed up in these verses. Paul begins with a repetition of the words in 6:12, which were probably his own but had been used by some in Corinth in a sense he did not intend. The Christian is free to enjoy anything and everything that belongs to this world of God's. For the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof (Psa. 24:1). But that freedom of his is to be used in accordance with other Christian principles. He is to seek not his own but his neighbour's good, respecting the conscience of his weaker

brother without weakening his own. The promotion of the glory of God is to be the rule of Christian conduct in all matters. No stumbling blocks should be put in the way of any by offending their scruples, whether Jews or Greeks or fellow-members of the Church of God.

5. Decorum in Public Worship (11:1-16). The Apostle now deals with some disorders that had appeared in the public services of the Corinthian church. These arose from the women thinking that their Christian liberty gave them equality with men. He first points out the system of subordination in the divine order of creation (vs. 1-3). As Christ is dependent on God, and man is dependent on Christ, so woman is dependent on man. This order of subordination is to be maintained in the Church and in its worship (vs. 4-6). It is manifested by proper respect for the recognized differences of dress on the part of men and women, and by proper deportment befitting each sex, according to the conventional customs of the social order. Greek women wore a veil in public, and Christian liberty did not give them the right to discard it when they were converted. Only women of low reputation appeared in public unveiled. What Paul describes in these verses practically means that a man with his head covered worshipped as a woman, and a woman with her head uncovered worshipped as a man.

Paul now confirms his teaching in this matter by a direct appeal to the divine order of subordination in the creation (vs. 7-10). Man with his face uncovered represents the image and glory of God. Woman represents the image and glory of man, because she had her being originally through the man,

and not directly from God like the man. She was made subject to the man, and therefore she should have "a sign of authority" on her head, showing that she modestly accepts her place as subordinate to man in the Divine government. And this, "because of the angels". They are present unseen in the worship of the Church of God (Heb. 12:22; 1 Tim. 5:21), and are offended when any dishonour is shown to the Divine majesty.

This difference between men and women in the order of creation does not affect their equality in the Lord. They both share the same privileges in the Church (vs. 11-12). Finally, Paul appeals to the natural feelings of humanity and the fitness of things in general (vs. 13-16). Christianity recognizes the established rules of decorum in every country, and never violates the natural instincts of any people.

6. The Observance of the Lord's Supper (11:17-34). Even this sacred feast had been affected by the factions and social disorders in the Corinthian church. The Apostle now deals with its proper observance. He first rebukes his readers for their abuse of the feast. The service that was intended to be the very symbol of union and communion in the Church was being made the occasion for exhibiting the differences and divisions among the members (vs.17-19). They also turned the spiritual feast into a material one, treating it as an occasion for satisfying their own hunger, as in the idolatrous feasts of their former heathenism (vs. 20-22).

Then in simple and stately language Paul tells of the original institution of the Supper as he had received it from the Lord, and adds his comment

upon it (vs. 23-26). It is the Church's way of proclaiming that the ground of its salvation lies in the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is to be continued till He comes again. There is therefore need of self-examination, lest one commit an offence against the Lord Himself by coming to His table in an irreverent spirit, and by failing to see the Lord's body in the symbols of bread and wine (vs. 27-29). This is the reason why bodily chastisements have been visited upon some members of the Corinthian church. Chastisements are intended for our spiritual discipline, that we may not be involved in the world's judgment (vs. 30-34).

#### SPIRITUAL GIFTS IN THE CHURCH

(Chs. 12—14)

The Corinthian Christians were displaying a personal rivalry in spiritual matters. They were more concerned about gifts than about grace. The Apostle now turns to this aspect of their church life. "Now concerning spiritual gifts" (12:1): the word "gifts" is not in the original, but it expresses as well as any word can what the Apostle has in mind. He means the different ways in which the Holy Spirit manifests His presence in the Church.

1. The Origin and Purpose of Spiritual Gifts (12:1-11). After referring to the frenzies of idol worship by which they were carried away in their former paganism (vs. 1-2), Paul explains to the Corinthians that the presence of the Holy Spirit is the governing principle in the worship of the Church. It is through Him that we recognize the Deity of Jesus and call Him Lord, thus giving Him the Old Testament title of Jehovah (v. 3).



There are different kinds of spiritual gifts and they have different functions, but they are distributed to the various members of the Christian community for the common good (vs. 4-7). Paul illustrates this with a list of nine gifts of the Spirit, given for different purposes (vs. 8-10). It is not implied that these were all the spiritual gifts that were given, nor that they were all given to every church. They are mentioned to show that the Spirit is always sovereign in their disposal—"dividing to each one severally even as he will" (v. 11).

2. The Mutual Relation of Spiritual Gifts (12: 12-31). The Church with its members is like the human body. Believers with their different gifts are related to one another as the different members of the body. The Church is the spiritual body of Christ, created such by the baptism of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. It is one spiritual organism, with many members, sharing one and the same Spirit (vs. 12-13). In the body every member is needed for the sake of the whole body; and each member needs the other members in order to fulfil its own function (vs. 14-21). Even the weaker members are necessary; and we bestow more care upon them and show them more honour, so that there may be no schism in the body, but sympathy and harmony between all its members (vs. 22-26).

The direct application of this analogy follows in the rest of the passage (vs. 27-31). Christians are the body of Christ collectively and His members individually. God has assigned different functions to different members of the Church, but none of these functions is common to the whole Christian body.

A list of functions is given in the order of their rank or importance in the Church. The first is that of the Apostles; next, that of the prophets, or inspired preachers; third, that of the teachers, or expounders of the truth. Then come certain supernatural functions given to various members—the working of miracles and gifts of healing—followed by certain functions for giving help and guidance. The gift of tongues comes last in the list. The Apostle closes with an injunction to his readers to seek after the best gifts, those that minister to the edification of the Church.

3. The Supreme Gift of Love (Ch. 13). This chapter is connected with the last verse of ch. 12, the second part of which should belong to it and may be paraphrased as follows: Moreover I show unto you the most excellent way to attain spiritual greatness, the greatest gift of all, the grace of love. The old word "charity" (A.V.) is now commonly limited to almsgiving, or kindly judgment of others. Paul is describing something larger than that, something that is not merely an emotion but an attitude of mind and heart requiring constant expression.

(1) The pre-eminence of love (vs. 1-3). Love is supreme over the emotional gift of eloquence, over the intellectual gift of knowledge, over the practical gift of faith, and over the heroic gift of self-sacrifice.

(2) The properties of love (vs. 4-7). In this analysis of the grace of love, Paul presents an ideal of the same kind as the beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:3-9). It is another description of the character of Jesus. Here the mark of the Cross is unmistakable; self-will and self-seeking

have completely died away. Its supreme quality is the surrender of self-interest for the sake of others.

(3) The permanence of love (vs. 8-13). Love always holds its place and will never cease to function. Other spiritual gifts have temporary purposes and are only fragmentary. They are suited for a state of imperfection, like that of childhood, and will make way hereafter for that which is full grown. In the present life we have only imperfect vision, but in the next life we shall have perfect knowledge. The abiding graces are faith, hope, and love; and the greatest of these three is love.

4. The Relative Value of Spiritual Gifts (14:1-19). Paul now takes up the two gifts that seem to have caused most rivalry in the Corinthian church, prophecy and tongues, and discusses their relative importance. He points out that the value of a gift depends on what it does for the edification of the Church. Hence prophesying, which edifies men, is more important than speaking with tongues, which edifies oneself and is not understood by others (vs. 1-5). The gift of prophecy was evidently that of proclaiming Christian truth and bearing Christian witness.

The Apostle proceeds to explain that speaking with tongues should be accompanied by interpretation, for without that it is useless (vs. 6-12). Tongues could be interpreted by those who had a sympathetic understanding of what they expressed. Their meaning was felt by the emotional nature rather than understood by the intellect. This gift, therefore, was evidently something of the nature of music, something intermediate between speaking and singing. It was not the power to speak in other

languages. It was the ecstatic and spontaneous expression of those feelings of joy and praise that sprang up in the heart of the convert from heathenism because of his new life in Christ. It was the result of the Holy Spirit's presence within his soul overflowing his human nature.

The spiritual gift of speaking with tongues has passed into the ordered worship of the Church in the form of sacred song and praise. This gift, Paul explains, should not be exercised without interpretation, for those who do not understand what praise and thanksgiving is being expressed are not edified. Paul himself speaks with tongues privately more than they all do. But in a church service he would rather speak five words for the instruction and edification of others than ten thousand words in a tongue that they did not understand (vs. 13-19).

5. The Right Use of Spiritual Gifts (14:20-40). In the use of the gift of tongues the Apostle appeals for common sense (v. 20). Tongues are a sign of God's presence to the unbelieving; and Paul quotes Isa. 28:11-12 as an illustration of God's use of the strange tongue of the Assyrian invaders to warn His own unbelieving people, who would not listen to His prophets speaking to them in their own tongue. But if tongues are unregulated in the services of the church, unbelievers will think you are mad (vs. 21-23). Prophecy, on the other hand, searches the heart of the hearer and brings him face to face with God (vs. 24-25). Let all parts of church worship be carried on for edifying. Those who speak in a tongue should do so in regular order, and only when there is someone present who can interpret (vs. 26-28).

The prophets also should limit themselves to two or three at a meeting, and the congregation should discern the spiritual value of what they say. If a revelation comes to one sitting in the audience, the first speaker should bring his address to a close. It is quite possible for all to speak in turn under inspiration for the instruction and comfort of all, because the spirits of the prophets are under their own control, and God is not a God of confusion but of peace (vs. 29-33). Then comes a prohibition forbidding women to speak in the churches. They are to recognize the subordination in which they are placed according to Gen. 3:16 (vs. 34-36). This cannot be a contradiction of 11:5, which implies that women have the right to pray or prophesy in the church if they are veiled.

The Apostle's prohibition is probably directed against unseemly outbursts of emotional excitement to which the women were especially prone. The warning occurs in connection with Paul's discussion of the gift of tongues, and immediately after his warning about confusion. Then he concludes his discussion with final admonitions addressed to the prophets and others endowed with spiritual gifts (vs. 37-38), and to all the members of the church (vs. 39-40). The gift of prophecy is to be earnestly desired, and speaking with tongues is not to be forbidden. But whatever gifts are exercised, church services should be carried on "decently and in order".

#### THE FUNDAMENTAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH (Ch. 15)

Some members of the Corinthian church had been

declaring that there is no resurrection of the dead. Paul now deals with this error by showing that the Resurrection is the fundamental doctrine of the Christian Church, because the Church is based on the resurrection of Christ.

1. The Fact of Christ's Resurrection (vs. 1-19). Paul reminds the Corinthians that the Gospel which he preached unto them, and by which they are saved, is the story that Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead; and all this was in fulfilment of the Scriptures (vs. 1-4). The fact of His resurrection is proved by the many witnesses to whom He appeared, of whom Paul himself was the last (vs. 5-8). The change that took place in Paul's life, from being a persecutor of the Church to becoming an Apostle of Christ, and his abundant labours afterwards, are evidence of the reality of the risen Lord's appearance to him (vs. 9-11). The Gospel of Christ's resurrection implies the resurrection of the dead; for if the dead do not rise then Christ is still dead, the preaching of the Gospel is useless, and the Apostles are false witnesses (vs. 12-15). If Christ has not been raised, then faith in Him is empty, Christians are yet in their sins, those who have died in Him have perished, and Christian life is a pitiful delusion (vs. 16-19).

2. The Place of the Resurrection in the Plan of God (vs. 20-28). Christ's resurrection is the first-fruits of a great harvest. The same principle that brought death brings life from the dead. As all who are in Adam and have his nature share his death, so all who are in Christ and have His nature will share His resurrection (vs. 20-22). Christ's resurrection is the first in order, then at His coming the

resurrection of those that are His. Finally, when He has put all His enemies under His feet and abolished all the foes of God, He will abolish death itself, the last enemy (vs. 23-26). Then He will deliver up the Kingdom to God, with all things put in subjection to Him, that God may be all in all—that is, that God's sovereignty in the universe may be complete, the life and power of God the Father filling every part and member of it (vs. 27-28).

3. The Hope of the Resurrection in the Life of the Christian (vs. 29-34). Here Paul abruptly changes the course of his thought and brings in another argument for belief in the Resurrection. It is the supreme motive for Christian hope. This is shown by those who are "baptised for the dead" (v. 29). This obscure expression, which has been explained in numberless ways, most probably refers to those who became converts to Christianity "for the sake of the dead", their own beloved dead. They turned to Christ and were baptized in the hope of reunion with them through the resurrection of the dead. This belief is also the motive of those who "stand in jeopardy every hour", and suffer for Christ, as Paul himself did at Ephesus (vs. 30-32). Then the Apostle quotes a Greek proverb to warn his readers that they had been contaminated by a bad moral atmosphere and a false philosophy. They should awake out of their stupifying self-indulgence to righteousness of life. The hope of the Resurrection should impel them to live for spiritual things and avoid worldly pleasures (vs. 33-34).

4. The Nature of the Resurrection Body (vs. 35-49). The Apostle takes up the question raised by some as to the kind of body with which the dead



are raised up (v. 35). He first points out some analogies to illustrate bodily changes and varieties of bodily manifestations (vs. 36-41). These are intended to show that while there will be a continuity of the personality in the resurrection, there will be a difference in the body. He then describes the resurrection body as a spiritual body, and explains the difference between that and the natural body (vs. 42-49). The natural body is the body governed by the animal life. It belongs to the earthly order, and is subject to corruption. The spiritual body belongs to the heavenly order. It is adapted for, and under the control of, the spirit, and is not subject to the present world. As we have borne the image of the earthly in our natural bodies, so we shall bear the image of the heavenly in our spiritual bodies.

5. The Manner of the Resurrection (vs. 50-58). It will be the changing of corruptible and perishable bodies into incorruptible and immortal bodies, so that they may become fit organs of the spirit in the Kingdom of God (v. 50). The change that will take place in the resurrection of the dead saints will be accompanied by a similar change in the living saints. This will all happen as a sudden, momentary event at the second coming of the Lord. Paul announces this as a Divine revelation made to him (vs. 51-53). It will mean the complete triumph over death and the power of sin, and the fulfilment of Isa. 25:8 and Hos. 13:14. The praise for this victory we owe to our Lord Jesus Christ (vs. 54-57). Paul closes his discussion of the Resurrection by summing up the practical bearing of this doctrine on the life and work of the Christian Church (v. 58).

THE CONCLUSION  
(Ch. 16)

Having dealt with the various questions that had been referred to him relating to church life in Corinth, the Apostle now takes up some local and personal matters, and brings his letter to a close.

1. The Collection for the Poor (vs. 1-4). Paul was gathering a fund from the churches of the Gentile world to help the Christians in the Jewish church of Jerusalem, who were in poverty and suffering. Christianity gained the mass of its adherents in Palestine from the poorer classes of the people, and they would suffer still further oppression from the richer classes and from the official leaders among the Jews, who hated the Gospel. The instructions which Paul gives in this passage contain some principles of Christian giving. Giving should be systematic ("upon the first day of the week"), universal ("every one of you"), and proportionate ("as God hath prospered you"). The Apostle also suggests the appointment of delegates to carry the money to Jerusalem. Under no circumstances would he take charge of it himself; he would avoid all suspicion of appropriating any of it to his own use.

2. Paul's Approaching Visit (vs. 5-9). He tells the Corinthians of his plans. He intends to make a journey through Macedonia and then visit Corinth, and perhaps spend the winter there. In the meantime he intends to stay in Ephesus till the early summer—until Pentecost: "for a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries". He would take advantage of such an

opportunity for work, especially because many were trying to close the door upon him.

3. News of His Companions (vs. 10-12). Paul had mentioned Timothy's visit before (4:17). Here he speaks of it with some uncertainty. What is said of Timothy here agrees with what we learn of his character elsewhere. He was comparatively young (1 Tim. 4:12) and perhaps a little timorous, but his work claimed the same respect as Paul's work. Apollos steadfastly declined Paul's earnest request that he should go to Corinth, probably because he feared that his presence there would stir up party spirit again.

4. Final Exhortations (vs. 13-18). The Apostle is preparing to close, and he sums up the message of the whole Epistle in the concise exhortations contained in vs. 13-14. The names mentioned in vs. 15-18 are those of the Corinthian deputies who had brought the letter from the church to Paul. In the fellowship of these three men he felt himself in fellowship with the whole church. They served as a link of sympathetic understanding between himself and them.

5. Final Salutations (vs. 19-24). The salutations that Paul attaches to his letters manifest his personal interest in his fellow Christians and his careful attention to the courtesies of life. The churches of Asia were those that had been founded in that province during Paul's ministry in Ephesus. Aquila and Priscilla had been with Paul in Corinth when he was establishing the church there (Acts 18:1-3), and they were now with him in Ephesus. "All the brethren salute you"—that is, the whole Ephesian church (vs. 19-20). The "holy kiss", or

the kiss of peace, formed a prominent part in the ritual of the early Church as a token of Christian brotherhood (Rom. 16:16; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26; 1 Pet. 5:14).

As the Apostle closes the Epistle with his own hand, after all its argument and controversy, he brings back the thoughts of the Corinthians to the true test of Christianity—personal love for the Lord Jesus Christ. If any one does not love the Lord—the word “not” is emphatic—he should be accursed. The word “Maranatha” is an Aramaic expression, standing by itself. It means “the Lord is at hand” (Phil. 4:5), and fittingly seals the whole message of the book. With a simple benediction and a tender expression of the Apostle’s affection for his readers, the letter comes to a close. As it had begun, so it ends, with the emphasis on the Saviour’s name (vs. 21-24).

## THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS

AFTER writing the First Epistle, Paul sent Titus to Corinth to see if its instructions had been carried out and if the troubles in the church had been settled (2 Cor. 8:6; 12:18). Before Titus returned with his report, the riot took place which hastened the Apostle's departure from Ephesus (Acts 20:1). He set out on his journey into Greece, hoping to meet Titus on the way, and anxiously looking for him. When he reached Troas and found that Titus had not arrived there yet, his anxiety was greatly increased. Although a door was opened for him to preach the Gospel there, he did not stay, but hurried on into Macedonia (2 Cor. 2:12-13). While he was in that province, probably at Philippi, Titus arrived, and Paul's fears were relieved by the tidings he brought (2 Cor. 7:5-7).

Although the situation that Titus found in Corinth was mainly favourable, yet there was a painful element in it. The majority of the members of the church had shown a godly sorrow for their sin and a warm affection for the Apostle. But a new danger had arisen. Emissaries of the Judaizing party, bearing credentials from leaders of the church in Jerusalem, had stirred up a faction opposed to Paul. They denied his apostolic authority, criticized his actions, and asserted that he had no right to the status of an Apostle. It was necessary to meet these charges at once, and this was the occasion of the

present letter. It was written somewhere in Macedonia during the summer of A.D. 56.

Paul's purpose was to encourage the faithful and obedient members of the church, and at the same time to defend and vindicate his apostolic authority against the accusations of his foes. It is the least doctrinal and most personal of all the Apostle's letters. It is an unstudied outpouring of his heart. The one theme that gives it unity is the practical application of the Gospel to the work of the Christian ministry.

Although there is no systematic development of thought, yet there are three clearly marked divisions in the Epistle. The first part (Chs. 1—7) deals with the past. It contains an explanation of the principles and methods that Paul followed in carrying on his apostolic work. It presents an apostolic example for the Christian ministry. The second part (Chs. 8—9) is concerned with the present. It has to do with the collection that was being made at that time by the churches in the provinces of Greece for the poor Jewish saints in the mother-church at Jerusalem. It contains the Apostle's appeal to his Corinthian converts regarding it. In the third part (Chs. 10—13) Paul turns to the future. Looking forward to his approaching visit to Corinth, he proceeds to establish his independent apostolic authority in the eyes of the church. This could only be done by speaking of himself, and it was most painful to him. He shrinks from the task of making his own defence, but it has to be done.

#### CONCERNING THE PAST—AN APOSTOLIC EXAMPLE (Chs. 1—7)

Reviewing his relations with the Corinthians in

the past, Paul explains the principles and motives that guided him in his apostolic ministry. This account of his own ministry sets an example for all ministers of the Gospel.

1. His Recent Affliction in Asia (1:1-14). The Apostle begins with a brief salutation in which he includes his companion Timothy, and he addresses it both to the church in Corinth and to the scattered Christian communities in the whole of Achaia, the southern province of Greece (vs. 1-2). He gives thanks for the comfort he found in the sufferings through which he had recently passed (vs. 3-7). The word "comfort" is repeated again and again; and the whole passage throws light on the value of suffering in the life of the Christian. Paul found in his experience the comfort of God. He had the comfort of sharing in the sufferings of Christ, and being fitted to comfort others in their sufferings.

He then describes the nature of the affliction which befell him in Asia, and tells how God delivered him out of it (vs. 8-11). It brought him the testimony of a good conscience and strengthened his hope in God (vs. 12-14). What particular affliction Paul means, we do not know; but his readers must have known. If he refers to the Ephesian tumult, then that was a more serious attempt on his life than appears from Luke's account in Acts. On the other hand, it is possible that the Apostle is describing the effect of some serious illness that may have occurred elsewhere which brought him down to the gates of death.

2. His Delay in Visiting Corinth (1:15<sup>15</sup>—2:13). Paul's first intention was to visit Corinth twice, once on his way from Ephesus to Macedonia and



again on his way back from Macedonia to Judea. The change in his plan was not due to fickleness or caprice, for he was not following the will of the flesh like a double-minded man (vs. 15-17). The Gospel of the faithful God, the message about His Son, Jesus Christ, which Paul and his companions preached among the Corinthians, was not changeable and unreliable. For in Him all the promises of God are fulfilled and ratified, and thus through the Apostle's preaching God is glorified (vs. 18-20). Such a result does not come from fickleness, but from a steadfastness that is due to God Himself, and from the anointing of the Spirit which God Himself has given (vs. 21-22).

Paul delayed his coming to the Corinthians in order to spare them a painful visit. He did not want to come to them in sorrow, and he waited till they themselves had put away the sin in their midst. He had written to them about it in great grief, that they might know his overflowing love for them (1:23—2:4). Now that the sin has been put away, he appeals to them to forgive the erring member of the church and show him their love, lest he be overwhelmed with sorrow and Satan get the advantage (2:5-11). Then he tells them of his anxiety in not finding Titus in Troas, and of his going on at once to meet him in Macedonia (2:12-13).

3. The Character of the Gospel Ministry (2:14—3:18). In what Paul says here of his own apostolic ministry we have the characteristic qualities of a true Gospel ministry.

(1) It diffuses the knowledge of Christ as a sweet savour (2:14-17). The terms used in this passage

allude to the triumphal procession of a Roman general returning home with a train of captives taken in war. Paul uses this as an illustration of the triumph of Christ in which His ministers share. The phrase, "the savour of his knowledge", is a reference to the fragrant clouds of incense that accompanied the triumphal march as an essential part of it. In the statement, "we are a sweet savour of Christ unto God", Paul claims to be, as it were, an incense-bearer in the procession of the Conqueror.

Such is the work of the ministers of the Gospel. To some they are "the savour from death unto death", and to others "the savour from life unto life". These phrases refer to what was done with the captives at the end of the triumphal procession. Some of them were led off to execution, while others were given their liberty. Thus does Paul indicate the result of the preaching of the Gospel "in them that are saved, and in them that perish". He was not corrupting the word of God like the Judaizing teachers, but was proclaiming it with a sincerity inspired by God.

(2) It manifests the life-giving power of the Spirit (3:1-6). Paul disowns any desire to commend himself. He does not need, "as do some,"—a reference to the Judaizing teachers—any written credentials, "epistles of commendation". The Corinthians themselves, as his converts, are his recommendation, written on his heart, for all men to recognize. They are an epistle of Christ, written through his ministry, not with lifeless ink, but with the Spirit of the living God (vs. 1-3).

As Paul writes this there rises before his mind the Old Testament promise that the Law should be written on the heart (Jer. 31:33). This was to be the special function of the New Covenant, and it is being carried on by the Spirit through those who are qualified to be ministers of the New Covenant, and whose "sufficiency is from God". Paul states the essential difference between the two Covenants in these words: "the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life". All that the Law can do is to make men conscious of sin, to show that they are dead in sin. The Holy Spirit alone has the power to give life (vs. 4-6).

(3) It possesses an abiding glory (3:7-11). Paul's thoughts now go back to the story of the giving of the Law. When Moses came down from the mount with the tables of stone, his face shone with a glory that he carried from the presence of God. (Exod. 34:29-35). But that glory gradually passed away, and Moses wore a veil on his face that the people might not see it fading. Such was the Old Covenant, which ministered condemnation. It had a glory of its own, but it was a glory that could not abide. Much more glorious is the New Covenant, which ministers righteousness. It has "the glory that surpasseth".

(4) It reveals the transforming power of the Lord (3:12-18). Paul now speaks without reserve. He declares that just as the veil over Moses' face prevented the Israelites from seeing that the glory there was passing away, so the veil over their hearts to-day prevents them from seeing that their Law was not permanent, but has been fulfilled and done away in Christ (vs. 12-15). But whenever the heart

turns to the Lord, then the veil is taken away (v. 16).

Then the Apostle reverts to what he had said in v. 6 about the Spirit, and declares that "the Lord is the Spirit". He means that it is from Jesus Christ in His glorified state as the risen and ascended Lord that the ministry of the Spirit is carried on. Then he adds, "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty", with an allusion to the bondage of the Jews who are still living under the letter of the Law (v. 17). Finally he describes the way that the Spirit of the Lord carries on His ministry in the lives of believers. We Christians, he says, "with unveiled faces reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord" (marg.), are being transformed into His likeness from one degree of glory to another, by the influence of His Spirit (v. 18).

4. The Spirit of the Gospel Ministry (4:1-5:10). This section may be summarized under two expressions, each of which occurs twice in the course of it: "we faint not" (4:1, 16), and "we are of good courage" (5:6, 8).

(1) Fainting not in tribulation (ch. 4). The fact that the ministry of so glorious a Gospel has been entrusted in mercy to us, says Paul, makes us renounce all dishonest and underhand practices (such as those his enemies used at Corinth), and leads us to recommend the truth to the conscience of every man by our lives (vs. 1-2). The god of this world blinds the unbelieving, and prevents them from seeing that the light of the Gospel reveals the image of God in the glory of Christ (vs. 3-4). The true God, who called light to shine out of darkness at the

beginning (Gen. 1:3), has given us light to see the glory of God revealed in Jesus Christ (vs. 5-6).

But we carry the treasure of this ministry in frail vessels, showing that the power by which we are able to fulfil it is God's, and not our own. We are subjected on every side to suffering and persecution, but this does not break us down. While the dying of Jesus is repeated in the wearing out of the body, the triumphant life of Jesus is also manifested in us (vs. 7-10). While we live, we are continually exposed to death for Jesus' sake. The faith expressed by the Psalmist (116:10) enables us to carry on this ministry for your sakes (vs. 11-15). Though the body keeps decaying, the spirit is being constantly renewed. Our present suffering, which is only momentary, is light in comparison with the weight of the coming glory. We keep our eyes on the unseen world, which is eternal, and not upon the visible world, which lasts only for a season (vs. 16-18).

(2) Of good courage in view of the coming glory (5:1-10). Paul now explains the secret of his calmness and courage in the midst of his afflictions. He looks beyond them to the glorified body in which he will dwell, as in an eternal habitation, when his present earthly tabernacle has been dissolved. In the present earthly body we feel the burden and weariness of life, and we long to have the heavenly tabernacle put on over the earthly house. Then we shall not be left through death without a body. God Himself has made us ready for this transformation by putting the Holy Spirit within us as a partial fulfilment and pledge (vs. 1-5).

Confidence in God and in the pledge He gives us

makes us of good courage in the face of death. While we are in the body we are absent from the Lord, walking by faith in Him without seeing Him. We are of good courage even in prospect of death, preferring to be absent from the body and present with the Lord. Therefore, whatever befalls us, whether at home with the Lord or absent from Him, our ambition is to be acceptable to Him when the day of testing comes. For we must all appear before His judgment-seat, that each of us may receive the due reward of what his bodily life has wrought (vs. 6-10).

5. The Motive of the Gospel Ministry (5:11—6:10). In the light of this coming judgment-day, the Apostle goes on to speak of the motives of his ministry. They may be summarized as follows:

(1) The fear of the Lord (5:11-13). Knowing how the Lord is to be feared, Paul goes on pleading with men. God knows that his motives are unselfish and genuine, and he hopes that the Corinthians also know this, that they may be able to defend him against his opponents, who have only the outward appearance of things to glory in and not inward sincerity.

(2) The love of Christ (5:14-15). Christ's love for men constrains Paul and holds him to his ministry. Paul had come to see that if Christ died as representing all, then all died in Him. If He died for all, we should further the purpose of His death by living for Him and not for ourselves.

(3) The new creation (5:16-17). When Paul says, "even though we have known Christ after the flesh", he seems to admit that he had seen and known Jesus of Nazareth before his conversion.

To be a true witness that Jesus had risen from the dead, the Apostle must have seen Him before His resurrection. But Paul goes on to say, "yet now we know him so no more"; that is, he is not preaching the Christ of the flesh, but the risen Christ, the Christ of the new creation.

(4) The reconciling work of Christ (5:18-21). The Gospel is a message of reconciliation. It contains the good news that God has been reconciled to men through Christ, together with an appeal to men through the ambassadors of Christ to be reconciled to God. This passage is one of the finest definitions of the Gospel in the whole New Testament. The gospel is "the word of reconciliation". There was a two-sided estrangement between God and man. In the death of Christ, God accomplished something which put away the cause of estrangement on His side. It is the story of what God has done that constitutes the Gospel. It appeals to men to believe in the love of God and put away their distrust of Him.

(5) The grace of God (6:1-10). Because of the reconciling work of Christ, the grace of God is now extended to men. By quoting Isa. 49:8 Paul leads up to his own statement, that this is the day in which to obtain salvation (vs. 1-3). As one of those who are "working together" with Christ, Paul seeks to commend his ministry of the grace of God by an irreproachable life under all kinds of circumstances (vs. 4-10). In this glowing passage Paul heaps phrase upon phrase—there are twenty-eight of them—to describe the character of his life as a minister of the Gospel. They depict it in both its physical and its spiritual aspect, on its passive and its active side. In their variety and their contrasts



they give us a vivid idea of the range of the Apostle's experiences.

6. A Plea for Consecration (6:11—7:16). Declaring his affection for his converts (6:11-13), the Apostle appeals for separation from all the iniquity and defilement of the heathen world around them, and he supports his appeal by quoting Lev. 26:12, Isa. 52:11, and Jer. 31:1 (6:14—7:1). Then he goes on to appeal for confidence in himself (7:2-4). He tells them of his meeting with Titus in Macedonia, and of the comfort that he got from his presence and from the news he brought (7:5-7).

He did not regret the sorrow that his first letter gave the Corinthians, for it led them to a repentance that was not to be regretted. It was a godly sorrow, not the sorrow of the world which is only remorse, and it resulted in works of reformation among them and in proving them innocent of complicity in the sin. Thus the effect of his letter was to bring out their real feeling for Paul (7:8-12). Then he refers again to the comfort that the news from Corinth gave him, which was all the greater when he saw the joy of Titus and his affection for the Corinthians because of the way they had received him (7:13-16).

#### CONCERNING THE PRESENT—AN APOSTOLIC APPEAL (Chs. 8—9)

This section deals with the collection for the Jewish saints in the church at Jerusalem, to which Paul had referred at the close of his First Epistle (16:1-4). He desired that this should be completed before his arrival in Corinth, so that it might not seem to be done under compulsion. He regarded this collection as a matter of great importance. It

was an evidence of the unity of the Spirit that bound all the churches together, and a conspicuous proof of the reality of the Christian faith. The Apostle discusses the matter in these chapters with fine, delicate consideration, and shows us what Christian liberality really is.

1. The Grace of Liberality (8:1-15). Paul first tells the Corinthians what the churches of Macedonia had done in circumstances of great affliction and deep poverty (Macedonia was the northern province of Greece. cf. 1:1). The grace of God was manifested in their liberality. They gave with joy, to the limit of their ability and of their own accord, having first put themselves at the service of the Lord and of the Apostle in the matter (vs. 1-5). Paul has urged Titus to complete this same grace among the Corinthians which he had already begun. As they abound in other graces, let them abound in this grace also, and prove their own sincerity. The great incentive to it is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in becoming poor that we might be rich (vs. 6-9).

The grace of liberality does not end in good intentions; it is completed when the doing is added to the willing. The giving is acceptable to God according to a man's willingness to give in proportion to his means, not according to the intrinsic value of the gift (vs. 10-12). The purpose of Christian giving is to bring about "equality", or a balance—the abundance of those who have supplying the need of those who have not (vs. 13-15).

2. The Deputation Sent to Corinth (8:16—9:5). Paul has sent Titus to Corinth to care for the collection, and Titus has accepted the mission willingly (8:16-17). Along with him he has sent two others

who are unnamed and whose identity is unknown. One of these, "the brother whose praise in the gospel is spread through all the churches", was chosen by the churches to be Paul's travelling companion in the matter of the contribution he was gathering, so that there would be no doubt of the Apostle's honesty regarding it (8:18-21). The other unnamed deputy, whom Paul speaks of as "our brother, whom we have many times proved earnest in many things", seems also to have been appointed by the churches; for in commending them all, Paul refers to these two as "the messengers of the churches" (8:22-24).

The Apostle goes on to say that he does not need to write to the Corinthians about the general question of ministering to the saints; for he has told the Macedonians of their zeal, and it has stirred them up to emulation (9:1-2). But he has sent the deputation to them, that his glorying about them may not be in vain, and that their gifts may be ready when he arrives (9:3-5).

3. An Appeal for Liberality (9:6-15). The Apostle now proceeds with a final exhortation. He assures them that the exercise of liberality yields a rich harvest. Let each man give with deliberate purpose, not grudgingly or reluctantly, but cheerfully (vs. 6-7). God is able to repay them in kind and enrich them for the increasing exercise of liberality, and he quotes Psa. 112:9 to support his plea (vs. 8-11). Their liberality will confer both material and spiritual blessings upon the saints, and will bring glory and thanksgiving to God; for it will prove to the Jewish saints the reality of the Christian love which the Corinthians have, and it will deepen the warm sense of fellowship between Jews

and Gentiles (vs. 12-14). This section of the Epistle comes to a close with a jubilant utterance of praise for God's "unspeakable gift" (v. 15).

CONCERNING THE FUTURE—AN APOSTOLIC DEFENCE  
(Chs. 10—13)

The opening words of ch. 10 — "Now I Paul myself" — indicate that the Apostle is coming to a new and more personal matter. The third and last division of the Epistle begins here. In view of his approaching visit to Corinth, and in preparation for it, Paul now proceeds to defend and vindicate his apostolic authority against the criticisms of the Judaizing faction in the church who still opposed him. This accounts for the marked change of tone in what follows.

1, His Opponents' Charges (Ch. 10). This chapter reflects the kind of opposition that Paul had to meet from the Judaizers, and reveals his own bearing in the face of it. They said that he was very bold and courageous when absent, but very meek and subdued when present among the Corinthians (v. 1), and that he was a man of the world, walking according to the flesh (v. 2). He could write weighty and powerful letters, but his personal appearance was insignificant and his oratory was of no account (v. 10). They claimed that they themselves were the true Christians (v. 7): they belonged to the Christ party (1 Cor. 1:12). They commended one another, making themselves the standard of measurement (v. 12).

In the face of all this, Paul takes the meekness and gentleness of Christ for his example, but he begs his readers not to drive him to act, when he

visits them, with that fearless decision with which he is quite prepared to confront his foes (vs. 1-2). Though living in the flesh and within human limitations, he does not war after the flesh. The weapons he uses are spiritual, and are of mighty power against the self-sufficiency and pride of man. He is ready to execute justice upon the disobedient when the loyalty of the church is restored (vs. 3-6).

If there is any one in Corinth who assumes that he belongs to Christ's party, let him reflect that Paul can make the same claim. The Apostle's authority rests in the commission that Christ has given him. It is an authority to build up the church and not to break it down, as his opponents are doing (vs. 7-9). Let those who say that Paul claims this authority only in his letters, and not in person, reflect that when he comes in person he will manifest his authority no less strongly in action (vs. 10-11). He does not measure his claims by their standard. The measure of the commission given him by God over the Gentile world extends to the Corinthians (vs. 12-14). He is not building his work on the labours of other men, and he hopes to take the Gospel into regions beyond Corinth. With a reference to Jer. 9:24, Paul declares that the only true commendation is that which comes from the Lord (vs. 15-18).

2. The Apostle's Reply (11:1-15). He appeals to his readers to bear with him in the foolish thing he is about to do. He is driven to it by his jealousy for the honour of God and his concern for his converts. He betrothed them to Christ through the Gospel at their conversion, that he might present the church of Corinth to Him as a true bride. But

he fears lest they should be turned away from the simplicity and purity of their devotion to Christ, as Eve was deluded by the craftiness of the serpent (vs. 1-3). If some one comes proclaiming a different Jesus from Him whom Paul proclaimed, or if they are presented with a different kind of spirit from the one they received from Paul, or a different kind of Gospel from the one they accepted from him—then they submit to it well enough (v. 4).

The Apostle now proceeds to make his defence with no mock modesty. As to his credentials, he counts himself in no respect inferior to his opponents—those pre-eminent apostles. Though untrained, as compared with them, in the arts of speech, he is not behind them in true knowledge, the knowledge of divine things. He has shown this in all details of his work among the Corinthians (vs. 5-6). Did he commit a wrong in preaching the Gospel among them without charge, humiliating himself that they might be uplifted? He accepted from other churches more than was their share of his support, that he might serve the Corinthians without laying any burden on them (vs. 7-9). He boasts of his independence in doing this in the province of Achaia; for he did it because of his love for the Corinthians, and because of his desire to give no occasion to false teachers to prey upon them in the guise of Apostles of Christ (vs. 10-13). It is not surprising that they should do this, for even Satan himself is wont to masquerade as an angel of light (vs. 14-15).

3. The Apostle's Labours (11:16—12:13). He asks his readers to bear with him in his foolishness as he goes on to boast in his own behalf. He shows very great reluctance in doing this. He confesses

that he is not speaking by inspiration from the Lord, but following the example of his opponents (11:16-21). They were of the Judaizing party, and Paul first compares himself with them on their own ground. And then he goes on to give a summary of his labours and sufferings for Christ, which were such as none of them had ever endured (11:22-27).

These few verses throw a flood of light on Paul's career. The incidents he mentions are passed over almost entirely in the Book of Acts. Besides all these outward things, he goes on to say, there is the spiritual burden he carries daily, his care for all the churches and his sympathy for all his converts (11:28-29). Paul then turns away from apparent self-praise to the praise of God, and boasts of his natural weakness, which would make his work impossible but for the strength and protecting care of God (11:30-33).

With a fresh apology he proceeds to boast of heavenly visions and revelations, especially of one that was given him fourteen years before, in which he heard things unlawful for a man to utter (12:1-6). The date of this experience would be about A.D. 42, when Paul was in Tarsus or Antioch before he had entered upon his missionary labours (Acts 9:30; 11:25-26). That he might not be unduly exalted by these revelations, he was given "a thorn in the flesh", some physical infirmity which he had to suffer continually. What this was we have no means of knowing, and it is futile to speculate about it. Paul regarded it as "a messenger of Satan" sent to buffet him, and petitioned the Lord three times that it might depart from him. But instead



of removing it, the Lord gave him strength to bear it, thus showing the sufficiency of His grace.

Therefore Paul glories in his weaknesses for Christ's sake, for through them the strength of Christ is revealed as dwelling in him (12:7-10). He finally declares that this foolishness of his in boasting was made necessary by the failure of the Corinthians to recognize the signs of an Apostle that had been wrought when he was among them (12:11-13).

4. His Approaching Visit (12:14—13:10). The Apostle now tells the Corinthians that for the third time he has been in a state of readiness to go to them, and when he does go he will continue to labour in their interest without accepting support at their hands. His actions are prompted by love for them, and he would gladly be spent for their souls (12:14-15). He then refers to the insinuation of his enemies that he made use of the agents whom he sent to take advantage of the Corinthians. He answers the charge by appealing to what they themselves know of Titus and the messengers who accompanied him. Did Titus over-reach them? Was not his spirit and conduct the same as Paul's? (12:16-18). He is not excusing himself, but aiming at their edification. He is preparing them for his coming, lest he find sins of self-will and self-indulgence among them, lest he be humbled by seeing the failure of his work, and have to mourn over many who have previously lived in sin and have never repented of their former wickedness and impurity (12:19-21).

He reminds them again of his approaching visit, which is the third time he has planned to come; and he warns them that it will not be in vain. If they

seek a proof of the power of Christ speaking in him, they shall have it (13:1-4). Let them put their own selves to the proof that they are in the faith. Paul hopes that they will come to know that he, at all events, is not a false disciple of Christ (13:5-6). He prays that they may take no false step this time. It is not their good opinion he seeks, but the purity of their lives. He has no ambitions for himself, but only for their perfecting (13:7-9). He writes these things while absent, that he may not have to deal sharply with them when present (13:10).

5. The Conclusion (13:11-14). The letter has come to an end. Much of it has been written in a tone of severity and indignation. But the love of the Apostle for his converts has been behind it all. And now that love speaks out in a few farewell words. They are brief, disconnected exhortations; but they sum up the practical message of the Epistle. Paul closes the letter with the apostolic benediction in its most complete and perfect form. It refers to the three Persons of the Godhead, and corresponds with the high-priestly benediction of Num. 6:24-26.

## THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

THE churches to which this letter was written were those established in the cities of Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe during Paul's first missionary journey. The story of this mission is told in Acts 13—14. The region in which these cities lay was the southern part of the large Roman province of Galatia, which occupied the centre of Asia Minor. Hence the Apostle addressed the churches as a group under the name of the province—"the churches of Galatia" (1:2).

Another view, which was once widely held but is now largely given up, regards these churches as belonging to "the region of Galatia" mentioned in Acts 16:6, through which Paul passed on his second missionary journey. This district was in the northern part of the province, to which it had given its name, and was so called because it was inhabited by a Gallic people whose ancestors had entered Asia Minor in the third century B.C. Luke gives no hint in Acts that Paul carried on any mission in North Galatia, while he gives a detailed account of the Apostle's work in South Galatia. And besides, Barnabas, who was Paul's companion in South Galatia but was not with him when he passed through North Galatia, is mentioned in the Epistle as personally known to the Galatians (2:13). The very deep concern which Paul shows in this letter for his beloved converts in the Galatian churches

falls in best with the idea that these were the first churches that he had founded in the Gentile world rather than churches of which no account at all has been given in the story of his missionary labours.

During Paul's absence from the churches of Galatia, Judaizing teachers had visited them and declared that there was no salvation for the Gentiles unless they were circumcised and observed the Law of Moses. When Paul heard that his converts were beginning to depart from the Gospel of salvation by faith in Christ alone which he had preached among them, he wrote this letter to correct this false teaching and arrest their apostasy. A reference that he makes in the course of it to the occasion when he preached the Gospel to them "the first time" (4:13), implies that he had already made two visits to Galatia, for the word used strictly means "the former time," as the margin indicates. It would seem, therefore, that the Epistle was written after the Apostle's second missionary journey. He probably wrote it before he set out from Antioch on his third journey in the summer of A.D. 53 (Acts 18:22-23).

The theme of the Epistle is the liberty of the Gospel of Christ. Paul shows that the Gospel is entirely free from the Law, and that the Cross of Christ liberates the believer from bondage to law and ritual. All Christianity is explained by the Cross. The Cross is the principle of everything in the Christian's life. The Epistle is the severest in tone of all Paul's letters. It is the only one of his letters to the churches that contains no thanksgiving for its readers. Instead of that, there is an indignant expression of surprise that his converts are departing from the faith, and an emphatic curse is

twice pronounced upon those who have been leading them astray (1:8-9).

The Epistle is in three equal parts. In the first part, which is personal (Chs. 1—2), Paul asserts and defends his independent apostolic authority for preaching the Gospel. In the second part, which is doctrinal (Chs. 3—4), he explains and illustrates the doctrine of salvation by faith apart from the Law. In the third part, which is practical (Chs. 5—6), he describes the kind of life that results from the freedom which salvation by faith in Christ gives.

#### THE APOSTLE OF LIBERTY

(Chs. 1—2)

Paul prepares to vindicate the Gospel of free grace which he has preached among the Galatians by asserting and defending his independent apostolic authority. He received the Gospel and his commission to preach it directly from God.

1. The Introduction (1:1-10). The Apostle strikes his key-note at once in the opening salutation. He expands his official title into a statement of his direct commission from God, and when he mentions the name of the Lord Jesus Christ he dwells on His redeeming work (vs. 1-5). Instead of the usual thanksgiving, which comes at this point in his other letters to the churches, Paul proceeds, in the tone of rebuke, to explain his reason for writing. He marvels that so soon after their conversion the Galatians are turning away from the grace of God to another gospel. There cannot be two Gospels; but certain men are attempting to pervert the Gospel of Christ. The Apostle then pronounces a solemn curse upon them (vs. 6-8). And he repeats it, thus

showing that, as a servant of Christ, he is not looking for the favour of men (vs. 9-10).

2. Proof of his Apostleship (1:11—2:21). He now proceeds to support his independent apostolic authority by three personal arguments.

(1) The manner of his conversion to Christ (1:11-24). The Gospel which he preached was not received from man. It came to him "through revelation of Jesus Christ". Paul is referring to his Damascus vision (vs. 11-12). They have heard of his former manner of life, how he persecuted the Christian Church above measure, and how he excelled his contemporaries in zeal for the Jew's religion. He was a fanatic in defence of the traditions of his fathers (vs. 13-14). His conversion was foreordained before he was born, and was a work of God's grace. When it did take place, he did not confer with human advisers, but went away into retirement in Arabia and then returned to Damascus (vs. 15-17).

Three years afterwards he went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and stayed with him only a fortnight. He saw none of the other Apostles except James the Lord's brother (vs. 18-20). After that he went to the distant regions of Syria and Cilicia, and thus was personally unknown to the Christian community in Judea. They had only heard that their former persecutor was now preaching the faith which he had once tried to destroy, and they glorified God for his conversion (vs. 21-24).

(2) His reception by the brethren in Jerusalem (2:1-10). After an interval of fourteen years Paul went up again to Jerusalem along with Barnabas, his fellow-labourer among the Gentiles, taking Titus

with him, who was an uncircumcised Greek. This journey was prompted by a direct revelation from God; and he laid before the leaders of the church, in a private conference, the terms of the Gospel he was preaching among the Gentiles, lest his work should be discredited (vs. 1-2). While he held conference with the Apostles of the circumcision, Paul did not yield to the Judaizing agitators in their attempt to have Titus circumcised. They had insinuated themselves into the midst of the brethren and were striving to subvert the liberty of the Gospel by fraudulent methods (vs. 3-5).

The reputable leaders of the Jewish church — their reputation made no difference to him—taught Paul nothing new. And they had no fault to find with him. On the contrary, they received him as an equal, and recognized that he had been given a mission among the Gentiles, as Peter had been given a mission among the Jews (vs. 6-8). The pillar Apostles, James, Peter, and John, gave Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, recognizing that their respective spheres of labour were to be separate, and only asking them to remember the poor brethren of Judea (vs. 9-10). The visit to Jerusalem to which Paul makes reference here was at the time of the council described in Acts 15.

(3) His rebuke of Peter at Antioch (2:11-21). On the occasion of Peter's visit to Antioch, Paul had to withstand him. Peter at first ate with the Gentile Christians, but afterwards drew back for fear of the Jewish brethren from the church in Jerusalem. The other Jews, and even Barnabas, were carried away by his example (vs. 11-13). When Paul saw that the liberty of the Gospel was being comprom-



ised, he rebuked Peter before them all, pointing out that the Jews themselves, by believing in Christ for justification had acknowledged that no man can be justified by the works of the Law (vs. 14-16). If after seeking justification in Christ, we should turn again to the Law for justification, it would mean that Christ had only led us deeper into sin. Such a thought is not to be tolerated. On the contrary, sin is seen, not in leaving the Law for Christ, but in going back from Christ to the Law (vs. 17-18).

Now Paul goes on to say that it was the Law itself that led him to abandon the Law and become dead to it, that he might live a life consecrated to God. He has got beyond the reach of the Law by sharing the crucifixion of Christ. It is the life of Christ that now lives in him. His own earthly life is lived by personal faith in the Son of God, the Saviour who loved him and died for him. If he went to the Law for righteousness like the Judaizers, he would be declaring the death of Christ to be useless (vs. 19-21). In these verses we have the same idea of spiritual union with Christ that the Apostle develops in Rom. 6:1-10.

#### THE GOSPEL OF LIBERTY

(Chs. 3—4)

Having established his right to preach the Gospel, the Apostle proceeds to establish the doctrine of salvation by faith alone. The Gospel means that salvation comes from the grace of God, and not from the observance of the Law.

1. The Doctrine Proved (Ch. 3). Paul builds up his argument on the basis of the following facts:

(1) The conversion of the Galatians (vs. 1-5). When Paul proclaimed Christ crucified among them and set Him forth before them, did they receive the gift of the Spirit then by obeying the commands of the Law, or by believing the word he preached? Having begun their new life in the Spirit, are they so foolish as to seek perfection through the observance of an outward rite? Have their past sufferings for Christ been in vain? Is the mighty work of the Spirit which is going on among them due to their observance of the Law, or to the faith with which they hearkened to the Gospel?

(2) The experience of Abraham (vs. 6-9). He was accepted as righteous because of his faith (Gen. 15:6). Only those that exercise faith are the true children of Abraham. It is they who receive his blessing. This was the blessing of salvation which God intended for the Gentiles when He gave Abraham the promise: "In thee shall all the nations be blessed" (Gen. 12:3).

(3) The failure of the Law to justify (vs. 10-14). The Law only lays us under a curse, for it is impossible to fulfil its requirements (Deut. 27:26). The Scripture shows that no man is held righteous before God by his observance of the Law, for it says, "The righteous shall live by faith" (Hab. 2:4); and the Law does not depend on faith, but demands the fulfilment of its commands (Lev. 18:5). Christ has redeemed us from the curse that the Law lays upon us (Deut. 21:23). He has assumed the curse for us, so that the blessing of justification given to Abraham might pass to the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, and that we might receive the gift of the Spirit through faith.

(4) The place of the Law in the plan of God (vs. 15-18). Here Paul introduces a human illustration drawn from a social contract between men. God made a covenant with Abraham, giving certain promises to him and to "his seed". This had special reference to Christ. The Law came in long afterwards, before the promise was fulfilled, and as distinct from it. It did not annul the covenant or change the terms of the promise. If our share of what was given to Abraham by promise depends on our observance of the Law, then it has ceased to be a matter of promise.

NOTE:—Paul's argument in v. 16, that the promise to Abraham's seed refers to Christ, does not rest upon the mere use of the singular word "seed" instead of the plural "seeds", but upon the fact that the word used is a singular collective noun. The Apostle is pointing out that the covenant with Abraham restricted his seed to one line. The descendants of Hagar and Keturah were not included. A similar argument is used in Rom. 9:6-8. The seed of Abraham means, in the first place, the Jewish people. But the Jewish race was summed up and fulfilled its purpose in the Messiah. He was the true seed of Abraham as the representative and embodiment of the people, and through Him they became a blessing to the whole earth. In accordance with the analogy of Scripture interpretation, the natural in the Old Testament is replaced by the spiritual in the New Testament. The seed of Abraham becomes the spiritual seed, who are gathered up in their one Head and Representative, Jesus Christ.

(5) The real purpose of the Law (vs. 19-24). It

was added to the promise in order to reveal sin and show the need of a Saviour, and it was designed to operate until the coming of the promised Seed. It was given through a mediator, being enacted by angels as a contract between God and Israel. But in the case of the promise, there is no contract through a mediator; everything depends on God alone (vs. 19-20). The Law is not opposed to the promises of God. It cannot give life, but it condemns all alike, and so prepares the way for the fulfilment of the promise to those that believe in Christ (vs. 21-22). Before faith came, the Jews—Paul refers to them as “we”—were kept under guard by the Law. It watched over them as a moral guardian till Christ should come, so that they might be justified by faith (vs. 23-24).

(6) The freedom that faith brings (vs. 25-29). It sets us free from guardianship. By faith in Jesus Christ, and by our spiritual baptism into Him, we are all united together in the one body of Christ. In union with Christ Jesus there is no difference between Jew and Greek, bondslave and freeman, male and female. If we belong to Christ we are Abraham's seed and heirs of the promise of salvation.

2. The Doctrine Illustrated (Ch. 4). Paul now brings in two analogies to illustrate the difference between the Law and the Gospel, and to show that they are two stages in the development of God's plan of salvation.

(1) The analogy of the heir (vs. 1-20). Every heir during his childhood is under guardians like a bondslave. When he comes of age he is free and has the privileges of a son. The first state is like

that of the Jews under the Law during the old dispensation. The second state is like that under the Gospel during the new dispensation. When the time was ripe, God sent His Son, born under human conditions subject to the Law, that He might ransom all who were under the Law, and introduce us to the state of sonship. And to prove that we are His sons, He has sent the Spirit of His own Son to come into our hearts, prompting us to cry to God as our Father (vs. 1-7).

You Gentiles in your former condition were bond-slaves to idolatry, and you have now come to recognize God as your Father, or rather to be recognized by God as members of His family. How is it that you are turning back again to what are mere elementary and impotent things, and are willing to become slaves to them again? You are observing all the seasons of the Jewish dispensation and the Mosaic Law. I fear that all my labour among you may have been in vain (vs. 8-11).

I beseech you to become free as I am by shaking off all this formalism. You have never wronged me yet; do not do it now. You remember how it was owing to a physical infirmity that I came to preach the Gospel among you the first time. My bodily affliction was a trial to you; yet you did not loathe me, but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ the Saviour Himself. What has become of the happiness you showed then? I can testify that you would have plucked out your very eyes and given them to me (vs. 12-15).

Am I your enemy when I tell you the truth? These false teachers are trying to win you, but for no good end. They want to shut you out from

Christ, that you may seek their favour. It is well that your good should be earnestly sought at all times, even when I am absent from you (vs. 16-18). My own little ones, for whom I am in travail again until the likeness of Christ be formed in you, I wish that I might be present with you now and speak in a different strain from this. I am at a loss to know how to deal with you (vs. 19-20).

(2) The allegory of Abraham's two sons (vs. 21-31). Paul now turns to the case of Abraham's two sons, Ishmael and Isaac, to illustrate the difference between the bondage of the Law and the freedom of the Gospel. The difference is drawn out as follows: Hagar, the bondswoman, represents the Covenant of the Law; and her son Ishmael, born after the flesh, represents the state of bondage under the Law; Sarah, the freewoman, represents the Covenant of promise; and her son, Isaac, born according to the promise, represents the state of freedom under the Gospel (vs. 21-24).

The Apostle carries the analogy further by explaining that the Old Covenant belongs to the earthly order and the New Covenant to the heavenly order (vs. 25-27). Hagar represents Mount Sinai, from which the Covenant of the Law came, and answers to the earthly Jerusalem. Correspondingly, Sarah represents Mount Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb. 12:22). She is our mother according to the Gospel, and of her Isaiah wrote (54:1). Paul completes the application of the allegory by pointing out that just as the natural son was wont to persecute the son born after the Spirit, so it is now. As the bondswoman and her son were cast out, and as her son did not share the inheritance with the

son of the freewoman, so, the analogy implies, the Covenant of the Law was ultimately to disappear. Then Paul draws the final inference: we should act as children of the freewoman (vs. 28-31).

#### THE LIFE OF LIBERTY

(Chs. 5—6)

The Apostle now applies the doctrine of salvation by faith to practical conduct, and describes the kind of life that results from the freedom which the Gospel gives. The teaching of this part of the Epistle may be summarized under the following main ideas:

1. Standing Fast in the Liberty of Christ (5: 1-12). Paul appeals to his converts not to be entangled in bondage again. If they submit to circumcision, they are placing themselves under obligation to observe the whole Mosaic Law. Christ will not avail them, for they are severing themselves from Him. If they seek righteousness by the observance of the Law, they have fallen away from the grace of God (vs. 1-4). We Christians, he says, living in the Spirit, wait by faith for the final state of righteousness that we hope for. It makes no difference whether we are circumcised or un-circumcised. Faith in Christ is the one principle of life, and faith shows its efficacy through love (vs. 5-6).

Who tripped you up in the race you were running so well, so that you are turning away from the truth? The influence you are yielding to does not come from God who called you. The leaven introduced by the false teachers, though it seems little, will affect the whole Church. I have confidence in



you as a whole, but whoever is disturbing you will have the judgment of God visited upon him (vs. 7-10).

At this point Paul alludes to the malicious charge of his enemies that he was doing the very thing he condemns them for: he had Timothy circumcised, who once belonged to the Galatian churches (Acts 16:1-3). To this he replies that the persecutions he suffers from the Judaizers show that he does not preach circumcision. If he did preach circumcision, there would be no need to preach the Cross. Paul wishes that those who are causing trouble would openly secede from the church (vs. 11-12).

2. Serving One Another in Love (5:13-15). You have been called to freedom; only do not make it a pretext for self-indulgence. There is one servitude we may submit to—the service of love to one another. The whole Law is fulfilled in the command to love one's neighbour as oneself (Lev. 19:18). Dissensions, on the other hand, would be fatal to all who took part in them.

3. Walking in the Spirit (5:16-26). The way to overcome the power of the flesh is to order your lives by the guidance of the Spirit and live in the power of the Spirit. The Spirit and the flesh are mutually antagonistic, and if you surrender to the Spirit you have escaped from the dominion of the Law (vs. 16-18). The Apostle follows this instruction with a list of "the works of the law", with which he contrasts "the fruit of the Spirit" (vs. 19-23). The change of terms from "works" to "fruit" is significant. The flesh is a rank weed which produces no fruit properly so called. The fruit of the Spirit is

the product of the new life that has been planted within.

The fruit of the Spirit is composed of three groups of three graces each. The first three—"love, joy, peace"—have a general character. The second three—"longsuffering, kindness, goodness"—are special qualities that concern the Christian's attitude to his neighbour. The third three—"faithfulness, meekness, self-control"—are general principles of Christian conduct. "Against such there is no law", says Paul, for the Law is not needed when there is nothing to restrain. The Christian has crucified the old life of the flesh, so there should be nothing in him to make him act differently from these graces. We should therefore conform our conduct to the new life of the Spirit and not yield to the pride and jealousy of the flesh (vs. 24-26).

4. Bearing One Another's Burdens (6:1-5). The Apostle appeals to his readers to act in a brotherly spirit, and to be sympathetically helpful to one another. Let those who profess to be spiritually-minded tenderly correct those who may have fallen into error, remembering their own weakness. The injunction to "bear one another's burdens" (v. 2) has reference to the burdens of mutual sympathy, the sorrows and sufferings of others. The statement that each man shall "bear his own burden" (v. 5) has reference to the burden of personal responsibility, which each must bear for himself.

5. Not Growing Weary in Well-doing (6:6-10). The instruction to provide for the temporal wants of their teachers is a special application of the command to bear one another's burdens. Let them not deceive themselves; God is not to be treated with

contempt. According as a man sows in this world, so will he reap at the end of the world. He who sows to satisfy his sensual nature will reap from that nature a harvest of moral corruption. He who sows to serve the Spirit will reap from the Spirit a harvest of life eternal. Let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for at the proper time we shall reap the harvest. Let us do what good we can, whenever an opportunity is given to us, especially to our fellow-Christians.

6. Summary and Conclusion (6:11-18). The last section of the Epistle is written in the Apostle's own hand: "See with how large letters I write unto you with mine own hand". Thus does he express the emphasis and authority which he wishes the letter to carry. The Judaizing teachers desire to have his readers circumcised, in order to disguise their own professed Christianity and to escape persecution from their fellow-Jews. But they are not keeping the Law themselves (vs. 11-13). The true ground for glorying is not the flesh, but the Cross of Christ. By that Cross we are completely separated from the world.

In Christ Jesus what counts is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, but the creation of a new nature. All who walk by this rule are the true Israel, and the Apostle invokes peace and mercy upon them. He dismisses the attacks upon himself and his authority with this final word: he bears upon his body the scars he has received in his Master's service. Then he ends the letter with a brief benediction, which he addresses to them as "brethren" (vs. 14-18).

## THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

EPHESUS was the chief city of Asia Minor and the metropolis of the Roman province of Asia. It was a centre of idolatrous worship among the Greeks, being celebrated for its temple of Diana, which was regarded as one of the wonders of the world. It also possessed a large theatre, which was excavated on the side of the hill to the east of the city, and was capable of seating 25,000 spectators. Both of these places are mentioned in the story of the riot that brought Paul's mission in Ephesus to a close (Acts 19:27-29).

Paul proclaimed the Gospel in Ephesus for the first time during a brief visit to the city on his voyage from Corinth back to Syria at the end of his second missionary journey. He took Aquila and Priscilla with him and left them there, promising to return if it was God's will (Acts 18:18-21). During his absence Apollos came to Ephesus as a disciple of John the Baptist, and he was led into the fuller knowledge of the Christian faith by Aquila and Priscilla before passing on to Corinth (Acts 18:24-28).

On his third missionary journey, Paul returned to Ephesus by way of the interior (Acts 19:1), and remained there between two and three years. During that time the Gospel was firmly established in the city, and also spread throughout the whole of Asia (Acts 19:10). This province took in the whole

western coast of Asia Minor and a considerable portion of the interior. It was then that "the seven churches of Asia" had their beginning (Rev. 1:11).

The Epistle to the Ephesians, and the Epistles to the Philippians and the Colossians, together with the Epistle to Philemon, were all written at Rome during Paul's first imprisonment (A.D. 60-62). They all bear evidence of having been written in prison (Eph. 3:1; 4:1; Phil. 1:7, 13, 14 17; Col. 4:3, 18; Philemon 9-10), and the circumstances referred to in them harmonize better with the Apostle's stay in Rome than with his imprisonment in Cæsarea. There is no decisive evidence as to the order in which they were written.

The present Epistle does not seem to have been called forth by any local circumstances. There are no references to conditions in Ephesus, no salutations to individuals. It was probably written as a circular letter, intended not only for the church in Ephesus, but also for all the other churches in the province. This inference is supported by the fact that two of the oldest manuscripts omit the phrase "at Ephesus" in the opening verse, and leave a blank in its place, which could be filled in with the name of the particular church for which the copy was intended. The reference in Col 4:16 to "the epistle from Laodicea" points to the Ephesian letter, which would be going around from church to church throughout the province, and would reach Laodicea, only a few miles away, about the time the Colossians received their letter. These two letters were carried by the same messenger, Tychicus (Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7).

The wide destination of the Epistle accounts for

the general character of its theme. It concerns the whole Church of Christ, and has in view all Christians everywhere. It was written to explain the heavenly nature of the Christian life. Of all the New Testament Epistles, its tone is the most exalted and its outlook the most sublime. The key-note is struck in the third verse, and the theme may be stated in Paul's own words: "spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ". The Apostle's mind seems to have been filled with the transcendent privileges that believers enjoy because of their union with Christ. Oneness with Him is the underlying thought of the whole Epistle, and it is set in a framework of praise. It falls into two equal parts. The first part (Chs. 1—3) is doctrinal, and explains the character of the Church's calling. The second part (Chs. 4—6) is practical, and deals with the character of the Church's life.

#### THE CHURCH'S HEAVENLY CALLING (Chs. 1—3)

These three chapters reach the sublimest heights of Christian thought. Here the Apostle unfolds his conception of the Church as the body of Christ, or the new humanity created in Him. After beginning the Epistle with an introductory salutation (1:1-2), he takes up his theme by going back to the Church's origin, which he finds in the eternal purpose and love of God, and he strikes his key-note at once in an ascription of praise to "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" for the blessings of redemption which He has bestowed upon us.

1. Praise for the Blessings of Redemption (1:3-14). This passage is one continued and sustained

sentence. Beginning with an expression of praise to God, "who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ", Paul goes on describing these blessings till his inspired and illumined thought has traced the whole movement of God's redeeming grace from its origin in the Divine mind to its final consummation. He begins in the eternal past with God's choice of us in Christ "before the foundation of the world", and he ends in the eternal future with the full enjoyment of our inheritance in "the redemption of God's own possession". Between these two eternities stretches a series of blessings in one unbroken chain.

These spiritual blessings are described as belonging to "the heavenly places", or "the heavenlies" (v. 3). This peculiar expression occurs four more times in the Epistle (1:20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12) and nowhere else in the whole New Testament. It means the realm that lies outside of time and space, the supersensible world. It may be defined simply as "the unseen world", the sphere of ultimate reality as over against the present visible world of man's abode which is but the sphere of relativity (2 Cor. 4:18). Blessings "in the heavenly places" are not so much blessings coming from those places as blessings that lift us into that realm and give us a place in the world of God and the angels.

These blessings are also described as being "in Christ". This is the essential and decisive element in the Apostle's conception. The phrase occurs, in one form or another, ten times in the present passage. The blessings of redemption are not separate and individual endowments bestowed upon the believer, but different aspects and mani-



festations of the one great gift of God, which is Jesus Christ Himself.

Paul's account of these blessings moves through three progressive stages, marked by a note of praise three times repeated (vs. 6, 12, 14). These three stages are apparently related in the mind of the Apostle to the three Persons of the Godhead. Thus we have the Father's purpose of love (vs. 4-6), the Son's work of grace (vs. 7-12), and the Spirit's ministry of fellowship (vs. 13-14). In each case two blessings are described. The six may be set forth as follows:

(1) Election (v. 4). We have been chosen in Christ before the creation of the world. Redemption is not an afterthought on God's part, or a piece of patchwork in the universe. It is rooted in His eternal purpose; it is part of one system with creation. In that purpose, and in that system, Christ is the supreme and all-inclusive Object of God's choice. And "in him" our election was provided for even before the foundation of the world.

(2) Adoption (vs. 5-6). Provision was also made for our adoption from out the human family into the divine fellowship, where we have the position and privilege of sonship. This, too, comes "through Jesus Christ", the only begotten and beloved Son, through whom we have been accepted.

(3) Reconciliation (vs. 7-8). Those whom God chose and adopted must be redeemed and reconciled to Him. This brings us to the one pivotal event upon which the whole movement of spiritual blessing turns. Redemption has been accomplished, "through his blood". This phrase marks the achievement of God's eternal purpose. The Cross is the one point in

the course of Christ's life on earth to which Paul links the chain of spiritual blessings that stretches between the eternities. He regards the Cross not only as an historic event but also as an eternal fact.

(4) Knowledge of His will (vs. 9-12). God has made His purpose for the world known to us. The divine secret which lay behind the creation of the world has been brought to light by the presence of Jesus Christ in the world. The redemptive purpose of God is to reach a consummation and have a triumphant issue ultimately. The whole universe of the heavens and the earth, of angels and men, is to be brought into one harmonious system under the Lord Jesus Christ. The operation of God's will through the ages has one thing in view, the glorifying of Christ as the Head of the universe. As we belong to Christ we share in that divine event. Because of our trust in Him we have been allotted a portion in the inheritance to be realized at that time.

(5) Assurance of salvation (v. 13). We have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. The gracious gifts and powers of the Comforter, promised by the Lord to His disciples, and realized by believers since the Day of Pentecost, are the true evidence of salvation.

(6) Foretaste of Glory (v. 14). The sealing of the Spirit which we receive when we believe is only a partial gift. But it is "the earnest of our inheritance", a pledge of what awaits us in the future.

2. Prayer for the Realization of Redemption (1: 15-23). Because such is the greatness of the blessings of redemption, Paul gives thanks for the evidences of it in his readers—their faith in the Lord

and their love to the saints (vs. 15-16). Then he prays that the Father of glory, in bestowing the full knowledge of Himself upon them, may give them divine illumination and spiritual insight. So shall they know the hope opened up when they were called, the rich and glorious life that awaits the saints, and the surpassing greatness of the power that He is exercising in the process of their salvation (vs. 17-19). This is the same power that He put forth when He raised Christ from the dead and enthroned Him at His own right hand in Heaven, far above all ranks and orders of power in this age or the next (vs. 20-21). Thus He put the whole universe under the feet of Jesus Christ, and made Him the Head of the Church, which indeed is His body, and is filled with the presence of Him who fills all that there is in the universe (vs. 22-23).

3. The Salvation of the Saints (2:1-10). The Apostle now goes on to show that the Church is composed of sinners, saved by the grace of God, and united into one spiritual temple. In their original state by nature his Gentile readers were dead in trespasses and sins, walking according to the course of the present world, under the influence of Satan, the spirit that is now at work in the fallen human race (vs. 1-2). The Jewish Christians also shared their life, and were by nature children of wrath, like all other men (v. 3). But because of His great love for us, God has saved us by uniting us with Jesus Christ. What He did in Christ, that He has done in us—quickened us together with Christ, raised us up with Him, and made us sit with Him in the unseen spiritual world (vs. 4-6).

His purpose in all this was to demonstrate in

future ages the overabounding wealth of His grace in kindness to us through Christ, by whom we have been saved. For our salvation is entirely the gift of God, which we receive by relying on Him, and not the result of any works about which we might boast (vs. 7-9). We are His workmanship. We are a new creation, which He has wrought in Christ Jesus. His purpose was that we should walk in good works which He prepared beforehand (v. 10).

4. The Union of the Saints (2:11-22). Paul reminds his Gentile readers again of what they once were—separate from Christ and isolated from the redeemed people, without hope and without God in the world. But a great change has been wrought by the death of Christ. The Gentiles have been brought into the same position before God as His chosen people (vs. 11-13). Christ has made peace between Jew and Gentile by breaking down the barrier of the Law which made a partition between them. He has also made peace between man and God by abolishing the claims and demands of the Law. Through Christ Jesus both Jew and Gentile have access to the Father (vs. 14-18). The Gentiles are now fellow-citizens with the saints, members of the family of God, incorporated into the Church of God, which is being built up as a holy temple for God to dwell in by His Spirit (vs. 19-22).

5. The Mystery of Christ (3:1-7). In this passage the Apostle digresses from the main line of his thought to refer to the divine commission that was given to him for preaching the Gospel. He declares that it contains the revelation of "the mystery of Christ", a divine secret which was not known in former times but has now been revealed to all the

founders of the Church (vs. 1-5). This new truth is the union of the Gentiles with the Jews into one body in Christ by the Holy Spirit. The mystery is not the fact of the Church's existence, but the nature of the Church's life. All the saints together form with Christ one spiritual organism, of which the Head is Christ and the body is the Church. This means that the Gentiles are members of the same body and partakers of the promise in Christ through the Gospel, which Paul has been empowered by the grace of God to preach to them (vs. 6-7).

6. The Purpose of the Gospel (3:8-13). The Apostle felt himself unworthy of his commission—"less than the least of all saints"—in view of its wide field and high purpose. The preaching of the Gospel among the Gentiles has a two-fold purpose. It is intended to enlighten all men regarding this divine secret which, during all the past ages, has been hidden in the mind of the Creator. Thus it gains converts for Christ among men and builds up His Church on earth (vs. 8-9).

But it has also a wider scope than that. It serves to display the wisdom of God to the angelic hosts in Heaven—"to the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God". The Church on earth is an object lesson to these high intelligences in the heavenly world. It shows what the love and wisdom of their God can do with the members of a ruined race through our Lord Jesus Christ (vs. 10-11). It is through Him, and through our faith in Him, that we have courage and confidence. And so the Apostle begs his readers not to lose heart when they hear of

the afflictions that befall him in their cause, but rather count them something to glory in (vs. 12-13).

7. Prayer for the Church (3:14-21). Here Paul resumes the prayer that he was about to offer at the beginning of the chapter. It arises out of the truths contained in the preceding chapters—"for this cause" (vs. 1, 14). Addressing himself to God as the Father of angels and men (v. 15), he asks that God would endow his readers "according to the riches of his glory"; that is, that His gifts may be worthy of the glorious revelation of Himself which He has now made in the Gospel. Then the prayer unfolds in a series of great petitions:

(1) First for the inward power of the Holy Spirit: "That ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man" (v. 16). This will result in

(2) The permanent indwelling of Christ Himself: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith" (v. 17). Thus they will become firmly grounded in love, and will be enabled to obtain

(3) A comprehensive grasp of God's plan for the Church: "That ye may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth" (v. 18). This is a collective idea, and can be understood only in conscious fellowship with the whole Church of God—"with all the saints". Then they will come to have

(4) A knowledge of the surpassing greatness of Christ's love: "To know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge" (v. 19). The idea is that of getting to know a love which is so transcendent that every step in our apprehension of it reveals pro-

found depths unperceived before. This carries with it

(5) The partaking of the Divine nature: "That ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God" All the qualities that go to make up the character of God are available for us, and He can bestow them upon us up to the limit of our capacity to receive them.

Then the prayer passes into a rapturous ascription of adoring praise to God (vs. 20-21). What He is able to accomplish transcends all that we can ask or imagine. "According to the power that worketh in us"—the power of the indwelling Spirit, the same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead (1: 19-20).

#### THE CHURCH'S HEAVENLY WALK (Chs. 4—6)

With another reference to his imprisonment, Paul appeals to his readers to walk worthily of their heavenly calling; and in these chapters he applies to their practical life and conduct the great truths regarding the Church which he has explained in the first part of the Epistle. He uses the word "walk" frequently, marking the importance of the steps and details of conduct in the Christian life.

1. The Life of the Corporate Body (4:1-16). The idea of the Church as the body of Christ pervades this passage. For the proper growth of the corporate life of the Church, three things are involved:

(1) The unity of the Spirit (vs. 1-6). This is to be maintained by the manifestation of those qualities of character in which all self-will and self-interest are suppressed in an atmosphere of love and



peace (vs. 1-3), and by the recognition of the fundamental unities that make the Church one living organism, spiritually united with Christ by faith, under one God and Father of all (vs. 4-6).

(2) The diversity of grace (vs. 7-12). The members of the Church have different functions and offices, according as Christ has distributed the gifts of His grace (v. 7). The inspired Apostle quotes Psa. 68:18 from the point of view of the New Testament dispensation, changing "received gifts for men" into "gave gifts unto men". The reference is to the Ascension and to the spiritual powers which Christ triumphed over on the Cross (Col. 2:15). By so doing He received spiritual gifts as man, and was enabled to give them to men when He ascended (v. 8). He could not have done this if He had not first come down and taken part among men; for the Ascension was based upon the Incarnation and the descent into death (vs. 9-10). Then comes a list of the various offices in the Church, for which Christ has bestowed special endowments upon different members, with a view to the spiritual growth of individual believers, and the building up of the Church as His own body (vs. 11-12).

(3) Growth into Christ (vs. 13-16). The mission of the Church is to bring all believers to a full knowledge of Christ and to the spiritual stature of His perfect manhood. We should not be children, yielding to every kind of false teaching; but following divine truth in the spirit of love, we should grow up in all things into Christ our Head. It is thus the corporate body of the Church, vitalized in all its parts by spiritual union with Christ, keeps on growing and building itself up in love.

2. The Life of the Individual Believer (4:17—5:21). In applying the truth to individual life, Paul first states the general principle of Christian conduct and then makes the particular application.

(1) The general principle (4:17-24). He urges upon his readers that their new life must be marked off entirely from that of their heathen neighbours (vs. 17-19). They did not so learn Christ, but were taught "even as truth is in Jesus"; that is, that spiritual truth is incarnate in Him (vs. 20-21). They are to "put away the old man", and "put on the new man", the new human nature of righteousness and holiness which has been created in Christ Jesus (vs. 22-24).

(2) The practical application (4:25—5:21). The Apostle enlarges upon the truth that he has stated by proceeding to give a series of practical instructions. In doing so he draws out the difference between the old life and the new in a number of contrasts. These may be summarized as follows: Falsehood and truth (4:25-30); malice and love (4:31-5:2); darkness and light (5:3-14); folly and wisdom (5:15-21).

3. The Christian Household (5:22—6:9). The family is the first divine institution in the world. It came into existence before the state, and stands above it. Paul deals with the Christian family in three pairs of relationships, taking the weaker members of each pair first.

(1) Wives and husbands (5:22-33). In this passage the Apostle make a tender and beautiful reference to the mystical union between Christ and the Church, using the one as the analogy of the other.

(2) Children and parents (6:1-4). The primary

duty of children is obedience to their parents. Fathers are to train their children according to the Lord's method of discipline.

(3) Servants and masters (6:5-9). Servants were all bondslaves in the ancient world. They formed a large section of the early Church. The Gospel did not directly condemn slavery, but introduced principles which mitigated its evils and were ultimately to eliminate it altogether.

4. The Spiritual Conflict (6:10-20). Paul's survey of the conditions of Christian life in the world leads him now to consider that which lies behind it. The Christian has to stand against the wiles of the devil. His foes are not mere flesh and blood, but the whole hierarchy of evil—"the world-rulers of this darkness, the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (vs. 10-12). The New Testament assumes the personality of Satan. But Satan does not stand alone. There is a hierarchy of evil spirits in the unseen world. They exercise a mysterious domination over the fallen human race in the darkness of ignorance and sin. The conflict with them is essentially a spiritual one, and the Christian must be armed with spiritual weapons—"the whole armour of God" (vs. 13-18).

The armour which Paul bids his readers put on is described in terms of the equipment of a Roman soldier. It consists of seven weapons, if we count prayer as one of them. With truth as a girdle, righteousness as a breastplate, the foot-hold of peace for sandals, faith as a shield, and salvation as a helmet, the defensive armour of the Christian soldier will be complete. His only offensive weapons are the Word of God for a sword and the continual

practice of prayer in every form. Then Paul adds a request for prayer for himself, that he may be able to proclaim the Gospel boldly in his imprisonment (vs. 19-20).

5. The Conclusion (6:21-24). The Apostle has finished his message for the churches of Asia, and he makes only one personal reference. It is a commendation of Tychicus, whom he is sending with the letter. Then he closes with a benediction, which is written in the third person, and is more general in form than his usual benedictions as more suited for a circular letter. Its closing word is especially appropriate, because of its suggestion of the spiritual and the eternal: "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ with a love incorruptible."

## THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS

THE city of Philippi lay on the great highway that ran through Macedonia from sea to sea. It had been raised to the dignity of a "colony" of Rome by Augustus Cæsar, in honour of the decisive victory which he had won there over the armies of the Republic in 42 B.C., and which marked the beginning of the Roman Empire. This meant that it had the same privileges and was governed in the same way as the city of Rome.

Philippi was near the Aegean Sea, and it was the first city in Europe in which Paul proclaimed the Gospel after crossing over from Asia on his second evangelizing journey. The story of his work in Philippi, and of the way the church was established there, is told in Acts 16:11-40. The most notable converts were Lydia and the jailor, with their households. The date of that first visit was A.D. 50 or 51. Twice after that, within the period covered by the Book of Acts, we find Paul at Philippi. During his third evangelizing mission he visited Philippi on his journey from Ephesus to Corinth in the summer of A.D. 56, and also on his journey back again early in the next year (Acts 20:1-6).

The Philippian church was mainly Gentile. The absence of a synagogue in the city would mean that there were but few Jews among its people. Women occupied a prominent place in the church (Phil. 4:2-3). The members were noted for their liberality

(2 Cor. 8:1-5), and they had sent generous gifts to Paul more than once (Phil. 4:10-18). The Judaizers had not disturbed the loyalty of the Philippians to the Apostle, and no church held a deeper place in his affection. The occasion of the Epistle was a gift which they had sent to him during his imprisonment in Rome (4:18). Epaphroditus, the messenger who had brought the gift, fell sick in Rome and came near death. News of this caused great distress among his friends in Philippi. He had recovered and longed to get home, and Paul sent this letter with him to thank the Philippians for their gift.

It is full of praise and thanksgiving. The note of joy rings through it. Its reiterated call is "rejoice" — "Rejoice in the Lord"; "Rejoice in the Lord always" (3:1; 4:4). The word "joy" occurs, in one form or another, fourteen times. Its theme may be defined as the joy of Christian experience, or joy in Christ. It is entirely devoid of censure, and the word "sin" is not used once.

Being a familiar letter, it does not lend itself to logical analysis. Its contents are not arranged systematically, but alternate between personal matters and doctrinal instruction. A key-verse may be taken from each of the four chapters, thus setting forth four main features of Christian life and experience. The secret of the Christian life is Christ Himself: "For to me to live is Christ" (1:21). The motive of the Christian life is the mind of Christ: "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (2:5). The goal of the Christian life is likeness to Christ: "I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (3:14). The support of the Christian life is the strength of

Christ: "I can do all things in him that strengthen me" (4:13).

For purposes of study, however, the contents of the Epistle are best divided into separate sections under the general idea of the joy of the Christian life.

1. Joy in Prayer (1:1-11). Timothy is associated with Paul in the opening salutation (vs. 1-2). He had been with Paul when the Apostle first entered Macedonia and established the churches there. He had visited the province since then (Acts 19:22), and was about to be sent again to Philippi as the Apostle's representative (2:19). The omission of Paul's official title is an indication of his friendly relation with the Philippians; he does not need to emphasize his authority. The inclusion of "the bishops and deacons" in the greeting marks the advanced state which the organization of the Church had reached at the time the Epistle was written. There were now two different kinds of office-bearers.

In his thanksgiving for his readers (vs. 3-8), Paul mentions the help which they had always given him in preaching the Gospel. He is confident that God will go on perfecting the good work that He has begun in them until its consummation at Christ's coming. His love goes out to them because of their sympathetic fellowship with him in his imprisonment and in his Gospel ministry, and he longs to see them. This is followed by the petitions of his prayer for them (vs. 9-11). These include abounding and increasing love, spiritual knowledge and discernment, singleness of heart and freedom from offence, and fruitfulness in life and witness.



2. Joy in Suffering (1:12-30). Paul now refers to his own circumstances in Rome. His imprisonment has been the means of spreading the Gospel, and therein he rejoices. He takes each of the darkest facts of the situation and makes it minister to his joy: his bonds have made the Gospel known among the soldiers of the imperial household, and among other people in general; and most of the Christians in Rome have been encouraged to proclaim the Gospel fearlessly (vs. 12-14). His rivals, who are animated by party-spirit and personal hostility instead of the good-will which the others show, have been stirred up to increased activity in preaching the Gospel (vs. 15-18). The danger in which he stands, and the uncertain issue of his imprisonment, only make him confident that Christ will be magnified in his body, whether it be by his life or by his death (vs. 19-20).

His own desire would be to depart and be with Christ. But for their sake it would be better for him to go on living, and for this reason he has the conviction that he will be with them again (vs. 21-26). He appeals to them to let their life be worthy of the Gospel, and he hopes to hear that they are standing firm and working together for the faith of the Gospel, undaunted by their adversaries. This is a sign that destruction awaits their foes, but that salvation is theirs. It is their privilege, not only to believe on Christ, but also to suffer for Him. In this experience they are maintaining the same conflict as the Apostle himself (vs. 27-30).

3. Joy in Humility (2:1-11). Paul makes an affectionate appeal to the Philippians to cultivate unity of spirit and lowliness of mind, and to think

of others without any selfish interest (vs. 1-4). They should have the attitude of mind shown by Christ Jesus in the Incarnation, and follow His example. Existing originally in the essential form of God, He did not set His mind upon His own equality with God as a prerogative to be jealously retained. He emptied Himself of all that glory, and took upon Himself the nature of a servant in the form of man, and lived in the world like other men. As man, He humbled Himself still further, being continually obedient to God. He maintained this spirit of obedience to the utmost length of death, even consenting to die the death for sin (vs. 5-8).

For this reason, because He looked to the interests of others and not His own, God has exalted Him, and bestowed upon Him the Name that is supreme over every name. He is invested now with the transcendent glory and greatness of Jehovah. In that Name, which belongs to Jesus, every creature in the universe, of all ranks and orders, wherever they dwell, shall bow in prayer and worship; and every one shall acknowledge that Jesus Christ is nothing less than Lord in the supreme and highest sense. The worship given to the Son is glory given to God the Father (vs. 9-11).

4. Joy in Service (2:12-30). Addressing his readers with a term of affection, the Apostle goes on to exhort them to work out their own salvation in his absence with reverence and watchfulness. They should do this because the energy of God, operating in their inmost being, gives them both power to will and strength to perform His own good pleasure (vs. 12-13). The outward result of this inner life will be such conduct and character as will

show them to be children of God, and will make them seen as lights in the world, holding forth the message of life, so that Paul may rejoice that his work among them was not in vain (vs. 14-16). Even if his life should be poured out as a libation, while they offer themselves by faith as a living sacrifice to God, he and they will rejoice together (vs. 17-18).

The Apostle then informs them that he intends to send Timothy to visit them as soon as he sees what the result of his trial is to be; and he tells them that the faithful and devoted service which Timothy has given him has been that of a son to a father (vs. 19-24). Meanwhile he is sending Epaphroditus back, the messenger who brought their gift. He had been seriously ill, and was troubled because they had heard about it; but God mercifully restored him. They should receive him gladly and hold him in high esteem, for he risked his life in rendering the service to Paul which they were unable to give (vs. 25-30).

5. Joy in the Knowledge of Christ (3:1-11). The Apostle seems to be approaching the end of his letter when he writes, "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord". And then he thinks of the Judaizers, who were disturbing the Church in so many places and might yet appear at Philippi, and he proceeds with a warning against them (vs. 1-2). It is the Christians that are the true Israel, who worship God by His Spirit, glory in His gift of the Saviour, and put no confidence in anything of the flesh (v. 3). Then Paul points out that he has more reason to glory in the flesh and in the observance of the Law than any other man. He is a thorough

Israelite, of pure and unmixed descent, and he was a zealous and blameless Pharisee (vs. 4-6).

But he renounced all that for Christ's sake. Yea more, he considers all things to be but loss in comparison with the transcendent blessedness of knowing Christ Jesus his Lord. For Christ's sake he let everything go, counting it as refuse, that he might gain Christ and be united with Him, possessing no righteousness of his own derived from the Law, but that alone which is received by faith in Christ, the righteousness provided by God (vs. 7-9). Then he goes on to enlarge upon this, explaining the Christian life in terms of his own experience of knowing Christ: That I may know Him, may know the power that flows from His resurrection, may know what it is to share His sufferings; that I may become conformed to His way of dying—His self-surrender to death—if by any means I may attain to the resurrection from among the dead (vs. 10-11).

Paul does not mean to imply that he is uncertain about the resurrection. His mind is filled with the thought of Christ's resurrection, which was a resurrection "from the dead", a new life out of death, and he is expressing the modest hope that, as his life is being conformed to the death of Christ, it may also show the power of the resurrection of Christ. Becoming conformed unto His death means dying to sin, being crucified with Christ, or bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus (Rom. 6:2; Gal. 2:20; 6:14; 2 Cor. 4:10). Attaining unto the resurrection means living in union with Christ in the power of His resurrection (Rom. 6:5).

6. Joy in Spiritual Progress (3:12-21). It is

not that the Apostle has obtained the prize yet, or been already made perfect, but he is pressing on to lay hold of that for which Christ laid hold of him. As for himself, he does not claim to have laid hold of it; but one thing he can say is this: Forgetting all that is behind, and stretching on toward what is before, he presses on to the goal for the prize to which God has called him upward in Christ Jesus (vs. 12-14). Let us, therefore, he goes on to say, who are full-grown in faith, be of this mind. And if any of them are differently minded in any particular, God will make the matter clear to them. Only, whatever progress we have succeeded in making, let us continue in the same path (vs. 15-16).

The Apostle then appeals to his readers to take him for their example, and to take note of those who follow the same path. For there are many, of whom he used to warn them and now warns them again with tears, whose conduct shows them to be enemies of the Cross of Christ. They are doomed to destruction, for they worship their sensual appetites, and shame their Christian profession (vs. 17-18). Our citizenship, our true home, says Paul, is in Heaven, out of which we are waiting for the Saviour to appear, who will transfigure the body of our humiliation that it may be like the body of His glory, by virtue of the power that He has to subject all things to Himself (vs. 19-21).

7. Joy in the Peace of God (4:1-9). In view of the warning he has just given, the Apostle, using terms of deep affection for his Philippian converts, appeals to them to stand firm in their union with the Lord (v. 1). He makes a special appeal to two women, whom he names, to work harmoniously in

the service of the Lord (v. 2). He makes another special appeal to one whom he calls a "true yokefellow", but does not name, to help these women, and to do so along with the rest of his fellow-workers (v. 3). This was probably the presiding elder of the church, to whom the letter would be delivered, and who would read it to the congregation.

Then he takes up the appeal with which ch. 3 began, and calls them again, with still more emphasis, to rejoice in the Lord; and to this he adds further instructions (vs. 4-6). They are to let their life-principle of "forbearance" be evident to all men who have any dealings with them (vs. 4-5). We have no exact English word for the term Paul uses here. The A.V. renders it "moderation" and the R.V. puts "gentleness" in the margin. What the Apostle has in mind is the essential and fundamental element in Christian character shown in yielding all self-interest for Christ's sake. Then he reminds his readers that "the Lord is at hand". He is always near, not only in the future but also in the unseen world, and will take care of their interests Himself. They are not to be anxious about anything; but in every matter they are to let their needs be made known to God by prayer and definite requests, linked with thanksgiving. And then the peace of God, which surpasses all human thinking, will be a garrison for their hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (vs. 6-7).

As a final instruction, the Apostle begs his readers to give their minds, thus safe-guarded by the peace of God, all possible material of the proper kind to work upon. He gives a summary of the things they should occupy their thoughts with — whatever is

virtuous, and whatever is worthy of praise. Then follows a more personal word, reminding them again that in his life they have an example to follow, and assuring them that God, who gives peace, will be with them (vs. 8-9).

8. Joy in the Strength of Christ (4:10-23). Paul now turns from teaching the Philippians to thanking them for the gift that they have sent him, and again he does it with a note of joy. This gift had come after an interval in which they had no opportunity for sending it (v. 10). He would not have them think that he spoke thus because he was feeling in want, for he had learned to be independent of his circumstances. He had learned the secret of being filled and being hungry, of having abundance and suffering need. He is able for anything through Him who gives him inward strength (vs. 11-13).

But the Philippians had done nobly in sharing the burden of his affliction. In the early days of his mission work, when he left Macedonia, they alone among the churches participated with him by giving him material aid for the spiritual help they had received. Even in Thessalonica they had sent him aid twice over. Not that he is seeking for the gift, but he seeks for the interest that is accumulating to their account (vs. 14-17).

Now he has all that he needs, and more than enough, since he has received from Epaphroditus what they have sent. It is sweet-smelling incense, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. He assures them that his God, the God who has supplied his need, will fill up every need of theirs, according to His riches in glory. Then he adds an ascription of praise to God (vs. 18-20). The salutations follow



and the final benediction. The saints "that are of Cæsar's household", who sent their greetings to the Philippians, were not members of the imperial family, but slaves and freedmen attached to the palace of the Emperor (vs. 21-23). The Gospel had spread among them from Paul's presence as a prisoner, and evidently a group of earnest converts had been gathered out, who probably found a welcome meeting-place in the Apostle's lodging, where he was writing the Epistle.

## THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

THE city of Colossæ was in the interior of Asia Minor, about a hundred miles east of Ephesus. It was one of a group of three cities in the Lycus valley on the great highway connecting Ephesus with the Euphrates. The other two, Laodicea and Hierapolis, were larger and more important places; and there were Christian communities in them also (4:13).

These three churches were no doubt established during Paul's long stay in Ephesus, when the Gospel spread throughout the whole province of Asia (Acts 19:10, 26). The Apostle had not been in Colossæ himself (2:1), but the chief agent in the founding of the church there, and also in the other cities of the group, was Epaphras, his companion and fellow-labourer, and probably one of his converts (1:7; 4:12-13). The Colossian church was mainly Gentile (1:21, 27). It was one of the smaller churches, for Colossæ was little more than a country-town. And yet the letter that Paul sent it contains some of the most important truths in the New Testament.

The Epistle to the Colossians was written during the Apostle's imprisonment in Rome, at the same time as the letter to the Ephesians. Both letters were carried to their destination by the same messenger (Col. 4:7; Eph. 6:21). Epaphras had visited Paul in Rome bringing news from Colossæ. There were many tokens of divine grace among the Christians, but a serious danger was threatening the church. It was a new teaching, an incipient

Gnosticism, containing a mixture of Judaism and oriental mysticism (2:8, 16-17). This heresy minimized the work of the Saviour and obscured His glory, by introducing other things into the plan of salvation, such as the mediation of angels, ritualistic observances, and ascetic practices (2:18, 20-23). Paul wrote the letter to refute these errors; and he did this by exalting Jesus Christ as the one sufficient Saviour and Lord.

There is great similarity between the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians in language and thought, and yet there are also striking differences. The aim of Ephesians is to build up Christians in the truth; the aim of Colossians is to guard them against error. The subject of Ephesians is the Church as the body of Christ, which He fills with His Divine fulness; the subject of Colossians is Christ as the Head of the Church, from whom the body derives its life. The message of Ephesians is that the saints are one in Christ; the message of Colossians is that they are complete in Christ.

The Epistle to the Colossians, like that to the Ephesians, is in two equal parts. The first part (Chs. 1-2) is mainly doctrinal. It reveals the supreme greatness and glory of Jesus Christ in His person and work. The second part (Chs. 3-4) is mainly practical. It unfolds the necessary issue of this great fact in the fulness of life provided for the believer in Christ.

#### THE GLORY OF THE PERSON OF CHRIST

(Chs. 1-2)

These chapters show that the surest test that can be applied to any teaching that claims to be Christian

is this: Where does it place Jesus Christ? Over against the Colossian heresy Paul sets the pre-eminence and supremacy of the Lord.

1. Paul's Prayer for the Saints (1:1-14). The Apostle begins in his usual way, with a salutation of grace and peace (vs. 1-2), followed by a thanksgiving for the Colossian Christians (vs. 3-8). In this he mentions their faith in Christ Jesus, their love toward all the saints, and the hope laid up for them in Heaven, which they heard of first in the Gospel when Epaphras proclaimed it among them. Then come his special petitions for them (vs. 9-14). He prays that they may be filled with true spiritual knowledge, that their conduct may be worthy of the Lord, that they may bear fruit in every good work, that they may realize the power of Christ to keep them patient and joyful under trial and provocation, and that they may be continually thankful to God the Father for delivering us out of the power of darkness and transferring us into the kingdom of His own Son.

2. The Pre-eminence of Christ (1:15-23). At this point the Apostle passes on without a pause to his main theme. Having mentioned the Son of the Father's love and referred to our redemption through Him, he goes on to explain that all the Divine fulness dwells in Him.

(1) The supreme dignity of His Person (vs. 15-18). This is brought out in a three-fold personal relationship. In relation to God: Christ is the visible manifestation of the unseen God, antecedent to all creation (v. 15). In relation to the Universe: He is its Creator. All things, heavenly and earthly, seen and unseen, came into existence through Him and

for Him. By Him they are held together in one ordered system. Thus He is the secret of all things (vs. 16-17). In relation to the Church: He is its Head, the origin of its life, being the first to pass through death in triumph, so that in all things, in grace as well as in nature, in salvation as well as in creation, He might hold the first place (v. 18).

(2) The glorious purpose of His work (vs. 19-23). This is first described generally, as the reconciliation of the Universe. It was the Father's good pleasure that the fulness of the Godhead should dwell in Christ, and that through Him all things, both on earth and in Heaven, should be reconciled to Himself. The means of this reconciliation was the peace made by the transaction on the Cross (vs. 19-20). Then the application is made to the special case of the Colossians. They have been reconciled to God by the death of Christ from their former evil ways of life and thought, that they might be presented to Him without blemish or blame. And so let them continue steadfast and unmoved in the faith and hope of the Gospel, which was given by the Lord to be proclaimed in the whole world (vs. 21-23).

3. Paul's Work for the Saints (1:24—2:7). Having referred to the fact that the Colossians had received the Gospel and that he himself was made a minister of it, the Apostle now goes on to tell of the way he has been carrying out his ministry. It comprises the following elements:

(1) Suffering (1:24). He rejoices in the sufferings that he is undergoing for the sake of the Church, for thereby he is filling up what is lacking

of the afflictions which Christ began, and left to be completed by the members of His body.

(2) Preaching (1:25-29). The stewardship of the Gospel was committed to him that he might proclaim among the Gentiles its divine secret, which has been hidden for ages, but has now been made manifest to believers. That secret is this: the indwelling of Christ within you is the hope of coming glory. So Paul toils on in dealing with men that he may present every man perfect in Christ.

(3) Praying (2:1-3). He would have them know how he wrestles in prayer for the believers in Colossæ and Loadicea, and for all whom he has never visited. He prays that they may be knit together in love, and have the sure and satisfying knowledge of the secret which God has disclosed for our salvation—the fact that in Christ are hidden all the treasures of His wisdom and knowledge.

(4) Warning (2:4-7). He tells them this so as to warn them against the danger of being allured and misled by a different kind of teaching from that which they received. They should continue in the exercise of the faith in Christ which they were taught, getting built up in Him, and living a life of thanksgiving.

4. The Sufficiency of Christ (2:8-23). Following his appeal to his readers to continue their walk in Christ as they were taught, the Apostle proceeds to point out that in Him the Church has all its needs supplied. Through Him all the resources of the Godhead are communicated to the saints. Over against the false teaching which had invaded the Colossian church, Paul sets two great spiritual facts:

(1) The believer's completeness in Christ (vs. 8-

15). Warning his readers against being captivated by the philosophy of the false teachers, which was but an empty delusion, and their mode of teaching, the Apostle goes on to declare that in Christ "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily"—that is, in bodily form through the Incarnation. "And in him ye are made full"—filled full of the fulness of God by virtue of union with Christ, who is the Head of all the ranks and orders of God's government (vs. 8-10). He carries out the idea of union with Christ by representing it as spiritual circumcision, which means putting off the carnal nature so as to receive Christ's nature, and as spiritual baptism, which means having the old self-life buried with Christ so as to share His resurrection-life (vs. 11-12).

Then Paul goes on to point out the results of Christ's work that come to us through our union with Him. It delivers us from the power of sin, because we are forgiven and have a new life in Christ; from the claims of the Law, because He has abolished them; and from the fear of evil spirits, because of His victory over them on the Cross (vs. 13-15).

Two phrases in these last verses need explanation: (a) "Having blotted out the bond written in ordinances". The "bond" is the same as the "law of commandments" in Eph. 2:15. It means the will of God expressed in formal commands and enforced by penalties on disobedience. Christ cancelled this bond that was against us, by fulfilling its commands for us, and by suffering its penalties which our disobedience had incurred. (b) "Having despoiled the principalities and the powers". The reference is not



to putting off the body, but to the final defeat of the powers of darkness. The conflict with them which began with Satan's attack upon Him in the wilderness came to a crisis at Calvary (Luke 22:53; John 12:31). What seemed to be their triumph over Christ on the Cross was His complete and eternal triumph over them.

(2) The believer's freedom in Christ (vs. 16-23). In view of this deliverance which Christ has wrought for us and of our spiritual union with Him, the Apostle warns his readers against losing their freedom in Christ. In this section he is referring to the special features of the heresy which was threatening the Colossian church. They should allow no man to call them to account for not following the Jewish ceremonial system of meat offerings and drink offerings, of feast days and holy days. These were only types and shadows of the reality that is in Christ (vs. 16-17). Nor should they let any one rob them of their heavenly prize by a self-willed humility, which displays itself in worshipping angels and in dealing presumptuously with the mysteries of the unseen world. Instead of this they should continue to hold fast the one Head from whom the whole body, vitally linked together with Him, keeps growing with the growth that God supplies (vs. 18-19).

If they have been set free by their death in Christ from the world's rudimentary ordinances, why do they still subject themselves to the tyranny of ordinances? Rules prohibiting this or that in conduct and practice have no moral value, and rest on the precepts of men alone. Such things, indeed, have a pretense of religious devotion and an affectation of

humility, but they have no real value in checking the indulgence of the flesh (vs. 20-23).

#### THE FULNESS OF LIFE IN CHRIST

(Chs. 3—4)

The practical part of this Epistle follows the same line of thought and teaching as in the Epistle to the Ephesians. The truth unfolded in the first two chapters is now applied to the life and conduct of the Christian. The Apostle first states briefly the fundamental principle, and then draws it out in a general and a special application.

1. The Fundamental Principle (3:1-4). This consists in our complete identification with Christ. Having been raised with Christ, we belong to Heaven and should seek the things that are there, where He sits enthroned. We are to set our heart and mind on things above, not on things on the earth. We died when Christ died for us, and our life lies hidden with Him in God. When He who is our life is manifested at His coming, we also, because of our living union with Him, will be manifested in glory.

2. The General Application (3:5-17). Now comes the practical application of this principle. Paul appeals to his readers to put to death the old man, or count it a dead thing, and to put away the vices in which they formerly walked and for which the wrath of God is coming upon the disobedient world (vs. 5-9). Having put off the old man, they have put on the new man, which is being renewed after the image of God, who is the Author of the new creation as of the old. In this there is

no distinction of race or language or social position, but Christ is embodied in all (vs. 10-11).

They are to put on therefore all His virtues, and over them all to put on love as the bond and mark of perfectness (vs. 12-14). They are to let the peace of God rule in their hearts, and to be more and more thankful. They are to let the Word of Christ dwell in them richly, and encourage and teach one another with psalms and hymns of praise to God. And let everything they do be done in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God, His Father, through Him (vs. 15-17).

3. The Special Application (3:18—4:6). The relations of the Christian household are dealt with in the same way and in the same order as in Ephesians, but in shorter form: wives and husbands; children and parents; servants and masters (3:18—4:1). Then follow some instructions for individuals: the duty of prayer and thanksgiving, with special intercession on the Apostle's behalf, and the duty of proper behaviour toward the unconverted (4:2-6).

4. The Personal Conclusion (4:7-18). The letter draws to a close, and the Apostle tells the Colossians of the mission of Tychicus whom he is sending with it, and of Onesimus who is to accompany him (vs. 7-9). Onesimus carried the Epistle to Philemon, who was a member of the Colossian church. Then come greetings from Paul's companions in Rome (vs. 10-14), the salutations, a message regarding the church at Laodicea, and the final word by Paul's own hand (vs. 15-18).

## THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS

THE Epistles to the Thessalonians are the earliest of Paul's letters that have come down to us. They were both written in Corinth during the Apostle's first visit there in A.D. 51-52, not many months after the Thessalonian church had been founded.

Thessalonica was a large and important mercantile city on the great highway that ran through Macedonia between the east and the west. It was situated at the head of a gulf of the Aegean Sea and had an excellent harbour. It has preserved its existence to the present day, and is now called Saloniki. In Paul's day it was the capital of the province, and its population had a large proportion of Jews. The Apostle planted the church there, with the help of Silas and Timothy, during his second missionary journey (Acts 17:1-9). It contained a few Jews, but was composed mainly of Gentiles (1 Thess. 1:9).

Paul and Silas were sent away from Thessalonica because of a riot stirred up by the Jews, and they went on to Berea. The Jews followed them, and stirred up trouble there also. Leaving Silas and Timothy behind, Paul went on alone to Athens, and then to Corinth (Acts 17:10, 14-15; 18:1). When they joined him again in Corinth, they brought news from Thessalonica.

The members of the church had been faithful in the face of continued hostility and persecution. But

their minds had been disturbed and their lives disorganized by some misunderstanding regarding the coming of the Lord. Believing it to be imminent, some of them were beginning to neglect their daily occupations and were waiting in idleness for the event. Some of them also were distressed by doubt and sorrow regarding fellow-members of the church who had died since their conversion. They feared that these friends of theirs might be deprived of a place among the saints at the Lord's return. It was to meet this situation that Paul wrote the First Epistle.

It is in two main parts. The first part (Chs. 1—3) is personal, and contains Paul's account of his work among the Thessalonians. The second part (Chs. 4—5) is practical and doctrinal, and contains his instructions to the Thessalonians. Each of the five chapters ends with a reference to the Lord's coming, and each of the two main divisions closes with a prayer.

#### PAUL'S WORK AMONG THE THESSALONIANS (Chs. 1—3)

The simplicity of the opening address and salutation in the first of Paul's letters to the churches is significant (1:1). He does not introduce himself as an Apostle, as he does in most of the later letters; nor does he style himself "a servant of Jesus Christ", as he does in Romans and Philippians. He approaches the Thessalonians with the affectionate intimacy of a friend who does not need to bring his credentials. He has no reason yet to assert his claims, for the opposition of the Judaizing Christians had not yet risen when he wrote these letters.

With his usual delicate feeling for others, he associates Silas and Timothy with himself in the salutation because they had been with him in Thessalonica.

1. His Thanksgiving for his Converts (1:2-12). Paul thanks God for the Christian graces seen in them, which prove the reality of their conversion and show that his work among them has been effectual. The three features which he notes in their Christian life may be described in this way: Remembering how your faith works, how your love toils, and how your hope endures (vs. 2-3). Then he notes four elements in their conversion as signs of their election.

The Gospel came home to them with four-fold strength: in the preaching of the Word, in the power of conviction, in the quickening power of the Holy Spirit, and in assurance of salvation (vs. 4-5). They had become an example to believers throughout both provinces of Greece, because of the joy they manifested in spite of the persecution they suffered, so that the Gospel had sounded out from them everywhere (vs. 6-8).

Wherever he went Paul heard the story of their conversion, which he describes as turning to God from idols (their work of faith), to serve the living and true God (their labour of love), and to wait for His Son from Heaven (their patience of hope). Then he adds a reference to the Resurrection as a proof of the Sonship of Christ, and an allusion to the Second Coming (vs. 9-10).

2. His Mission in Thessalonica (2:1-12). The Apostle now describes how he and his companions came to Thessalonica fresh from the persecution in Philippi, and how he laboured to proclaim the Gos-

pel to the Thessalonians. His ministry was characterized by boldness of speech (vs. 1-2), sincerity and singleness of purpose (vs. 3-6), gentleness and tenderness (vs. 7-8), unselfishness and blamelessness (vs. 9-10), and fatherly concern for them individually (vs. 11-12).

3. The Persecution of the Thessalonians (2:13-20). Paul tells them how he thanks God continually that they received his message not as a mere message of men, but as the effectual message of God. They suffered for it from their own countrymen, as their fellow-believers in Judea did from the Jews (vs. 13-14). The killing of the Lord Jesus by the Jews was the crime that consummated their murder of their prophets. They have become enemies of God and man. They have filled up the measure of their sins by refusing the Gospel themselves and forbidding its proclamation to the Gentiles. God's wrath has overtaken them at last (vs. 15-16). This is the only place in Paul's letters where such an outburst against the Jews occurs. It is in striking contrast with Rom. 9:1-5.

The Apostle then tells his readers of his longing to see them again after his enforced departure from them. Satan hindered the attempts he made to return. In words of tender affection for them as his converts, he expresses his joy in them, and the glory he hopes to have in them before Christ at His coming (vs. 17-20).

4. Timothy's Mission to Thessalonica (Ch. 3). When Paul could no longer bear his separation from his converts without news from them, he remained at Athens alone and sent Timothy to encourage them in the faithful endurance of persecution. He himself



had told them before that tribulation is the common lot of Christians, even as it has happened to them. He was anxious to know if they stood firm under it (vs. 1-5).

Timothy has come back with good news, both of their faith and love for one another, and of their affectionate remembrance of Paul. He was greatly cheered. It was his very life to know that his converts stood fast in the Lord (vs. 6-8). He thanks God because of this good news. His constant and earnest prayer is that he may see them again and supply what is lacking in their knowledge of the truth (vs. 9-10).

Now comes a fervent prayer that God may direct his way to them, and that they may abound in love to one another and to all men, so that they may be established blameless in holiness "at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints" (vs. 11-13). Thus for the third time in the course of the letter Paul brings the glorious appearing of the Lord into view as the consummation of salvation and the object of the Christian hope. The saints referred to are the angelic hosts, and not the departed dead. The latter is a possible meaning; but Paul always writes with the Old Testament in his mind, and in the light of such Scriptures as Deut. 33:2, Dan. 4:13, and Zech. 14:5 (cf. Matt. 13:41; Mark 8:38; 2 Thess. 1:7), the former meaning is the more probable.

#### PAUL'S INSTRUCTIONS TO THE THESSALONIANS

(Chs. 4—5)

The teaching contained in these chapters is based

on Timothy's report about the condition of the Thessalonian church.

1. The Christian's Walk (4:1-12). In this passage Paul emphasizes the instruction that he had given them before about the kind of life that pleases God (vs. 1-2). It has a three-fold relation:

(1) In relation to oneself—personal purity (vs. 3-8). In heathenism there was no connection between religion and morality. Ancient philosophy saw no wrong in acts which the Christian mind regards with abhorrence.

(2) In relation to one another—love of the brethren (vs. 9-10). In the New Testament the word "brethren" means fellow-Christians and not fellow-men. The one outstanding characteristic of the early Christians which attracted attention from the Gentile world, besides personal purity, was their love for one another.

(3) In relation to the world—quiet, self-possessed, and honourable independence (vs. 11-12). Some of the members of the church seem to have been giving up their daily occupation under the influence of religious fanaticism. Paul urges the duty of the Christian to support himself by his own work and to be loyal to the ordinary duties of life. Excitement, idleness, and want of common sense are inconsistent with the dignity of Christian character.

2. Concerning the Christian Dead (4:13-18). The Apostle's purpose in this passage is not to give a program of the Lord's coming, but to assure the Thessalonians that the dead and the living saints will be united, and will share alike in the transcendent change which that event will bring about. They need not sorrow over their dead friends as

the heathen do, who are without God and have no hope in the future. And so Paul concludes what he says about the matter with this practical advice: "Wherefore, comfort one another with these words". A number of phrases used by the Apostle in the course of the passage should be noted:

"Them that fall asleep"; "them that are fallen asleep in Jesus":—Jesus looked upon death as a sleep (Mark 5:39; John 11:11), and the Apostles, following Him, describe the state of believers after death as being asleep. Christ having conquered death for them, all that death can do to them now is to put them to sleep in Him.

"For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again":—Paul's argument here means that the place of believers at the Lord's coming is assured by their union with Him. If we are in Christ now, we shall still be in Him after death, and with Him when He comes. Our destiny is linked with His.

"This we say unto you by the word of the Lord":—This does not mean that Paul had received some direct revelation from the Lord about His return, but that he is basing his teaching on what the Lord had taught. There are sayings in the Gospels which bear a striking resemblance to Paul's words here (Matt. 24:31; John 6:39). Jesus had given His disciples to understand that at His coming He would raise the dead, and that the dead no less than the living would share in His Kingdom.

"We that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord":—Paul does not necessarily mean that he expects to be alive when the Lord comes, for elsewhere he ranks himself among those that will be raised from the dead (1 Cor. 6:14; 2 Cor. 4:14;

Phil. 3:11). In other places he writes as if undecided (2 Cor. 5:6-10; Phil. 1:21-24; 2:17). What he means is that there will be two classes of believers, undergoing different changes, at the Lord's coming—those that are dead, who will be raised, and those that are living, as "we" are now, who will be translated.

"To meet the Lord in the air":—By this phrase we are not to understand the atmosphere above us, but the supersensible world, the realm of spiritual beings, where Satan now holds sway (Eph. 2:2). The error of the Thessalonians arose from thinking that the Lord's coming would be a return to the conditions of this world. The Apostle corrects this wrong idea, and tells them that it will introduce them into another world altogether, a world where the Lord will meet them. Then Paul states the spiritual significance of the event for us: "And so shall we ever be with the Lord". Nothing more is said as to what will happen then. This is bliss enough for our comfort and hope.

3. Preparation for the Lord's Coming (5:1-11). The Apostle now proceeds to give some instructions as to how the living should prepare themselves for the coming of the Lord. He had already taught his readers what the Lord had told His disciples about His coming as a thief in the night (Matt. 24:43), that the day of the Lord should come upon the world without warning, unobserved and unexpected, bringing sudden destruction that none could escape (vs. 1-3).

The day of the Lord was one of the themes of the Old Testament prophets. They used the phrase for the time when God would put forth His power to deliver His oppressed people and destroy their foes,

or to bring judgment upon Israel. In the New Testament the phrase is always applied to the time when the supreme manifestation of the Lord's power will take place, which is to be ushered in by the Second Coming.

The day of the Lord should not come upon his readers, Paul tells them, like a thief in the night, for they are all children of the day, living in the light, not in moral darkness (vs. 4-5). Therefore we should not sleep in a moral stupor as other men do, but keep watch and live in a calm and collected spirit, manifesting the graces of faith, love, and hope (vs. 6-8).

Thus Paul explains how to watch for the Lord's coming in a world that is utterly insensible of the approach of such an event. The destiny God will have for us then is not the wrath that He will visit upon the world, but the consummation of the salvation that Christ secured for us by His death. Whether we are awake or asleep when He comes, whether we are among the living or among the dead at that time, we shall be forever with the Lord. Therefore take comfort and encouragement from this truth (vs. 9-11).

4. The Sanctified Life (5:12-28). In these two chapters Paul has been keeping in view the sanctification of his readers (4:3). The present section contains a number of specific instructions for the sanctified life, leading up to a final prayer for entire sanctification. The pastors and leaders of the church are to be honoured, and the brethren are to live at peace among themselves, exercising discipline over the disorderly, and admonishing and encouraging one another. They are to see that there is no revenge,

the most natural and instinctive of all vices; they are always to confer good upon others (vs. 12-15). Then follow a number of short rules for their religious life, which is to be joyful, prayerful, and grateful (vs. 16-18). The spiritual gifts of the various members of the church are not to be checked, but are to be tested and proved, the good held fast and all kinds of evil rejected (vs. 19-22).

Then comes the Apostle's final prayer for the entire sanctification of his readers, to which he adds the ground of his confidence in its fulfilment (vs. 23-24). He makes a three-fold division of human nature. Sanctification begins in the spirit, that part of our nature which makes us conscious of God. It extends to the soul, the seat of our separate personalities, and to the body, which links us with the physical world. The conclusion of the letter is very brief (vs. 25-28). Besides the benediction, it contains an urgent request that the Epistle be read to all the members of the church. This was probably due to Paul's concern that none of them should miss the consolation it contained for the bereaved. The custom of reading apostolic letters to the whole congregation had not yet been established.

## THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS

THIS letter was written while Silas and Timothy were still with Paul in Corinth (1:1). The First Epistle had quieted the fears of the Thessalonians regarding their departed friends, but the excitement caused by the expectation of an immediate coming of the Lord still remained. This was aggravated by the claims of some to have received prophetic revelations, and by a message alleged to have come from Paul agreeing with them (2:2). Hence the Christian community in Thessalonica was becoming more and more disturbed. When the Apostle heard of this, he wrote the Second Epistle, to put a stop once and for all to these mistaken views about Christ's coming. Only a short interval could have elapsed between the two letters.

The First Epistle had dealt with the Second Coming in its relation to the Christian Church. The Second Epistle deals with the event mainly in its relation to the world and the foes of the Church. It may be taken in three parts. The Apostle first explains the Lord's purpose in His coming. It is to bring retribution on the foes of the Gospel as well as to bring deliverance to believers (Ch. 1). Then he declares that before that takes place certain intervening events will happen, and the movement which will bring them about has yet to develop and run its course (Ch. 2:1-12). Finally, on the basis of this



revelation, some further instructions and warnings are given (Chs. 2:13—3:18).

#### THE PURPOSE OF CHRIST'S COMING

##### (Ch. 1)

After beginning with the same kind of salutation as in the first letter (vs. 1-2), Paul continues with an extended thanksgiving, in the course of which he states the general purpose of the Second Coming. He thanks God that his readers continue to manifest increasingly the three graces he mentioned in 1 Thess. 1:3. Hope is not mentioned by name, but that grace is involved in their patience in enduring persecution. They are to regard these afflictions as a token that God counts them worthy of His Kingdom, and is preparing them for it (vs. 3-5). This leads to the thought of the Lord's return, and the passage goes on to unfold the objects to be achieved at that time.

It is God's purpose to bring righteous retribution upon those that refuse the Gospel and persecute His people (vs. 6-9). This will take place at the revelation of the Lord from Heaven attended by the angels of His power. The phrase, "in flaming fire", probably marks the robe of glory in which the Lord appears. But in the light of 2 Pet. 3:10-12 it is possible to interpret it as describing the instrument of judgment in the day of the Lord. Vengeance is to be visited both upon "them that know not God" (the Gentiles who have refused the Gospel), and upon "them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus" (the Jews to whom the Gospel came first). The punishment to be inflicted upon them is "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord".

They are cut off from God for ever. This is the antithesis of everlasting life.

It is also God's purpose to give rest to His afflicted people. As a result of the revelation of the Lord, His glory will be exhibited in His saints. What He has done in the case of those that have accepted the Gospel will be a source of wonderment in that day (v. 10). Paul then adds his constant prayer that God would count his readers worthy of their calling, and fulfil in them all that goodness desires and all that faith can effect, so that through them the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified; that is, that He may be shown to be Jehovah (vs. 11-12).

#### THE INTERVENING EVENTS

(2:1-12)

The Apostle now comes to the main theme of his letter. It has to do with "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him" (v. 1)—the special subject about which he had written in his former letter (4:15-17). He begs his readers not to give way to excitement, or to allow themselves to be deceived by some pretended revelation, or some letter purporting to come from him, to the effect that the day of the Lord is just upon us. Because it will not come, he goes on to declare, until two other events have happened. These are closely related—"the falling away", and the revelation of "the man of sin, the son of perdition" (vs. 2-3).

The man of sin is described in terms which mean that he presents himself instead of God as the object of divine worship, and usurps the place of God in the Christian Church (v. 4). Paul uses the phrase,

“the temple of God”, for the Church in 1 Cor. 3:16-17 and 2 Cor. 6:16, and he cannot mean the Jewish temple here. That could no longer be called the temple of God when its typical significance had been fulfilled in Christ. It is never mentioned elsewhere in Paul’s letters except in 1 Cor. 9:13, and there he uses another Greek word to describe it.

This prophecy should be interpreted in the broad light of Christian history. The nineteen centuries through which the Church has passed have something to say about it. Any other method of dealing with it can only result in speculation. The use of the article with “falling away” indicates that no local or temporary apostasy from the faith is meant, but something that affects the whole Church and stands out in its history. It is not said to be a falling away from belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. Apostasies of that kind have been temporary and have never affected the Church as a whole. What is meant is the falling away from the spiritual constitution of the Church and the unseen leadership of the Holy Spirit. This “falling away” began very early, and is the most significant movement in the ecclesiastical history of the first five centuries. What is seen in the Book of Acts as the Church of the Spirit gradually became the Church of the Bishops, and finally the Roman Catholic Church with the Papacy at its head.

There is a striking parallel in this respect between the history of Israel and the history of the Church. Israel fell away from Jehovah when they demanded a king “like all the nations” (1 Sam. 8:4-7). It was not that they denied His Deity, but that they rejected His invisible Kingship. This

started the nation on a path which led her away from her covenant God and ended in her overthrow in judgment. The organized Church has followed a similar course, and out of "the falling away" has arisen "the man of sin".

This phrase does not indicate a man in whom the sin of the world will be consummated, but the man in whom the sin of the Church, its falling away, comes to a head. He is called "the son of perdition" in the same sense as Judas Iscariot (John 17:12). The prophecy does not point to any particular Pope, but to the Papal hierarchy as a whole. The Papacy is to be distinguished from the Church of Rome, for it is a distinct system by itself. It is the consummation of "the falling away", for it puts the Pope in the place of the Holy Spirit as the representative of God in the Church of Christ.

Paul reminds the Thessalonians that he had told them about these things when he was with them (v. 5). It seems that on this subject he was drawing out teaching that he found in the Old Testament Scriptures. By "the man of sin" he meant "the little horn" in Daniel's vision of the four beasts (Dan. 7:8). The career of this horn symbolizes prophetically the rise of the Papacy as a political power among the various national powers that developed out of the Roman Empire (See pages 214-216 in Vol. II of this series). Paul does not use the term "Antichrist", but the phrase, "the man of sin", or according to another reading, "the man of lawlessness", may contain an implied allusion by contrast to "the Son of man" in whom righteousness is embodied and the Law is fulfilled.

The Apostle goes on to refer to a restraining

power and a restraining person holding back the revelation of the man of sin until his time comes—"that which restraineth" and "one that restraineth now" (vs. 6-7). Paul had to use guarded terms, for he was referring to the Roman Empire and its ruler. As long as the seat of Empire was in the city of Rome the power of the Pope was limited; but when that was moved to Constantinople early in the fourth century, then Papal power began to develop rapidly.

"The mystery of lawlessness doth already work". This was the tendency in the Church to fall away from the headship of Christ which began even in the days of the Apostles (Rev. 2:4). "Then shall be revealed the lawless one" (v. 8)—so called as departing from the law of Christ and as disobedient to Him. "Whom the Lord Jesus shall . . . bring to naught by the manifestation of his coming." This seems to be a prophetic indication that the Papacy will continue to oppose the progress of the Word of God in the world until the coming of the Lord Himself.

The next verses (vs. 9-10) contain a prophetic description of the rise and appearance of the Papacy—its "coming"—on the stage of world history, which corresponds exactly with historic fact. It is literally true that this took place "according to the working of Satan", and that its whole course is marked by "lying wonders"—pretended miraculous signs.

In all the long history of Christianity, nothing has ever appeared that answers so closely to all the characteristics described in this passage as does the Papal system of the Roman Catholic Church. No other institution in the world has exerted such

a universal and long-sustained influence in preventing men from knowing the truth "that they might be saved". Paul then goes on to declare that all this was permitted to happen as a Divine judgment upon men for their aversion to the Gospel and their delight in unrighteousness (vs. 11-12).

CHRISTIAN DUTY IN VIEW OF CHRIST'S COMING  
(2:13—3:18)

Paul follows up the new light he has given about the Second Coming with further instructions of the same kind as those contained in his first letter.

1. Words of Encouragement (2:13-17). While there is a principle of iniquity secretly at work in the world, deceiving men and carrying them on to ruin, there is also a work of God leading men to salvation. Paul gives thanks for the part that the Thessalonians have in this through the Gospel message which he brought them. He urges them to stand fast in it, and invokes the comfort and strength of God to keep them faithful.

2. Prayer for the Progress of the Gospel (3:1-5). Paul's request of the Thessalonians to pray for him reveals how his own heart was burdened about the work in Corinth. But in a moment, he thinks again of their need and offers prayer for them. This is characteristic of the Apostle. How easily and often he breaks into prayer as he writes (1:11; 2:13, 16; 3:5, 16).

3. Discipline in the Church (3:6-15). Some members of the church, under a mistaken notion that the Lord was to be expected at any moment, were giving up their daily work and were waiting for Him in idleness. Paul condemns their conduct as

“disorderly”, and calls them “busybodies”. They have a false Christian spirit and a wrong attitude toward the Lord’s coming. The thrice repeated expression about “walking disorderly” does not mean that these persons were causing a disturbance or living in open sin, but that they were shirking their personal responsibilities.

Working for one’s own living is essential to Christian character, and the true attitude of waiting for the Lord is that of earnest attention to present duty. If one is not willing to work, he is not worthy to eat. Such a Christian is to be disciplined, but not treated as an enemy. The Christian community has a character to keep, and he is to be excluded from it till he comes to see that he is out of fellowship with it. Discipline in the Church is necessary in order to preserve its true character and witness in the world, but it should be exercised in the spirit of love.

4. The Conclusion (3:16-18). In contrast with the excitement and disorder which a false view of the Second Coming had brought into the church, Paul brings his letter to a close with this significant prayer: “Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in all ways”. Having dictated the Epistle, he adds the salutation and benediction with his own hand as his own personal mark and token.



## THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

PAUL'S letters to Timothy and Titus form a group by themselves. They are known as the Pastoral Epistles, because they were written to pastors in charge of churches and are concerned chiefly with the qualifications and duties of ministers and office-bearers. It is not likely that they were intended to be read aloud to congregations. They belong to the closing years of the Apostle's life, and lie beyond the narrative of the Book of Acts.

According to an early and general tradition, Paul was released from the imprisonment with which Acts closes, and subsequently resumed his evangelizing work and his visitation of the churches, and suffered martyrdom five or six years afterwards in a second imprisonment at Rome. The First Epistle to Timothy and the Epistle to Titus were written in the interval between the two imprisonments, and the Second Epistle to Timothy was written during his second imprisonment.

These letters reveal the Apostle's deep concern for the welfare of the Christian Church. It had now been for many years a visible institution in the world, with an organization and office-bearers of its own in each locality where it existed. The doctrines upon which it was founded, and by which it lived, had been explained and established. To preserve the purity of its teaching and the sanctification of its fellowship, and to provide for the supervision and maintenance of its well-ordered life after

he and the other Apostles had passed away, was Paul's object in writing these letters.

Timothy was the most tenderly loved and the most thoroughly trusted of all Paul's companions and fellow-workers. He was the Apostle's "true child in faith" (1 Tim. 1:2), having been converted during his first missionary journey. He had been continuously employed by Paul ever since he was chosen "to go forth with him" from his home in Lystra during the second missionary journey (Acts 16:1-3). Timothy accompanied Paul and Silas during the rest of that mission, was associated with Paul during his third missionary journey, and was with him during his first imprisonment in Rome (Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:1).

After his release, Paul entrusted Timothy with the supervision of the church in Ephesus; and he was there when this First Epistle was written to him. It is a charge to a chief pastor concerning the oversight of a church. Its purpose is definitely stated: "that thou mayest know how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God" (3:15). The word "charge", as a noun or a verb, occurs seven times in the course of the Epistle. It is best taken chapter by chapter.

1. The Gospel in the Church (Ch. 1). After the opening salutation, in which Paul adds "mercy" to his usual greeting of "grace and peace" (vs. 1-2), he exhorts Timothy to be faithful in the ministry which he had left him to carry on at Ephesus, maintaining the true doctrine of the Gospel, for there were certain men teaching a different doctrine (vs. 3-4). The practical aim of the teaching con-

tained in "the gospel of the glory of the blessed God" is a life of love springing from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith (vs. 5 and 11). But some have turned aside to vain talking, desiring to be teachers of the Law, although they fail to understand the purpose of the Law. We understand that the Law was made not for the righteous but for the wicked, and for whatever is opposed to "the sound doctrine" (vs. 6-10).

This expression is characteristic of the Pastoral Epistles. It means "healthful teaching", and was probably suggested by the growing heresies of the time, which were harmful forms of thought. The word "doctrine" or "teaching", in the sense of the substance of teaching as distinguished from the act, occurs fifteen times in these Epistles, more often than in all the rest of the New Testament. The heretical teachers to whom Paul refers seem to have belonged to the Judaizing party, who gave the Apostle lifelong trouble.

The Apostle goes on to remind Timothy of his own call to preach the Gospel and of the grace bestowed upon him in carrying out his commission (vs. 12-14). His conversion was a supreme example of the longsuffering of God, and of the power of the Gospel to save sinners, of whom he counts himself to be the chief (vs. 15-16). This thought evokes from his heart a doxology of adoring praise (v. 17). Then he solemnly commits the same charge to Timothy, recalling the prophecies that were uttered over him, probably at his baptism or his ordination, and reminding him of some teachers who had made shipwreck of their faith (vs. 18-20). The expression "faithful is the saying" (v. 15) is used five times in

these Epistles and in each case it introduces or describes some statement regarding the Christian faith (1 Tim. 3:1; 4:8-9; 2 Tim. 2:11; Titus 3:8). These may have been extracts from early Christian hymns.

2. The Public Worship of the Church (Ch. 2). Prayers of intercession are to be made for all men, with thanksgiving, especially for kings and all who are in authority (vs. 1-2). The reason for this is that God desires the salvation of all men, and there is but one appointed Mediator for the race (vs. 3-5). The ransom He gave is now available for all, and this redemption, which Paul was appointed to proclaim among the Gentiles, was to be announced when the time of its accomplishment had come (vs. 6-7).

These public prayers are to be offered only by men, and in a devout spirit (v. 8). Women are to have a place in public worship, but a subordinate one. They are to worship in silence, and their dress and behaviour should be consistent with their Christian profession (vs. 9-12). This subordination of women in the public worship of the Church is based upon the order of creation and the facts of the Fall. The woman was the second in creation and the first in transgression; yet through her function of motherhood she has an honoured place in the Church (vs. 13-15). Paul has in mind here both the curse and the promise of Gen. 3:15-16.

3. The Office-bearers of the Church (Ch. 3). Now come instructions regarding the character and qualifications of those who hold office in the Church. The first office mentioned is that of bishop, which is the same as that of pastor or elder. This office has to do with the spiritual oversight of a church, and it is

described as "a good work", in the sense of being noble or honourable (v. 1). The necessary qualifications of the bishop are described as to character (vs. 2-3), temperament (vs. 4-5), experience (v. 6), and reputation (v. 7).

The qualifications of deacons are given next (vs. 8-13). This office had to do with the temporal welfare of the members of a church, especially with the care of the poor, who formed by far the largest class among the early Christians. The office of deacon may have been suggested by the appointment of the Seven to care for the poor widows among the Grecian Jews in the church at Jerusalem (Acts 6: 1-6), although they are nowhere called deacons. It was held by women as well as men, as v. 11 indicates, which refers to women as deaconesses and not to wives of deacons. The qualifications required for this office are similar to those of the bishop.

Paul now goes on to emphasize the importance of these instructions. He hopes to join Timothy shortly, but in case of delay he wishes him to know "how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (vs. 14-15). The house of God is not the building but the household, the society of believers. A proper order is to be maintained in it, because it is the assembly where the living God is worshipped, and the mainstay of divine truth in the world.

Then the substance of the truth which a church has to maintain is given in a number of succinct parallel phrases (v. 16). They appear to be in poetical form, as though they were taken from a Christian hymn. The "mystery of godliness" is the rev-

elation of God in Christ, and is so called because it is the secret from which vital godliness springs (Col. 1:27). The word "godliness" is used eleven times in the Pastoral Epistles, and elsewhere only in 2 Peter. By the time these letters were written it had become a compendious expression for Christian faith and practice.

4. The Testimony of the Church (Ch. 4). From the idea of the Christian society as the pillar and prop of the truth, the Apostle passes on to warn Timothy of the error against which the truth will have to be maintained (vs. 1-3). He had been taught by the Spirit that in future times some would "fall away from the faith", and be led astray by the hypocrisy and deceitful teaching of men who would fain impose a false asceticism upon believers. In the New Testament, "the faith" does not mean a body of doctrine, but the attitude of trust in the incarnate Redeemer alone for salvation. This is the truth for the Church to maintain, and Paul declares that those who know it can receive with thanksgiving all that God has created for food (vs. 4-5).

Timothy will be a good servant of Christ Jesus if he reminds the brethren of these things. Let him oppose all vain and false teaching, and give an illustration of godliness in the discipline of his own life. This is beneficial both for the present life and for the life to come (vs. 6-9). This is the end of the trials we endure, because our hope is set upon the living God. He is "the Saviour of all men"—in having made propitiation for the sins of the world through Jesus Christ (1 John 2:2)—, but "specially of them that believe", for salvation can only be

realized through faith. This is what Timothy is to teach in the church (vs. 10-11).

Then follow some directions for Timothy regarding his own personal conduct (vs. 12-16). He is to be an example to believers in all respects, and to conduct himself in such a way that the church cannot but respect and honour him notwithstanding his youth. "Give heed to reading"—the public reading of the Scriptures; "to exhortation"—the sermon following the reading; "to teaching"—the teaching that accompanied the exhortation. "Neglect not the gift that is in thee"—the special equipment of the Holy Spirit for the office to which he was ordained.

5. The Administration of the Church (Ch. 5). Special instructions are now given Timothy to guide him in his pastoral care of the church and his treatment of the different classes of its members. He is to act toward the older men and women as he would toward his father and mother, and toward the younger men and women as he would toward his brothers and sisters (vs. 1-2).

Careful directions are then given regarding widows, for they were a large class, and their condition in the pagan world was solitary and helpless. Christian widows were the special care of the corporate body of a church (Acts 6:1). Paul explains the principles to be observed in dealing with them. Children should make some return to their parents and should provide for widows who belong to their own family. Those who are destitute of support, "widows indeed", should be taken under the special care of the church, but only if they are living devout and blameless Christian lives (vs. 3-8). Then follow special instructions for an order of widows who



were to be enrolled as church servants. This was to include only women of mature age and experience, and of tried Christian character (vs. 9-16).

Instructions are given also for the treatment of elders (vs. 17-25). Special honour was to be paid to them, and the quotations from Deut. 25:4 and Matt. 10:10 mean that they were entitled to financial remuneration for their labour. Paul realized the serious responsibility of the judicial functions involved in his instructions to Timothy regarding the elders, and hence the solemn charge of v. 21 thrown in as a kind of parenthesis.

Another parenthesis occurs in v. 23, suggested by the last words of v. 22. In disciplining himself in purity, Timothy is to exercise sanctified common sense and not let his health be injured. The injunction implied that Paul regarded wine as a medicine for the infirm, and not as a beverage for the strong. In the next verses he reverts to the judicial position of Timothy in dealing with the office-bearers of the church. The instructions contained in this chapter indicate that Timothy was acting as Paul's representative in Ephesus, and not as the ordinary church pastor.

6. Closing Charges (Ch. 6). Paul gives some wise advice regarding bondservants, of whom there were many in the New Testament churches (vs. 1-2). The tendency of the Christian slave in a household would be to treat his unbelieving master with contempt; and on the other hand, if his master was a Christian, to treat him with undue familiarity.

Then comes a further warning against false teachers, who are puffed up and ignorant, and whose motive is gain—"supposing that godliness is a way

of gain" (vs. 3-5). This leads the Apostle to say that contentment is the mark of the pilgrim life in the world (vs. 6-8), and to point out the peril of covetousness (vs. 9-10). The desire to be rich brings on temptation and the snares of sin, and often results in moral ruin. The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and has led some astray from the faith and into many sorrows.

Turning from the conduct of false teachers, Paul describes the life of the true teacher in a beautiful and dignified appeal to Timothy, beginning, "But thou, O man of God, flee these things" (vs. 11-16). He describes the character that he should follow after in three pairs of virtues, and summons him to fight the noble fight of faith and lay hold on the life eternal which he has professed. Then Paul adds a solemn and impressive charge, urging Timothy to keep his sacred commission without spot and without reproach, in view of the inspiring hope of the appearing of the Lord Jesus. This sublime passage closes with a majestic description of the living God, who in due time is to bring in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The prospect of the Lord's coming leads Paul to think of the rich again, and he gives Timothy a further charge about them. They are to be told to use their wealth in such a way as to lay up in store for themselves "a good foundation against the time to come" (vs. 17-19). After that the letter comes to an end with the closing exhortation of warning to Timothy himself, and a brief benediction (vs. 20-21).

## THE SECOND EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

THIS is Paul's farewell message. When it was written the Apostle was a prisoner in Rome under close guard (1:8, 16-17). This was a different kind of confinement from the imprisonment mentioned at the end of Acts. He had already had a preliminary trial, and was remanded (4:16-17). The persecution of the Christians in Rome, following the great fire of A.D. 64, had been so severe that no one now dared to stand by him in the court. He expected to suffer death very soon (4:6-8). He was almost quite alone; only Luke remained with him; and he longed to see his "beloved child" Timothy before the end (1:2; 4:9-11).

Timothy was still at Ephesus where Paul had left him, bearing the heavy burden of his responsibility in the church there. His difficulties had been increased by the activity of false teachers. Paul seems to have felt that he would need all the encouragement and advice that the Apostle could give him, for henceforth he should have to stand alone. This is the main purpose of the letter. But the Apostle also appeals to Timothy to come to him with all haste, and if possible before the winter (4:9, 21). The probable date of the Epistle is the fall of A.D. 67.

It is a purely personal letter, and its value does not depend so much upon its doctrinal and ecclesiastical teaching as upon its human interest. It is a revelation of the passionate attachment that Paul

felt for Timothy, and also of the profound nature of the Apostle's faith as he reviewed his Christian experience in the face of death. His personal interest in people still remained, for twenty-three persons are mentioned by name. The Epistle may be taken chapter by chapter.

1. Timothy Encouraged (Ch. 1). After the opening salutation, Paul expresses his thanksgiving to God as he prays for Timothy and remembers his genuine faith and the religious influence of his early home (vs. 1-5). He reminds him to stir up the gift of God that he received at his ordination, and encourages him not to be ashamed of the ministry of the Gospel, but to share its hardships (vs. 6-8). Then the Apostle goes on describing the power and grandeur of the Gospel which he was appointed to proclaim and teach among the Gentiles (vs. 9-11). He declares that he himself is not ashamed of the sufferings he has endured in this ministry of his; for he knows Him in whom he has put his trust, and is sure that He is able to guard what he has laid up in his keeping until the great day (v. 12).

Paul bids Timothy adhere to the doctrine of the Gospel that he taught him, "the pattern of sound words", and guard the deposit of truth entrusted to him by the help of the Holy Spirit (vs. 13-14). He then holds up before him two instances, one as a sad warning, and the other as a bright example. The Christians of Asia deserted the Apostle; this Timothy knows. Onesiphorus, on the other hand, a prominent Christian of Ephesus well known to Timothy, sought Paul out in his imprisonment when he was in Rome, and often cheered him. Paul twice invokes mercy upon him (vs. 15-18).

2. Timothy Exhorted (Ch. 2). Paul now gives Timothy a personal exhortation. Finding his strength in the grace of Christ, he is to take practical measures for preserving the truth which the Apostle has taught him, by transmitting it to faithful men who will be able to teach it to others (vs. 1-2). Then he urges him to fidelity in the hardships and difficulties of his service for Christ by illustrations from the life of the soldier, the athlete, and the husbandman. The Lord will make all these things clear to him, Paul adds (vs. 3-7). The highest motive in the ministry of the Gospel of salvation consists in keeping the risen Christ before his mind (vs. 8-10). Then comes another "faithful saying", confirming the foregoing statement. It dwells on the fact that faith in Christ identifies us with Him in everything, and it ends with a warning against denying Him (vs. 11-13).

The Apostle now turns to the condition of the church, and gives Timothy some instructions in view of it. He tells him how to deal with those who carry on worthless disputes about doctrine (vs. 14-18). He is to take good heed that his own manner of presenting the truth is such as will receive the blessing of God. He is to show himself a workman who is not to be put to shame, marking out aright the word of truth; and he is to keep aloof from the profane babbling of false teachers. They will go to more daring lengths in impiety; and their teaching will work deeper and deeper like a gangrene. There follow two instances of teachers who had gone utterly astray about the Resurrection.

But the foundation of the Church of God stands firm in spite of the false teaching of some (v. 19).

It has as its seal two correlative truths: the sovereign care and love of God for His own children ("The Lord knoweth them that are his"), and their responsibility to be separate from sin ("Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness").

Although the Church in its ideal condition is a society of believers, yet its condition as actually found in the world is like a large mansion, in which there are vessels made of precious metals which are used for honourable purposes, and other vessels of perishable material which are put to an ignoble use. If a man cleanse himself from the pollutions of false teaching, he will be a vessel for a noble use, prepared for every good work in the service of his Master (vs. 20-21).

Then Paul exhorts Timothy to look to the cultivation of his own spiritual life, in fellowship with sincere followers of the Lord, and to avoid questions that engender strife in the church (vs. 22-23). As the servant of the Lord, he should be gentle and patient with all. He should in a kindly spirit instruct those who are contentious, in the hope that God may bring them to repentance, so that they may acknowledge the truth and come to themselves again out of the snare of the devil (vs. 24-26). The last words of the passage, "unto his will", refer to the restoration of the sinner to do the will of God.

3. Timothy Warned (Ch. 3). From the false teaching and its results which Timothy was meeting in his day, Paul turns to the future and warns him of more grievous things to happen "in the last days" (vs. 1-5). By this phrase he refers to the

close of the Christian age. He had said that profane babblings would lead to still more impiety, and here he describes the results. The immoral features by which life would be marked make it more akin to paganism than Christianity. He does not mean that all these vices would appear in the same persons, but that they would characterize human society; and it is to society within the sphere of Christendom that he refers. There would be a superficial form of Christianity without the inward reality.

The prediction has been fulfilled at different times in the course of the centuries, but the fulfilment has not yet reached its climax. The reason why Timothy was warned about this is stated in the next verses (vs. 6-9). Signs of it had already begun to appear in some Christian communities. An indication of the real character of these deceivers is given in the example of Jannes and Jambres. According to Jewish tradition these were the two chief magicians who withstood Moses in the court of Pharaoh. A word of encouragement is added, based on the failure of these men. And then Paul reminds Timothy of the privilege he has had in the company of the Apostle on his missionary journeys, in following his manner of life and his methods of work, and in seeing what persecutions he endured and how the Lord delivered him out of them (vs. 10-11).

Those who live a godly life, Paul declares, will suffer persecution, but impostors will go on their way of destruction (vs. 12-13). He bids Timothy abide in the truth that he has learned from his teachers. From his childhood he has known the sacred Scriptures, which can give him the wisdom



that leads to salvation through faith in Christ (vs. 14-15). Every Scripture is inspired of God, and is fitted to prepare one for the work of the ministry, so that the man of God may be fully equipped for every good work (vs. 16-17). This passage contains the most definite statement in Paul's writings of the inspiration of the Old Testament and of its authoritative value for the Christian minister. Paul evidently believed that these Scriptures testify of Christ, and can lead men to a knowledge of the truth which was fulfilled in Him.

4. Timothy Charged (Ch.. 4). Now comes the aged Apostle's last charge. It is marked by a tender and solemn dignity, and is urged in the light of the Lord's appearing. Timothy's chief work was to preach the Word, the Divine message of the Gospel, and he was to be ever on the alert for opportunities of enforcing the truth (vs. 1-2). The time should come when men would not endure "the sound doctrine", the healthful truth of the Gospel, but would gather teachers to satisfy their self-willed notions and their itch for novelty, who would turn them away from the truth. But Timothy was to remain calm and sane in all things, enduring hardship, doing the work of an evangelist, and thus fulfilling his ministry (vs. 3-5).

Paul's life-work was ended, and his departure was at hand. He had fought the good fight, finished the race, and kept the Christian faith. He now faced death with triumphant assurance. The victor's crown of righteousness was laid up for him, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, would award him in the great day of His appearing (vs. 6-8). This passage regarding Paul's finished course and coming

reward is more than an outbreak of personal joy; behind it is his strong desire to encourage Timothy to fight his own fight and run his own course with a view to the crown.

Then follow some personal messages (vs. 9-15). He appeals to Timothy to come to him soon, and bring Mark along with him. He is lonely; some have forsaken him, and others have gone to their homes or fields of labour. Luke alone is with him, faithful to the end. Paul left a cloak at Troas; Timothy is to bring that, for winter is coming on, and it can be terribly cold in the prison. He is also to bring the books, but above all the parchments. These may have been portions of the Scriptures, but we have no means of knowing.

Then Paul interposes a touching notice of the first stage of his trial (vs. 16-18). None of the Christians in Rome appeared as his advocate; all deserted him. May God not record it against them. But the Lord stood by him and gave him strength to make the Christian message known to all the Gentiles there. He was delivered from death on that occasion, and he is assured that the Lord will deliver him from every evil work and will bring him safely into His heavenly Kingdom. The Epistle then comes to an end with another appeal to Timothy to come soon, set in the midst of a few salutations and a closing benediction (vs. 19-22).

## THE EPISTLE TO TITUS

TITUS was a Gentile who had been converted at an early period in Paul's ministry, his "true child after a common faith" (1:4). He had been associated with the Apostle longer than Timothy, but did not hold the same place in his affections. He is never mentioned in the Book of Acts, but from the references Paul makes to him in his Epistles it would seem that he was one of the ablest and most reliable of the Apostle's fellow-workers. He appears first as accompanying Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem after the first missionary journey (Gal. 2:1-3), and next as sent by Paul on important missions to Corinth during the third missionary journey (2 Cor. 2:13; 7:6; 8:6; 12:18).

Some time after the Apostle's release from Rome, he took Titus with him to the island of Crete, and left him there in charge of the organization of the churches. He was engaged in that ministry when this Epistle was sent to him. He evidently possessed a rare combination of firmness and tact, and was fitted for delicate and difficult tasks. Paul reminds him that the Cretans had a bad reputation, and even after conversion they needed firm and resolute oversight (1:10-13). He quotes a Cretan poet of about 600 B.C. to support his description of them. It is not known how the Gospel reached Crete. Probably the Cretans who were in Jerusalem on the

Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:11) carried it back to the island.

The Epistle to Titus is very similar to First Timothy, and was probably written about the same time. It may be described as a charge to a missionary superintendent. It deals with three main themes.

1. The Church and its Elders (Ch. 1). Paul begins with a much more elaborate salutation than in the letters to Timothy (vs. 1-4). He evidently feels a deep sense of responsibility, and wishes to impress Titus with the important place the Gospel occupies in God's eternal purpose. He instructs him first about the appointment of elders in the churches (vs. 5-9). Elders were to be appointed in each congregation—"in every city". The elder, or bishop, should be blameless in his family life, in his personal character, and in his social relations. As a special qualification he must hold fast the truth which he has been taught and be able to proclaim it and explain it to others.

The Apostle goes on to point out the need for these office-bearers (vs. 10-14). False teachers, especially of the Judaizing party, were threatening the Christian communities. The Cretans were of an unruly disposition, and firmness was needed in dealing with them. Then Paul states some important maxims about human nature fitted to guide Titus in his teaching (vs. 15-16).

2. The Church and its Members (Ch. 2). The Apostle now turns to the "things which befit the sound doctrine" (v. 1), and instructs Titus about the behaviour expected of the various classes of Christians—the aged men and women (vs. 2-3),

the young women and the young men (vs. 4-6). In connection with the last class, Paul points out the special responsibility resting upon Titus to set a good example in his conduct and teaching (vs. 7-8). The duties of household slaves are next set forth (vs. 9-10).

And then Paul gives a grand outline of the grace of God in the Gospel itself as it bears upon the life of Christians in the world (vs. 11-14), and adds a pointed exhortation to Titus to proclaim these things, and to maintain such authority in his ministry that no man can despise him (v. 15).

3. The Church and the State (Ch. 3). Paul now instructs Titus regarding proper conduct toward those who are in authority in the state, and those who belong to the world outside the Church. It is the duty of all Christians to be in subjection to the civil authorities, and to contribute to the well-being of the state by following proper callings in life. They are to speak evil of no man, and show gentleness and meekness to all men (vs. 1-2). These were new virtues, and were peculiar to Christianity. The motive for them consists in recognizing what we once were in our sinful state (v. 3), and what God did to save us from our sins (vs. 4-7). Here we have another fine summary of the Gospel similar to 2:11-14.

Titus was to insist on these essential things, that believers might be careful to show their Christian character in honest occupations (v. 8). He was to avoid unprofitable controversies, especially those about the Law which Judaizers raised, and shun any man who persisted in being factious after repeated warnings (vs. 9-11). Then the Epistle comes

to a close with a few personal messages and the final salutations, in the midst of which Paul reminds Titus again that Christians are to "learn to maintain good works" (vs. 12-15).

This is the eighth time in the course of these pastoral Epistles that the Apostle emphasizes the duty of Christians to manifest their faith by "good works". Two different adjectives are used in the original Greek. One marks the intrinsic character of the works; they are essentially good (1 Tim. 2:10; 2 Tim. 3:17; Tit. 3:1). The other marks their effect upon others: they have a nobility that attracts (1 Tim. 3:1; 5:10, 25; 6:18; Tit. 2:7; 3:14).

## THE EPISTLE TO PHILEMON

PHILEMON was a Colossian Christian who had been converted to Christianity through Paul (v. 19). He was a man of considerable means, and was noted for his charity and devotion (v.7). His house was a meeting-place for the church in Colossæ (v. 2).

Onesimus, a household slave belonging to Philemon, had robbed his master and run away from home. He had found his way to Rome when Paul was a prisoner there, and by some strange coincidence he had come within the sphere of the Apostle's influence and had been converted (v. 10). Paul then sent him back to Philemon with this letter. It was written at the same time as the Epistle to the Colossians. Onesimus accompanied the messenger who carried that letter to Colossæ (Col. 4:8-9).

The Epistle to Philemon is a private letter, written by one Christian to another. It is a model of Christian courtesy, tact, and delicacy. Paul's purpose was to restore the penitent slave to his master, and to commend him as a fellow-Christian. The letter shows how Christianity deals with the evils of human society. The system of slavery was the main foundation of social life when the Gospel entered the world. It was not attacked openly from without, but the Spirit of Christ was brought to bear upon it from within. The letter also illustrates the human interest which the Gospel creates. On its single



page eleven different persons are mentioned by name, and in most cases portraits of them drawn.

Paul begins the Epistle with his usual greeting of "grace and peace", but does not use his official title. To Philemon he is simply "a prisoner of Jesus Christ" (vs. 1-3). Apphia was probably the wife of Philemon, and Archippus his son. Then, as usual in Paul's letters, comes a thanksgiving. This time it is for the character of Philemon—his love and faith toward the Lord Jesus, and his charity and kindness toward all the saints (vs. 4-7).

The case of Onesimus is put before Philemon. The Apostle might enjoin him by his authority, but he rather beseeches him for love's sake, on the ground of his age and imprisonment, for his son whom he has begotten in his bonds (vs. 8-10). Then he plays on the slave's name, which means "serviceable", "good for something". Onesimus once was Little Good to Philemon; but now he is Great Good both to Philemon and to Paul (v. 11).

Paul is sending him back in his own person as one with himself. He would fain have kept him that he might serve himself on Philemon's behalf in the bonds of the Gospel. But he would do nothing without Philemon's consent, that his kindness might not be compulsory, but wholly of his own free will (vs. 12-14). Perhaps Onesimus was parted from him for a little that he might have him for ever, no longer as a slave, but as a brother beloved. Such he is to Paul; how much more to Philemon (vs. 15-16).

Next Paul appeals to Philemon as his partner to receive Onesimus as himself, and pledges himself to repay whatever Onesimus owes him. He might urge

the plea that Philemon owes to Paul all that he is, but he will not. But he pleads with him to do one piece of joyful service, and thus refresh his heart (vs. 17-20). This is probably a delicate suggestion to Philemon to set his slave free. He has written thus because he is sure that Philemon will yield to his appeal, and even do more than he requests. But he asks him now to prepare a lodging for him in Colossæ for he hopes to be able to visit him in answer to his prayers (vs. 21-22).

The letter comes to an end with a salutation from Epaphras, who had come to Rome from Colossæ (Col. 1:7) and seems to have shared the Apostle's imprisonment, and also from four of his fellow-workers, followed by a simple closing benediction (vs. 23-25).

## THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

THIS Epistle is anonymous, and there is no indication of the writer's identity in it. The tradition of the Church ascribes it to Paul, but not uniformly. The Eastern Church accepted it as Paul's from the beginning, but in the West its authorship was disputed. It was not till the fourth century that the Pauline tradition was generally received. It differs considerably in style and manner from the Epistles known to be Paul's, and is more like an ordered treatise than a familiar letter. Because of these features, the prevailing modern view denies the Pauline authorship. It assumes that no man, even with the versatility and mental ability that Paul had, could write in such different styles on different occasions.

While the authorship must remain hidden, yet no one was better fitted by training and ability to write such a letter, and the probabilities in Paul's favour are quite as strong as in the case of any other apostolic author whose name has been suggested. Whoever wrote the book must have been a man of massive mind. The mention of Timothy in Heb. 13:23, and the reference in 2 Pet. 3:15 to a letter that Paul had written to Hebrew Christians, would fall in with the Pauline authorship.

Assuming that the Apostle to the Gentiles was the writer, it is quite easy to see why he should omit a personal salutation and a reference to his apostolic

authority in writing to Jewish Christians. The chief difficulty lies in a difference in the view-point. In Hebrews the writer's point of view is within Israel, while in Paul's known letters it is outside Israel. This could be explained by the fact that the readers of Hebrews belonged entirely to Israel, while in the other letters Paul was writing to churches that were very largely Gentile.

The Epistle bears the title, "To the Hebrews". It was apparently addressed to a community of Christian Jews in some particular locality, most probably Jerusalem, or Palestine in general; but it was no doubt intended for a wider circle also. They were undergoing persecution and were tempted to lapse into Judaism on account of it (10:23-25, 32-33; 12:3). The believing Jews in Jerusalem and Judea were especially subjected to this temptation, because of the presence of the Temple and the splendour of the Levitical ritual. The author speaks of these ceremonies as still carried on, which shows that he was writing before the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70.

The Epistle was written to show that Christianity is better than Judaism, that the new dispensation is better than the old. The word "better" occurs thirteen times, more often than in all the rest of the New Testament. The writer shows that the whole system of types and ceremonies has been fulfilled in Christ, that Christianity is the completion and goal of the Old Covenant, and that it introduces a New Covenant. The argument may be divided into five main parts:

#### I. Jesus as the Mediator of the New Revelation Better than Angels—Chs. 1—2

- II. Jesus as the Founder of the New Dispensation  
Better than Moses—Chs. 3—4
- III. Jesus as the High Priest of the New Covenant  
Better than Aaron—Chs. 5—7
- IV. The Work of the Great High Priest—Chs. 8—10
- V. The New Life Under the New Covenant—  
Chs. 11—13

JESUS BETTER THAN ANGELS  
(Chs. 1—9)

The Epistle begins with a note of finality. There is a majestic march in the opening sentence. Jesus Christ the Son is brought into view at once, seated at the centre of power in the heavenly world, in the repose of a finished work. This transcendent fact dominates the whole book. The present section shows that Jesus, through whom the new revelation of God was given, is superior to the angels, through whom the old revelation was given (2:2; Gal. 3:19).

1. Jesus the Revealer of God (Ch. 1). God has made His final revelation to man in a Son. The old revelation through the prophets is contrasted with the new revelation in Jesus Christ. He is all that God is, "being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance". He is therefore the perfect Prophet. He has "made purification of sins", and has therefore accomplished the work of the Priest. He now sits as King, "on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (vs. 1-3). There He occupies a place of pre-eminence over the angels (v.4).

This is proved by Scripture references to the supreme dignity of His person (vs. 5-6; Psa. 2:7; 2 Sam. 7:14; Psa. 97:7), of His office (vs. 7-9; Psa. 104:4; 45:6-7), of His work (vs. 10-12; Psa. 102:

25-27), and of His position (vs. 13-14; Psa. 110:1).

2. A Warning to Give Heed (2:1-4). This is the first of a number of digressions in the form of warnings or exhortations that occur throughout the Epistle. It is a warning against neglecting the great salvation which has come through the new revelation, and has been proclaimed through the preaching of the Gospel.

3. Jesus the Representative Man (2:5-18). Man's true destiny, as revealed in the quotation from Psalm 8, is fulfilled in the exaltation of Jesus (vs. 5-9). He was made lower than the angels that He might share man's death: He was exalted that man might share His victory. Man has not yet attained this destiny. But we see Jesus, "because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that by the grace of God he should taste death for every man".

It makes no difference to the author's argument whether we take the crowning of Jesus with glory and honour as preceding the Cross so as to qualify Him to taste death for every man, in which case it would refer to the Transfiguration, or as following the Cross so as to make the benefits of His death available for every man, in which case it would refer to the Ascension. In either case the central fact remains, that Jesus passed through death as the perfect and ideal representative of the human race.

Having made this point, the writer goes on to show that, as the representative man and the author of our salvation, Jesus was made perfect through suffering (vs. 10-15). The manhood which He carried to the Cross and on into glory was an

achievement, wrought out under those conditions which the sin of man had imposed. He was incorporated voluntarily in the human race. He assumed the nature of man and consented to live as men live, subject to the limitations of existence on earth. And this He did for the ultimate purpose of redeeming men: "That through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage".

It was not the nature of angels, but the nature of men, that He took upon Himself, for it was necessary that, as the representative man, He should be made like those who were to be redeemed (vs. 16-18). It was thus that He became a true High Priest "in things pertaining to God", that is, on the Godward side of the veil, in order to make atonement for the sins of men. And He is also able to help those who are tempted on the human side.

#### JESUS BETTER THAN MOSES

(Chs. 3—4)

As the founder of the new dispensation, Jesus is shown to be superior to Moses, the founder of the old dispensation. The real purpose of God in redeeming His people out of Egypt and bringing them into Canaan remains to be realized through Jesus.

1. Jesus Compared with Moses (3:1-6). On the ground of what he has just said, the writer now calls upon his readers as "partakers of a heavenly calling"—members of the spiritual dispensation—to fix their attention on Jesus. He is both Apostle and High Priest of the faith they acknowledge, that



is, the representative of both God and man. He was faithful in founding the new economy, as Moses was faithful in founding the old (vs. 1-2). The phrase, "in all his house", is a reference to the Lord's statement about Moses in Num. 12:7: "he is faithful in all mine house".

The writer then establishes the superiority of Christ by two considerations. Moses represents a "house", the house in which God dwells, but Christ represents the builder of the house, God Himself (vs. 3-4). Moses held the position of a servant, and bore witness to truths that were to be made plain afterwards. But Christ holds the position of a Son, and the blessings that He introduced are realized by us now (vs. 5-6).

2. Israel's Failure under Moses (3:7-19). This comparison of Christ with Moses leads naturally to a comparison of the people under the two dispensations. Israel failed in the wilderness because they hardened their hearts against God, and the writer quotes Psa. 95 to point the lesson he draws (vs. 7-11), and then makes a personal application of it to his readers (vs. 12-15). The Holy Spirit in the Psalm announced a new revelation and exhorted those to whom it was coming to be mindful of the fate of their fathers, who disbelieved God and missed the rest that was promised them.

The passage goes on to draw out the lesson in detail by a series of questions and answers showing the danger of backsliding (vs. 16-19): Who, when they heard, did provoke? Was it not the very people that came out of Egypt? With whom was He grieved forty years? Was it not with those that sinned and died in the wilderness? To whom sware

He that they should not enter into His rest? Was it not those that believed not? Thus the apostolic writer shows his readers that faith is the condition of enjoying the Divine blessing.

3. The Blessing Provided under Jesus (Ch. 4). It follows from this review of the history of Israel that the promise of God to His people was not fulfilled in Canaan, but remains to be fulfilled in Jesus Christ; and there is reason to fear that we may miss it because of unbelief, as they did.

(1) The promised rest of God (vs. 1-10). This rest is proclaimed in the Gospel. It is entered by faith, and it has been prepared from the foundation of the world (vs. 1-3). The writer describes it by a further exposition of Psa. 95. It is a rest from one's "own works", from all that man does of himself (vs. 4-5, 10). It is a rest for "to-day", the present age of grace, a day long after the entrance into Canaan under Joshua (vs. 6-8). It is "a sabbath rest", a fellowship with God in His rest (vs. 9-10).

This means that state of divine bliss and satisfaction which followed the creating of the world, when the Creator proceeded to repose in the perfect enjoyment of His own handiwork. It was God's purpose that man should share this rest of His, entering into fellowship with Him in the full enjoyment of the creation, of which man himself is the crown. The writer of Hebrews declares that this blissful privilege is now offered to men through Christ; it is part of the Christian system.

(2) An appeal to enter into this rest (vs. 11-16). Let us therefore give diligence to enter into that rest; let us seek to make sure of it, lest we fail like the Israelites (v. 11). For this purpose we have

the living and active Word of God, which goes to the secrets of each man's heart, and lays everything open in His sight (vs. 12-13). We have also a great High Priest in Heaven, who has Himself entered into the rest of God, who knows our infirmities and can sympathize with us, so that we ourselves can draw near to God for the mercy and grace that we need (vs. 14-16). These verses form a transition to the main theme of the Epistle, which deals with the High-priesthood of Christ.

#### JESUS BETTER THAN AARON

(Chs. 5-7)

This section deals with the general conception of Christ's High-priesthood. As our great High Priest, He is shown to be superior to the high priest of the order of Aaron.

1. The Aaronic Priesthood of Jesus (5:1-10). The qualifications of the old high priest are first laid down (vs. 1-4). These were threefold: (a) His office was to act for men before God and offer sacrifices for sins. (b) He was chosen from among men, so as to sympathize with them and be their true representative. (c) He was called and appointed by God to his office, so that he had authority to act for men in things that relate to God.

Then it is shown that these qualifications were perfectly fulfilled in Christ. They are described in His case in the reverse order (vs. 5-10). He was appointed by God to His office, as the Word of God bears witness (Psa. 2:7; 110:4). He suffered in the days of His flesh and can sympathize with men, having learned through actual experience the deepest needs of human weakness. The reference in v. 7 is

primarily to Gethsemane, where His perfect obedience to the will of God was consummated, and in v. 8 to the discipline of having His manhood perfected by obeying the will of God. Then by His perfect sacrifice for the sins of men, He became "the author of eternal salvation", and was named a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek.

2. The Need of Making Progress (5:11—6:8). The mention of Melchizedek calls up the difficulty of unfolding the truth of Christ's High-priestly office to the Hebrews, whose spiritual intelligence is so backward that, though by this time they ought to be teachers, they need to be taught the rudiments of Christianity (5:11-14). The Apostle will not speak of the elementary teaching about Christ and have them begin the Christian life over again, but will go on with his original design, for there is need that they press on toward maturity (6:1-3).

Meanwhile he gives them a warning about the peril of relapse (6:4-8). It is impossible to renew again unto repentance those who were once for all enlightened with the Christian revelation and had a real spiritual experience and then go back to Judaism, seeing they have crucified the Son of God again to their own ruin. Having rejected Him, there is no other Gospel for them. Nature itself teaches that divine gifts and opportunities must be used in order to be retained and enjoyed.

3. Reasons for Encouragement (6:9-20). Addressing his readers with a term of affection, "beloved", used only here in the Epistle, the Apostle tells them that he is persuaded they are not in the condition he has described, but are in the way of salvation. The Christian love which they show in

ministering to the saints is an evidence of this, and God will not forget it (vs. 9-10). Let each of them persist to the end in the same zeal and full assurance, and show themselves to be true imitators of those who by faith and patient waiting attained the fulfilment of the promises (vs. 11-12).

Then he goes on to speak of the promise that God made to Abraham, which the patriarch obtained after patient endurance, and to show that God confirmed it in the strongest possible way—by His oath (Gen. 22:15-18), as well as by His word (vs. 13-16). Thus we who inherit the promise have these two immutable things on which to rest our faith (vs. 17-18). The reference to the oath by which God confirmed the promise after the sacrifice of Isaac carries the thought to the oath by which the priesthood of Jesus was confirmed (Psa. 110:4). He received this priesthood when He entered as our representative and forerunner into the heavenly world within the veil. Our hope can now reach into the very presence of God where Jesus is, who has become “a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek” (vs. 19-20).

4. The Greatness of Melchizedek (7:1-10). At this point the writer enters upon the main argument of the Epistle, the explanation of the priesthood of Jesus in the Christian system. He first points out the significance of Melchizedek as a type of Christ (vs. 1-3). When Melchizedek comes into the story of Abraham in Gen. 14:18-20, he is called a king as well as a priest. He was “king of righteousness” by the meaning of his name, and “king of peace” by the meaning of Salem. He is introduced into the record without any mention of his birth or

his death: "having neither beginning of days nor end of life". Thus he foreshadows the Son of God in His eternal beginning and endless life.

Then the writer goes on to show "how great this man was" (vs. 4-10). He was greater than Abraham, for he blessed the patriarch and received tithes from him. He was therefore greater than Levi, the head of the Aaronic order of priests, for Levi was but a descendant of Abraham and was not yet born.

5. The Melchizedek Priesthood of Jesus (7:11-28). The main significance of the analogy between Jesus and Melchizedek consists in Jesus becoming a High Priest "forever". The superiority of the Melchizedek priesthood over the Levitical is drawn out in this passage as follows: It is a new priesthood of another order, introduced because the Levitical priesthood could not make salvation perfect. This is seen in the fact that our Lord came from another tribe (vs. 11-14). It is based on an eternal principle, the power of an indissoluble life, instead of the law of an external command. Thus it gives us a better hope, by which we can draw near unto God (vs. 15-19).

It is final and immutable, being confirmed with the oath of God and establishing a better covenant (vs. 20-22; Psa. 110:4). It is an unchangeable and perpetual priesthood, embodied in one Priest who lives for ever, and is thus able to secure salvation to the uttermost for them that draw near to God through Him (vs. 23-25). This Melchizedek priesthood is completely realized in Jesus Christ, because of his personal qualifications (v. 26), because of His priestly work (v. 27), and because of His Divine appointment (v. 28).

## THE WORK OF THE GREAT HIGH PRIEST

(Chs. 8—10)

Having shown the superiority of the priesthood of Christ to that of Aaron, the writer now proceeds to compare the two ministries. He shows that our High Priest ministers in the true sanctuary, and that He is the Mediator of a better covenant.

1. The Minister of the True Tabernacle (8:1-5). His place of service is the unseen world of the eternal realities. This is the real sanctuary, while the old tabernacle of the Law, which Moses made at God's command, was only a copy and shadow of the true. In this heavenly world the work of our High Priest is kingly: He "sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens". He has entered into the full and permanent participation of the Divine glory and power. It is also priestly: He "has somewhat to offer". What He has to offer is not stated yet. It has been referred to in 7:27, and will be taken up again in 9:11-14. He offered up Himself, and on the ground of this offering He exercises His priestly work in Heaven. The tabernacle in which the priests of the Law served was only a copy and shadow of Heaven.

2. The Mediator of the New Covenant (8:6-13). In this heavenly tabernacle—the true tabernacle of the unseen world—Jesus is carrying on a more excellent ministry. He is the Mediator of a better covenant, which has been established on better promises (v. 6). A New Covenant was needed, for the first Covenant was not faultless. It had no power to achieve its object; it could not secure obedience on the part of the people (v. 7). And so the Lord promised a New Covenant which would be



different from the Old (vs. 8-12). This whole passage is quoted from Jer. 31:31-34. By this Covenant the Law would be written on the heart, and there would be personal knowledge of God for everyone and complete forgiveness of sins. The promise of a New Covenant implied that the first was old and would vanish away (v. 13).

3. The Typical Service of the Old Tabernacle (9:1-10). The first Covenant had divine services and a sanctuary of this world; but they were typical only, and did not avail for redemption (v. 1). The Mosaic tabernacle was a material one, with two parts, the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, each with its special sacred vessels (vs. 2-5). The priests ministered in the Holy Place continually, but in the Most Holy Place only the high priest ministered; and he could enter only once a year, on the annual Day of Atonement, and only with the blood of the sacrifices (vs. 6-7).

The spiritual significance of this is then explained. It meant that the true sanctuary was not yet open. Immediate access to God was not yet possible, because the old rites and ceremonies could not purify the conscience. They could not "make the worshippers perfect". Redemption was not yet achieved (vs. 8-10).

4. The Eternal Redemption of the New Covenant (9:11-28). The Apostle now sums up Christ's high-priestly work in a general description (vs. 11-12). He has secured "eternal redemption" for us by two transcendent acts: His sacrifice on the Cross ("through his own blood"), and His entrance into Heaven ("once for all into the holy place"). Then

he takes each of these acts separately and explains them.

(1) The efficacy of the Cross (vs. 13-22). Through it Christ made a final atonement for sin. This was the voluntary sacrifice of His own perfected human nature. The writer emphasizes the fact that it was "through his own blood": it was "the sacrifice of himself" (v. 26). It was also made "through the eternal Spirit". That is, Christ's own Spirit which found expression in the sacrifice is independent of time, and this gave it permanent validity. It has therefore power to cleanse from sin (vs. 13-14). It ratifies the New Covenant and secures the eternal inheritance for us (vs. 15-17), thus corresponding with Moses' ratification of the Old Covenant by the typical sacrifice of calves and goats (vs. 18-22; Exod. 24:8).

(2) The significance of the Ascension (vs. 23-28). The high priest's entrance into the innermost shrine of the earthly tabernacle was a type and shadow of Christ's entrance into Heaven (vs. 23-24). There He appears in the presence of God for us, on the ground of His own finished sacrifice, by which He put away sin once for all (vs. 25-26). Having finished His earthly work by offering Himself for the sins of many, He has nothing further to do with sin. But He will appear a second time to complete the salvation of them that wait for Him (vs. 27-28).

5. The Perpetual Efficacy of Christ's Sacrifice (10:1-18). The writer goes on with his argument to show that the sacrifice of Christ does what the old sacrifices could not do. It perfects those who come unto God through Him, by cleansing them

from sin, and bringing them into communion with God. The old sacrifices were inadequate, because they were the shadow, not the substance (vs. 1-4). They required to be repeated, and thus maintained a consciousness of sins, instead of providing a remission and cleansing of sin. They meant a yearly remembrance of sins and not their removal.

Christ's sacrifice is adequate, because its source was in the will of God. *Psa. 40:6-8* is quoted with a free rendering which explains the original text, to show that the essence of the Messiah's sacrifice consisted in His willingness to do the will of God (vs. 5-7). He came into the world with this deliberate purpose. This voluntary obedience gave His sacrifice a moral quality, which was not possessed by the Levitical sacrifices. Thus it could sanctify us in the will of God by removing all hindrance to our fellowship with God (vs. 8-10).

That the one sacrifice of Christ has eternal efficacy is shown by His present exaltation. The priests of the Old Covenant continually repeated the same sacrifices. Our High Priest, having offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, now occupies the place of power in Heaven, and is waiting until His enemies are put under His feet (vs. 11-14). The Holy Spirit also bears witness that under the New Covenant our sins are not remembered by God, and there is no longer any need of another sin offering (vs. 15-18). Here *Jer. 31:33-34* is quoted again.

6. The Sacred Privileges of the New Covenant (10:19-39). The whole preceding argument of the Epistle is now summed up in the privilege of direct access to God. Through the work of our Great High Priest we have "boldness to enter into the holiest".

The Cross has made for us "a new and living way" into the presence-chamber of God (vs. 19-21). But this privilege has corresponding duties. We should draw near "in fulness of faith"; we should hold fast "the confession of our hope"; we should provoke one another "unto love and good works"; and we should maintain our Christian fellowship by "not forsaking our own assembling together" (vs. 22-25).

Probably the writer thought that some were already forsaking the Christian assemblies, and he felt that this was ominous of an approaching lapse from the faith. There was a special reason for maintaining their fellowship and exhorting one another—"so much the more, as ye see the day drawing nigh". They were apparently on the eve of the great catastrophe of A.D. 70, the destruction of Jerusalem, and to disregard their corporate fellowship was to incur great spiritual peril, especially the peril of apostasy.

Wilful sin under the Old Covenant was punished by death; no sacrifice was provided for it. If he who despised Moses' Law was deemed worthy of death, "of how much sorer punishment" shall he be thought worthy who rejects the sacrifice of Christ and despises the gracious Spirit of God (vs. 26-29). The writer quotes Deut. 32:35-36 to remind his readers that the punishment of this sin is in the hands of the living God, and He will not lightly pass over such conduct in His people (vs. 30-31).

But the past experience of the Hebrews, the way they endured suffering and persecution after they received the Gospel, gives encouragement for the present (vs. 32-34). Let them have confidence and

patience. The memory of the past should encourage them to still further endurance for the future. By a quotation from Hab. 2:3-4 the author reminds them of the coming of the Lord; and he is sure they will not fall back to perdition, but will go on to salvation (vs. 35-39).

NOTE:—In order to understand the full significance of this part of the Epistle, we need to transport ourselves back across the ages to the point of view of the Old Covenant. The whole explanation of the work of Christ is given under the symbols of the Mosaic tabernacle and in terms of the high priest's work on the Day of Atonement. That old Levitical sanctuary was expressly made, says the writer, to be "a shadow of the heavenly things" (8:5). It was far more than Israel's meeting-place for worship. Made after the pattern shown to Moses, its very structure was planned to represent the unseen world in which God dwells. In its courts only the priests could minister; the congregation of Israel stood outside. It was a type and prophecy of the world of eternal realities, which the Old Testament worshipper could see only afar off but could not enter. For him there was no access into the presence of God.

To appreciate the full force of the writer's argument, we should stand in imagination with the congregation of Israel at the gate of the tabernacle where the ceremonies of the Day of Atonement are taking place, and watch the high priest making propitiation for the sins of the people (Lev. 16). We look across the outer court past the altar of sacrifice, where the victim has been offered, toward the cur-

tains of the tent of meeting. Behind those curtains is the Holy Place, and behind that again is the Most Holy Place, the heart of the whole Levitical system, containing the sacred Ark of the Covenant.

To the devout Israelite, that dark and mysterious chamber, so far beyond his reach, into which no man could go save the high priest, and he only on this one occasion in all the year, was the dwelling place of God. The high priest, with the blood of the victim, disappears behind the curtains of the tent. Passing through the first inner court, he enters into the Holiest of all. There, before the sacred symbol of the Divine presence, he presents the blood that bears witness to the sacrifice offered without, and makes atonement for the sins of the people.

That ceremony was the consummation of the Old Testament system of sacrifice, but it had to be repeated year by year. High priests came and passed away, but none of them could abide in that sanctuary, or open it for anyone else to enter in. That old Levitical system could never make the worshipper "perfect"; it could not bring him into the presence of God. It was but "a shadow of the good things to come" (10:1).

And so we turn to a later day, when our High Priest, having offered Himself as the one perfect and sufficient sacrifice, passed by way of the Ascension into the immediate presence of God. There we behold Him now, in the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, enthroned at God's right hand. From that place of power and dignity, which He has reached by His own merit, he administers for men an atonement that is final and complete, being "able to save to the uttermost them

that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (7:25).

That is the transcendent truth to which the massive argument of the Epistle has conducted us. In the unseen realm behind the vast visible universe, in the secret place of its life and power, where God is, there is a Man who has been tempted in all points like as we are and can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities (4:15). It is the glory of Christianity that it presents to the world "so great salvation" (2:3). It draws the veil aside from the unseen and reveals at the centre of ultimate reality, not only the Father-heart of God, but also the Brother-heart of Jesus; not only an infinite and eternal love, but also a comprehending and redeeming sympathy.

#### THE NEW LIFE UNDER THE NEW COVENANT

##### (Chs. 11—13)

These chapters form the practical part of the Epistle. The writer takes up the three ideas of faith, hope, and love in the special duties mentioned in 10:22-24, and enlarges upon each separately.

1. The Exercise of Faith (Ch. 11). Faith is first explained as the sense that realizes the unseen. It knows that there is substance in what we hope for and reality in transactions that belong to the unseen spiritual world (v. 1). It was because of their faith that the ancient fathers of Israel were accepted of God (v. 2). Faith sees in the visible world the evidence of an invisible world. By faith we understand that God did not make the world out of things that are seen, but out of things that are not seen (v. 3).



Then faith is illustrated in the ancient world (vs. 4-7). It was by faith that Abel offered "a more excellent sacrifice" than Cain. The idea is that there was something more in his offering, something based on faith (Gen. 4:4). It was because of his walk of faith that Enoch pleased God and was translated (Gen. 5:24). It was because of his faith that Noah, when warned of God about the future, carried out the work that God commanded him to do (Gen. 6:22).

Faith is next traced among the patriarchs. In the case of Abraham, we see the obedience of faith and the pilgrim spirit, which looks for a heavenly country and the eternal city of God (vs. 8-10). In the case of Sarah, we see faith trusting in the power and faithfulness of God (vs. 11-12). The patriarchs all died in faith, confessing that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth, and that they desired a heavenly country (vs. 13-16). To illustrate this fact further instances are given of the faith of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph (vs. 17-22).

This is followed by showing how faith was at work in the life of Moses (vs. 23-28). It is significant that more prominence is given to the founder of the old dispensation than to any other in this list of men and women of faith. In the events of the exodus from Egypt and the conquest of Canaan, faith was still manifested (vs. 29-31).

Finally, the writer sums up the history of Israel in the Land, and gives illustrations of faith both in its power of heroic achievement in action (vs. 32-34), and in its power of patient endurance in suffering (vs. 35-38). The chapter closes with a statement about all these worthies, whose faith was

acknowledged by God though they did not obtain what was promised. They had to wait until they could share with the believers of the new dispensation the spiritual blessings provided by God through Jesus Christ (vs. 39-40).

2. The Exercise of Hope (Ch. 12). The apostolic writer now makes the general application of the lessons of the past to the present season of trial through which the Hebrews were passing. These examples of faith in the past present a motive for endurance in our Christian life and experience (vs. 1-3). The writer imagines himself and his readers as contending in the arena for the prize of the race, and as surrounded with a great multitude in the seats of the amphitheatre. These are the men and women of faith who have lived and gone before. They are not regarded as spectators of our lives on earth, but as "witnesses" to the power of faith. By "the sin which doth so easily beset us" is probably meant unbelief. Our supreme motive for endurance consists in the contemplation of Christ Himself—"the author and perfecter" of our salvation—in His triumphant entrance into Heaven after the suffering of the Cross.

The writer goes on to explain the value of the discipline of suffering. It is God's method of fatherly chastening, and it is the portion of all true children of God (vs. 4-8). Its purpose is that we may be partakers of His holiness, and after it has been endured it issues in peace and righteousness (vs. 9-11). Then the Apostle states the practical conclusion for the Hebrews in their trial. They should encourage those that are disheartened, and put every hindrance out of their way (vs. 12-13).

This leads to some general instructions for following peace with all men, and for maintaining the purity of the Christian community lest it be compromised by the apostate, the sinful, or the unspiritual (vs. 14-17).

Then there comes a splendid passage which presents a striking contrast between the two Covenants. The writer first describes the scene at Sinai, bringing out the terrifying manifestations which attended the making of the Old Covenant and the overwhelming awe which the sight caused. It was material and earthly in its character, and it barred approach to God (vs. 18-21). Then he describes the position of Christians under the New Covenant in a magnificent scene. Over against the material and earthly is set the spiritual and heavenly (vs. 22-24).

In the spiritual reality, Mount Zion represents the divine foundation of the new order, while the city of Jerusalem represents the heavenly fellowship based upon it. In this God dwells, surrounded by angels and redeemed men in a vast general assembly. Then the scene turns to the human side. The "church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven" refers to Christians still living on earth while their names are known in Heaven. And now the two great ideas of the final judgment of God and the redemption wrought by the Mediator of the New Covenant are made prominent.

This passage is followed by a warning from the fate of the disobedient Israelites. It should remind Christians of their responsibility. Heaven and earth will soon be shaken by the judgment of God. The Kingdom to which we belong will abide. Let us

have grace therefore to serve God with reverence and awe (vs. 25-29).

3. The Exercise of Love (Ch. 13). The Apostle proceeds to give his readers some particular instructions regarding their social and religious duties. They are to practice love of the brethren, hospitality to strangers, care for the persecuted, purity, contentment, and freedom from avarice (vs. 1-6). They are to remember their former leaders in the faith, and imitate them. The reference seems to be to teachers of the Word among the Christian Jews who had passed away, who had perhaps died by martyrdom—Stephen, James the Apostle, and James the Lord's brother. Jesus Christ does not pass away; He always remains (vs. 7-8).

Let them not be carried away by strange doctrines, but guard against this by being established in grace (v. 9). Our altar is the Cross of Christ, represented in the Lord's Supper, of which those who follow the old tabernacle worship have no right to partake; and this is the means of our sanctification (vs. 10-12). Therefore let us be separated unto Him. We must go without the camp and share His reproach, becoming homeless on earth as He was. The reference is to the fact that Christian Jews had to break with Judaism and bear the ignominy of the Cross (vs. 13-14).

The true sacrifice of believers is the offering of praise and thanksgiving to God, and helpful service to their fellow men (vs. 15-16). Then the writer, having told his readers to remember those that "had the rule" over them in the past (v. 7), adds a word instructing them to obey those that "have the rule" over them now (v. 17).

The Epistle closes with the Apostle's personal messages. He asks for the prayers of his readers, and then he pours out his heart for them in a prayer which sums up the message of his letter (vs. 18-21). To this he adds a final exhortation and a personal word about Timothy. Then he ends with the salutations and a brief benediction (vs. 22-25).

NOTE:—This book occupies a unique place in the New Testament. In the preceding Epistles the main emphasis has been on the presence of Christ in the heart of the believer. They interpret the meaning of Pentecost. They unfold the profound significance of the event that took place on earth when the Spirit of Christ came down to dwell in the midst of the Church. The Epistle to the Hebrews, on the other hand, interprets the meaning of the Ascension. It draws aside the veil, and discloses the equally profound significance of the event that took place in Heaven when the Man Christ Jesus entered in to sit at the right hand of God.

As Pentecost made a change on earth, so the Ascension made a change in Heaven. A new world, the unseen world of abiding reality with the Saviour of men at the heart of it, is now open for us to contemplate. We may draw near to it "in fulness of faith". Faith in this Epistle has a richer meaning than in the other Epistles. It is more than trust in God for salvation. It is that attitude of soul which stands face to face with the unseen and gives substance to the things that are there, which counts upon them as more sure and real than if they were apprehended by the senses.

The writer of Hebrews points out that this was the essential element in the faith of the Old Testa-

ment saints. They looked beyond the physical world. They knew that there were matters of far deeper importance than the possession of Canaan. They sought a better country, a heavenly one. And yet all these Old Testament believers died without receiving the promise. They could only see it from afar. Their faith looked down the ages toward the true promised land, which was not ready yet for the redeemed to enter. All they could do in the meantime was to "wait upon the Lord", to wait for Him to accomplish the work of redemption.

But now that our great High Priest has entered in, our faith may look through the veil into the new world where He is gone. The words of the prophet have been fulfilled for us (Isa. 33:17). Now we can "see the king in his beauty, and behold a land that reacheth afar". To the saints of the old dispensation that land lay in the future: for us it lies in the unseen. This is the spiritual world of the Bible; and there lie the springs of spiritual power.

The message which this book brings us about the reality of the unseen in the Christian system is needed by the Church in every age. Its value did not cease with the early Hebrew Christians to whom it was addressed. The indwelling presence of Christ in the heart of the believer is the very secret of Christian life; but the secret that is within the heart needs the anchor that is within the veil. The immanent Spirit does His work here because the transcendent Priest does His work there. The nerve centres of Christianity are not in the human mind or the human heart. A subjective approach can never discover them. They lie elsewhere, deep-seated in the unseen verities, where faith alone can find them. All the springs of the Christian Church are there.

## THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

TWO of the Twelve Apostles bore the name, James; but the author of the Epistle does not call himself an Apostle. He was the other James mentioned in the New Testament, a brother of the Lord, who became the head of the church in Jerusalem after the martyrdom of James the brother of John and the dispersion of the other Apostles. He was probably the oldest of the four brothers named in Matt. 13:55 and Mark 6:3. They did not believe the claims of Jesus during His ministry (John 7:5), but after the Resurrection they are found among His disciples (Acts 1:14). Their conversion was doubtless due to the appearance of the risen Lord to James (1 Cor. 15:7). That brought James to see the true nature of Him who was his brother according to the flesh, and he was then ready to worship and serve Him. In the Epistle he calls himself "a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ" (1:1).

Among the Christians in Jerusalem James took a prominent part and was counted among the Apostles (Gal. 1:19). He presided at the council held there after Paul and Barnabas had carried the Gospel into the Gentile world (Acts 15:13). James did not break with Judaism, and he was held in high esteem by the Jews generally, being known among them as James the Just. During the times of trouble that preceded the outbreak of the war with Rome, he was stoned to death in the Temple court for proclaiming his belief that Jesus was the Messiah.



His Epistle is a circular letter addressed to the Jewish Christians outside Palestine—"the twelve tribes which are of the Dispersion". Jews were found in all parts of the Roman Empire, but especially in the East (Acts 2:5, 9-11). Christian groups had already appeared among them when this letter was written, which was probably in the fifth decade of the century. It was fitting that the recognized head of the Jewish church in Jerusalem should send a message to the Christian Jews in other parts of the world.

The letter was written to strengthen the believing Jews in the midst of suffering and persecution, and to give them instruction in the Christian life. There is no development of doctrine. The purpose of the writer is practical throughout, and he takes up one topic after another without any unifying plan.

1. Trial and Temptation (1:1-18). After the introductory greeting (v. 1), James tells his readers that trials from without are to be received with joy, because they are a test of faith. They work out patience, and result in a fully rounded Christian character (vs. 2-4). If any of them lack wisdom, let them ask of God, for it is a divine gift and is given to those who trust God and are steadfastly devoted to Him (vs. 5-8). What James means by wisdom is not essentially different from the gift of the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13). This wisdom may be given to rich and poor alike. It will lead them both to look at this present life and its varying conditions in the light of the world to come (vs. 9-11). The result of endurance in trial is the reward of the crown of life (v. 12).

Temptation from within does not come from God,

but from some uncontrolled desire in one's own heart. No trial from without can become a temptation to sin apart from something in oneself (vs. 13-15). God cannot tempt us to evil, for His gifts are always good. He is "the Father of lights", like the sun among the stars; His glory is never obscured or cast into a shadow (vs. 16-17). The fact that He has redeemed us and made us His children shows that He does not tempt us (v. 18).

2. Hearing and Doing (1:19-27). James now exhorts his readers, on the ground of what he has stated, to be meek hearers of the Gospel of salvation, and to refrain from hasty speaking and unruly passion. "The implanted word" is the seed that has life in it and springs up into righteous and holy living (vs. 19-21). They are to be doers of the word also, for hearing without doing is only to deceive oneself with a mere passing impression (vs. 22-24).

It is only active obedience to the word that brings blessing. "The perfect law of liberty" is a fine description of the Gospel. In the Christian Gospel there is a law requiring a higher perfection than the Old Testament Law. But the Gospel sets us free to obey the Law by the power of the Spirit, and is therefore "a law of liberty" (v. 25). True religion—the external manifestation of true faith and real worship of God—consists in being courteous and kindly in speech, in doing acts of mercy, and in keeping oneself pure (vs. 26-27).

3. Respect of Persons (2:1-13). To give preference in a Christian assembly to a man of wealth or worldly position over a poor man, is inconsistent with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In view of His glorious position in the heavenly world, all distinc-

tions in this world disappear (vs. 1-4). It is the poor who are most often rich in faith, and it is the rich who oppress and persecute the Christians. James refers to the fact that the wealthy Jews bitterly opposed the Gospel and blasphemed the name of Christ (vs. 5-7).

We cannot fulfil "the royal law", the law of love, and have respect of persons. This law may have been so called by the writer because it has the highest place among all the commandments. But the expression he uses may mean the law "of the Kingdom", and may allude to the law of love being the one law of the Kingdom of Heaven (vs. 8-9). To violate this law is to be guilty of breaking the whole Moral Law (vs. 10-11). Our behaviour should be regulated by the free spirit of Christian love, which is "the law of liberty". This law condemns the man who has respect of persons and no compassion for the poor (vs. 12-13).

4. Faith and Works (2:14-26). Faith that has no practical influence on conduct is not the faith that saves (vs. 14). James proves that faith is dead without works by showing how useless benevolence is that does not go beyond words (vs. 15-17), and how empty an intellectual belief is that is shared by demons (vs. 18-20).

Then he proves from Scripture that saving faith is manifested in works by showing how faith wrought in the cases of Abraham (vs. 21-24), and Rahab (v. 25). He concludes his argument with the statement that faith without works is like a dead body without an animating spirit (v. 26). He does not mean that works answer to the inner spirit, but rather to the activity of the living body. Their

absence is a proof that there is no life in the body.

5. Control of the Tongue (3:1-12). James now goes back to the subject touched in 1:19. Sins of the tongue seem to have been so common among Jewish Christians that James refers to them several times in the course of the Epistle (1:26; 2:12). He begins here by warning them against eagerness to teach: "Be not many teachers, my brethren" (v. 1). Large freedom of speech existed in the early Church; private members were at liberty to speak and teach in the meetings of the Christians. James goes on to point out that those who undertake to teach assume a great responsibility. Control of one's speech is the test of Christian perfection (v. 2). He means the ability to say the right thing in the right way at the right time.

Then he gives illustrations of the power of the tongue as a little thing (vs. 3-5), and goes on to describe the evil influence of the tongue when uncontrolled. "It setteth on fire the wheel of nature": it sets a destructive power to work through the whole course of human life. "It is set on fire of hell": the destructive power exerted by the tongue is inspired by Satanic passion. "The tongue can no man tame": it can be controlled by the Holy Spirit alone (vs. 6-8). There is inconsistency and duplicity in the tongue, for it utters both blessing and cursing (vs. 9-10). James goes on to point out that the real cause of these things is an unregenerate nature. Christian faith and an uncontrolled tongue are incompatible (vs. 11-12).

6. True and False Wisdom (3:13-18). True wisdom will show itself in a good life and a meek spirit (v. 13). It is a false wisdom, a wisdom of

the earth and of the flesh, that leads to jealousy of the brethren and creates factions among them (vs. 14-16). The true wisdom of God, "the wisdom that is from above", is first of all pure, because its object is not the gratification of self-will; and so it is peaceable and gently reasonable. The man that is governed by this wisdom will show it in works of mercy without any partiality or hypocrisy. Those that possess this wisdom will cultivate peace and then righteousness will come to prevail (vs. 17-18).

7. The Spirit of Worldliness (4:1-10). In contrast with the peace that true wisdom brings (3:18), war and strife arise from a self-seeking spirit (vs. 1-2). Here we have a terse and impressive description of the life of self and its evil results. The first part of v. 2 may be read thus: "Ye lust and have not, so ye kill; ye covet and cannot obtain, so ye fight and war". Even in their prayers they asked amiss, because their heart was set on self. In so doing they showed the spirit of worldliness. Did they not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God (vs. 3-4)? The Spirit which God made to dwell in us jealously yearns for the entire devotion He requires (vs. 5-6).

Then James makes a plea for humble submission to God. The order of the injunctions should be noted. "Submit yourselves to God"—then "resist the devil". The devil will only flee from one who has submitted to God. "Draw near to God"—then "cleanse your hands and purify your hearts". God will only draw nigh to one who sincerely desires clean hands and a pure heart (vs. 7-8). In this approach to God they were to express their repentance both inwardly and by appropriate outward signs, and they would

find that those who humble themselves in the sight of God will be exalted (vs. 9-10).

8. The Spirit of Humility (4:11-17). James now follows up his appeal for humility with a warning against three things that are opposed to it. The first is the habit of fault-finding and judging one's brethren. To set themselves up as judges is to offend against the majesty of the divine law, and to take the place of the one Lawgiver (vs. 11-12). The next is the habit of making one's plans without God. It shows a spirit of proud indifference to God's will (vs. 13-15). This leads to presumption and the habit of boasting, which is the third thing James warns them against. Then he adds that it is not enough for them to know what is right to do. To know it and fail to do it is sin (vs. 16-17).

9. Patience in Suffering (5:1-11). The suffering of the Jewish believers in the early Church was due largely to their oppression by the wealthy Jews, who hated the Gospel. James now pronounces the doom of these rich men, and foretells their coming miseries—a prophecy which was fulfilled for the Jews of that day when their wealth was destroyed in the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (vs. 1-3). The cries of the labourers whom they have oppressed and defrauded of their hire have gone up to Heaven, while they have lived in luxury and self-indulgence on earth, fattening themselves like sheep for a day of slaughter (vs. 4-5). They persecute the followers of Jesus, who, like their Master, do not resist (v. 6).

Then James turns to his readers, the oppressed Christians among the Jews, and encourages them to be patient and steadfast in view of the coming of

the Lord. Let them guard against murmuring and discontent among themselves; for they, too, are to be judged, and the Judge is at hand (vs. 7-9). As examples of patient endurance in suffering, he reminds them of the prophets, and of the experience of Job and the issue in his case (vs. 10-11).

10. Precepts for Christian Fellowship (5:12-20). This section is a kind of postscript to the letter. It contains some final instructions and precepts suggested by special circumstances among the Jewish Christians. Above all things they should not use oaths in common speech, for their intercourse with one another should have a sanctified character. Then he tells them how to sanctify every experience, whether of sorrow or of joy (vs. 12-13).

This is followed by instructions for cases of sickness. What James has in mind is the healing of sickness that has come as discipline and chastening for sin. In such cases the Church has the right to seek and pray for Divine healing (vs. 14-15). Christians should share with one another in the confession of sin and in prayer for healing. James recommends this for the strength it would give to their mutual fellowship, and adds: "This supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working". The literal meaning is "inwrought", being inspired and energized by the Holy Spirit. And he illustrates it by citing the case of Elijah (vs. 16-18).

Prayer may result in the conversion of one who has wandered from the truth and fallen into sin, and thus one saves a soul from spiritual death (vs. 19-20). With this message of blessing, the Epistle ends abruptly, on the same strong, earnest note that marks it throughout.



## THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER

THIS Epistle claims to have been written by the chief of the Twelve Apostles of the Lord. It bears the stamp of his mind, and contains many traces of his experience. The last appearance of Peter in the New Testament was at the council in Jerusalem in A.D. 50 (Acts 15:7). The only light we have on his intervening movements is given in a reference of Paul's to the fact that Peter used to go on missionary journeys and take his wife along with him (1 Cor. 9:5). The only indication of the place from which he wrote this letter is contained in the phrase, "she that is in Babylon", in the salutation of 5:13, which probably means a church and not Peter's wife. Babylon might be the city on the Euphrates, but there is more reason to believe that Peter meant the capital of the Empire. Babylon was coming to be used by the Christians as a cryptic name for Rome. It is so used in the Book of Revelation.

The letter is addressed "to the elect who are sojourners of the Dispersion" throughout the northern provinces of Asia Minor (1:1). This would naturally mean the Jewish Christians in those regions. The term "Dispersion" was used to describe the Jews who had been scattered among the nations since the time of the Captivity (Jas. 1:1). Gentile churches had been established in this district by Paul. Jews from some of the provinces Peter names heard his sermon in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:9), and may have carried the Gospel

back and established churches of Jewish believers in their own home-towns. This would account for the Apostle of the circumcision writing to churches in a district evangelized by Paul. While Peter wrote more particularly for Jewish Christians, several passages in the letter show that he had Gentile readers also in mind (1:14; 2:9-10; 4:3).

The occasion of the letter was some special outbreak of persecution whereby the Christians of Asia Minor were being severely tried. The churches in the provinces were beginning to feel the effect of the Neronian persecution which began in Rome in the fall of A.D. 64. The date of the letter would be soon after that. The messenger who carried the letter was Silvanus (5:12), who may have been Paul's companion, better known as Silas.

Peter regards his readers as "sojourners" in the world (1:1, 17; 2:11). In the light of this the Epistle may be taken as a message to Christians as pilgrims. It falls into three parts, the second and third divisions each beginning with a tender appeal. The first division (Chs. 1:1—2:10) deals with the blessings and privileges of Christian pilgrims; the second (Chs. 2:11—4:11) with their duties and responsibilities; and the third (Chs. 4:12—5:14) with their trials and sufferings.

#### THE BLESSINGS OF CHRISTIAN PILGRIMS

(1:1—2:10)

In his greeting (1:1-2) Peter uses the new name which the Lord had given him. It has replaced in his own mind, as in that of others, the old name by which he had once been known (John 1:42; Matt. 16:18). He describes his readers as "the elect who

are sojourners", terms which are applicable to all Christians. They are elect, as chosen of God (Eph. 1:4), and sojourners, as pilgrims who have their citizenship in Heaven (Phil. 3:20). Then he begins the body of his letter with a doxology to God, who, as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, is the source of all our blessings.

1. The Joy of Salvation (1:3-12). This passage is really one continued sentence, like that of Eph. 1:3-14. Its key-note is in the words, "ye rejoice", twice repeated. In the course of it, Peter refers to a number of topics connected with salvation. The beginning of the Christian life consists in being born by the resurrection of Christ into a living hope, the hope of an inheritance reserved in Heaven which is eternal and cannot decay (vs. 3-4). For the realization of this inheritance, when it is revealed, we are being preserved by the power of God through our faith (v. 5). The assurance of this salvation is a source of joy in the midst of trial, and an incentive to perseverance under persecution (vs. 6-7). It is a joy inspired by love for the unseen Christ and the hope of His glorious appearing, when our salvation will be consummated (vs. 8-9).

This salvation was made known to the prophets, but its time and circumstances were hidden from them. Their predictions of the sufferings of the Messiah, and the blessings of salvation that should result from them, were not to be fulfilled in their own generation. They were ministering for those who belong to the present dispensation of the Holy Spirit, in which the Gospel of Christ is being preached (vs. 10-12).

This passage shows how the Apostles of the Lord

linked their preaching of the Gospel with the preaching of the Old Testament prophets. They identified the Spirit of Christ, by whom they were anointed, with the Spirit of Jehovah, who inspired the prophets. They proclaimed the events connected with the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and the salvation enjoyed by those who believed on Him, as the fulfilment of the predictions of the prophets regarding the sufferings and glories of the Messiah.

2. The Fruit of Salvation (1:13—2:10). The Apostle now makes the practical application of the message of salvation. The passage begins with "wherefore". Salvation should be manifested in life.

(1) Holy living (1:13-21). Peter exhorts his readers to be steadfast and consistent in their hope. They should keep their minds firmly set upon the coming revelation of the Lord, and show in the pure moral character of their lives that they are separated unto Him (vs. 13-16). Here Peter quotes Lev. 11:44-45 to support his appeal. As children of God, the righteous and impartial Judge, they should pass the time of their pilgrimage in the world with godly fear, remembering that they have been redeemed with the precious blood of Jesus Christ (vs. 17-19). He was fore-ordained for this purpose before the creation of the world, but was manifested in this last age. His resurrection and glorification are the ground of their faith and hope (vs. 20-21).

(2) Brotherly love (1:22-25). This is the natural expression of a holy life, and it comes from a pure heart (v. 22). It is the quality of that new life which all share together who have received the living Word of God, the word contained in the Gospel (vs. 23-25). Here Peter quotes Isa. 40:6-8. There

the word of the Lord is the prophetic announcement of God's purpose for Israel's redemption and restoration; and here Peter applies it to the redemption wrought out through Jesus Christ.

(3) Spiritual growth (2:1-10). In speaking of his readers as "newborn babes", Peter carries on the thought of the regeneration of believers expressed in 1:3 and 23. As such they are to desire the pure Word of God for their spiritual growth (vs. 1-3). Then the figure changes to that of a temple. By coming to Christ, to a living stone, rejected of men but chosen of God, they are being built up as living stones into a spiritual house for the offering of spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ (vs. 4-5).

Then Peter quotes again from the Old Testament (Isa. 28:16; 8:14; Psa. 118:22), as he goes on to point out the blessedness of believing in Christ, and the consequence of disbelief (vs. 6-8). He explains that Christian believers inherit the privileges of Israel as a nation of kings and priests, separated to God. They are to show forth His praise, for He called them out of darkness into light, and made them His own people (vs. 9-10).

#### THE DUTIES OF CHRISTIAN PILGRIMS

(2:11—4:11)

With a word of affection for his readers, Peter begins a new section of his letter. He now gives more particular instruction about their duties "as sojourners and pilgrims".

1. In the Common Relations of Life (2:11—3:12). The outward expression of their life in the eyes of unbelievers should be blameless and seemly.

Their good works should lead others to praise God (2:11-12). They should submit to the laws of the state, and show due honour to every one in an official position. They should show proper respect for all men, and love their fellow-Christians (2:13-17).

Household servants should serve their employers faithfully, even when ill-treated. Patient endurance of wrong is acceptable to God (2:18-20). We are called to follow the example of Christ in this respect. He suffered unjustly; but He met the reviling of His foes with silent patience, and committed His cause to God (2:21-23). He has a right to require this from us, because He suffered on account of our sins and brought us back to God (2:24-25).

In their household relations, wives should obey their husbands, even if the husbands are not Christians, for such behaviour may lead to their conversion. They should have the outward adornment of a meek and quiet spirit, like the holy women of old (3:1-6). On the other hand, husbands should consider the weakness and dependence of their wives, and give them due honour as fellow-Christians; otherwise their fellowship with God would be hindered (3:7).

Finally, Peter sums up the foregoing instructions regarding Christian duty by urging his readers to show the spirit of unity, sympathy, and humility in all their relations in life (3:8-9). Then he quotes Psa. 34:12-16 as a description of the true life to be exemplified by the Christian (3:10-12).

2. In Suffering and Persecution (3:13—4:11). Those who live upright lives are usually not harmed. But persecution may arise, and it is blessed to suffer for righteousness' sake (3:13-14; Matt. 5: 10-12).

Therefore be not afraid, but reverence in your hearts Christ as Lord, and be prepared to give a courteous but confident answer to anyone who asks about the ground of your faith, supporting your testimony by your good manner of life. If it should be God's will that you suffer, it is better to be persecuted for uprightness than to provoke ill-treatment by bad behaviour (3:15-17).

Then the Apostle turns to Christ as an example of the suffering of the righteous and its blessed results. The passage is full of difficulty caused by Peter's compressed and allusive style (3:18-22). Its meaning will unfold as we consider the significance of some of its phrases:

"Being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit":—There is the same antithesis here between the flesh and the spirit as in Rom. 1:3-4, where the reference is to the Resurrection. Being "made alive in the spirit" is the same as being "declared to be the Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead. In the Person of Jesus Christ, "the spirit of holiness" cannot be distinguished from the Holy Spirit.

"In which (spirit) also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison":—This preaching must have occurred after the Resurrection, for only then was He made alive in the spirit. It was the proclamation of the Gospel by the Lord through His Spirit in the Apostles to those who were in the prison-house of sin (Isa. 42:5-7; 49:8-9; 61:1). Of this sinful race the people of Noah's day were examples. The result of Noah's preaching while the ark was being prepared was only eight souls saved



(v. 20), but the result of the Lord's preaching after the spiritual quickening of the Resurrection was three thousand souls saved in one day (Acts 2:41).

The reference to Noah suggests to Peter an analogy between the Flood and Christian Baptism. As the Flood meant the washing away of the corruption of the old world and a new beginning of life for it, so baptism symbolizes the washing away of the defilement of the flesh and the receiving of the new life of the Spirit from the risen Christ, now enthroned in Heaven.

With this example of Christ before them and the blessed results of His suffering in the flesh, Peter goes on to urge his readers to arm themselves with the mind of Christ, the mind that consents to suffer in the flesh in order to cease from sin and live to the will of God (4:1-2). Let their past suffice for living in the sinful ways of the Gentiles. Their former companions are surprised that the Christians do not join them in their wickedness, and so they revile them (4:3-4). But they will give account in the coming judgment of all mankind, and then the Christians will be vindicated. For those who have suffered death since the Gospel was preached to them are sharing the life of God in the spirit (4:5-6).

The Apostle now summarizes this whole section of the Epistle in the light of the approaching "end of all things". He makes an appeal for soberness and prayerfulness, for brotherly love and hospitality, and for the active ministry of the manifold grace of God which has been given to them in vari-

ous ways, so that God may be glorified through Jesus Christ (4:7-11).

#### THE TRIALS OF CHRISTIAN PILGRIMS

(4:12—5:14)

The Apostle introduces another main division of his letter with the same tender appeal to his readers as in 2:11. He deals now more particularly with "the fiery trial" of persecution which has come upon them.

1. Suffering for Christ's Sake (4:12-19). He exhorts them to steadfastness and joy, because in being persecuted for bearing the name of Christ they are sharing His sufferings, and so they will share His glory (vs. 12-14). Let no one of them bring dishonour on Christ by suffering for committing a crime, but let him glory in suffering "as a Christian" (vs. 15-16). The word "Christian" is found in only two other places in the New Testament (Acts 11:26; 26:28). The present sufferings are a sign that the time of judgment is at hand, and is beginning with God's own people. If it begins with us as a test of our faithfulness, and the righteous are barely saved, what about the unbelieving and the ungodly (vs. 17-18)? God permits persecution in working out His will; therefore let those who suffer commit their spiritual interests to Him (v. 19).

2. Fidelity in Service (5:1-4). Now comes a tender and sympathetic appeal on Peter's part to his fellow-elders in the Church to be faithful in their oversight of the particular flock committed to their care. He gives a twofold description of the Church: "the flock of God", and "the charge allotted

to you". The latter expression is literally, "the lots", and refers to the different congregations or separate churches allotted to the oversight of the different elders. Peter then tells of the reward that faithful shepherds will receive when the Chief Shepherd comes.

3. Humility and Watchfulness (5:5-11). The charge to the elders of the churches is followed by a charge to all the members, emphasizing first the grace of humility. Humility has a double reference, both toward their fellow-Christians and toward God (vs. 5-7). Next the need of watchfulness is emphasized, because of the opposition of the devil, the special adversary of believers. They are to resist him by being steadfast in their faith in Christ (vs. 8-9). Then Peter brings this part of his Epistle to an end with a prayer for his readers, contrasting their brief period of suffering with the eternal glory, and with a doxology repeated from 4:11 (vs. 10-11).

4. The Conclusion (5:12-14). Silvanus is mentioned as the messenger who was to carry the letter to its destination. Instead of "I have written", we would say, "I am writing". The terms in which he describes his letter recall the special commission the Lord gave him: "When once thou hast turned again, establish thy brethren" (Luke 22:31-32). The salutations are sent from the church where Peter was writing, and from Mark, his convert and friend, who was with him at the time. It is much more likely that Babylon means the capital of the world than the city of that name. We never hear of Peter having been in the East, while tradition connects him with the city of Rome. What Babylon meant to Israel, that Rome meant to the Christian Church.

## THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PETER

THE genuineness of this Epistle has been questioned more than that of any other book in the New Testament. The external evidence for it is very meagre. But to deny the Petrine authorship raises greater difficulties than to take the letter at its face value. It claims to come from Simon Peter, and to be the second letter written by him to its readers (1:1; 3:1); and the author declares that he was an eyewitness of the Transfiguration (1:16-18). If it was the work of a later writer, who used the name of the Apostle to get his message accepted by the Church, then its presence in the sacred Canon cannot be explained. The Church of those early days was not so devoid of spiritual discernment.

This Epistle was apparently intended for the same circle of readers as the First Epistle, although it nowhere expressly defines them. There is no indication as to where it was written; but the use of the Apostle's Hebrew name in the greeting, and the manifest influence of Jude in the body of the letter, would suggest a Palestine background. The Epistle has no definite plan, and the best way to take it is by chapters.

1. The Knowledge of Christ (Ch. 1). In the opening salutation, the Apostle greets his fellow-Christians with a prayer that the blessings they enjoy may be increased "in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord" (vs. 1-2). The word "knowl-

edge", which occurs five times in the chapter, strikes the key-note. It is in the knowledge of Christ that provision has been made for our spiritual life. Through His promises, we are made partakers of the Divine nature and delivered from the corruption of the world (vs. 3-4). Then Peter instructs us how to grow in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ and become fruitful by adding to our faith a list of graces, each of which grows out of the preceding one, all being rooted in faith (vs. 5-9).

But the growth is not spontaneous. Progress in the Christian life is made only by the co-operation of the human will with the Divine will. And so Peter goes on to urge his readers still further. "Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure". If these Christian graces are being developed and knowledge is increasing, we shall not stumble, and we shall be assured of a glorious entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (vs. 10-11).

Then the Apostle proceeds to state the grounds on which this knowledge of Christ rests. He thinks it right to remind his readers, while he is living, of what they already know, for he is conscious that his death as foretold by the Lord is not far off (vs. 12-14). In the meantime he will make an earnest effort to provide for their calling these things to remembrance after his departure (v. 15)—a promise which may have had its fulfilment in the Gospel according to Mark. Then Peter gives his personal testimony as an eyewitness of the glory of Christ on the mount of the Transfiguration. He seems to regard the event as an anticipation and

foregleam of the glorious appearing of the Lord, for he calls it "the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (vs. 16-18).

The certainty of the coming of Christ is further confirmed by Old Testament prophecy, to which Peter urges his readers to take heed, for it gives us light in the gloom of the present world. The phrases, "until the day dawn, and the day-star arise", both refer to the objective event of the coming. The phrase, "in your hearts", was perhaps intended to go with, "ye do well that ye take heed"; otherwise the rise of the day-star becomes a purely subjective experience (v. 19).

"No prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation":—No prophecy is to be interpreted by itself, but in the light of the whole body of prophecy, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. "For no prophecy ever came by the will of man":—Prophecy did not spring from the prophet's own promptings, but all the prophets spoke the mind of God as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (vs. 20-21).

2. The Teachers of Error (Ch. 2). Having shown how the words of the prophets have been confirmed, the Apostle goes on to say that false prophets also arose among the people in Old Testament times, and so false teachers will arise among the Christians now. The whole chapter is one unbroken paragraph, but there are certain stages which mark the course of the thought about these false teachers.

(1) Their rise and motive (vs. 1-3). The fundamental root of their destructive heresies consists in their "denying even the Master that bought them", setting at naught the redemption provided by God in

Jesus Christ. They carry on their work "in covetousness"; that is, their real motive is self-interest, personal gain.

(2) Their coming doom (vs. 4-9). The certainty of the punishment of the false teachers, and the deliverance of the faithful, is shown from examples of God's judgments in Old Testament history:—His casting the wicked angels down to hell, His bringing the flood upon the old world and saving Noah, His destroying Sodom and Gomorrah and delivering righteous Lot.

(3) Their character and conduct (vs. 10-16). The secret of their character lies in the first words describing them: they "walk after the flesh". In them the evil of man's self-will and fleshly nature finds full development in all kinds of infamy.

(4) Their evil influence (vs. 17-22). They profess to be sources of spiritual life, but they are "springs without water". They make boastful promises of liberty, but lead astray into sin and bondage. Those who are enticed by them are in a worse state than if they had never known the way of righteousness.

3. The Coming of Christ (Ch. 3). Peter has been moved to write this—his second letter to his readers—to remind them of the teaching of the Prophets and the Apostles (vs. 1-2); and especially of their warnings that, as the present age draws to a close, false teachers should arise ridiculing the doctrine of the Lord's return.

(1) The objections to the doctrine (vs. 3-4). These false teachers oppose the doctrine on two grounds—the long delay since He promised to return ("Where is the promise of his coming?"), and



the uniformity of natural law ("All things continue as they were"). The Apostle then proceeds to answer these objections, taking the second first.

(2) The answer to the objections (vs. 5-9). As to the uniformity of nature, it is not true that there has been no intervention in the course of nature. The ancient world was destroyed by a deluge of water, and the present world awaits a judgment of fire (vs. 5-7). As to the long delay, what seems long to us is not long to the Lord. With Him there is no such thing as the passing of time: the issues of a single day are permanent and endless, and the events of a thousand years are present and real at once. The delay is due to the Lord's long-suffering. His purpose is to give men a chance of repentance (vs. 8-9).

(3) The final day of judgment (vs. 10-13). The day of judgment to be ushered in by the Lord's return will come "as a thief", breaking in upon the world unannounced and unexpected. Here Peter gives a more explicit prediction of the judgment he announced in v. 7. This picture of the elements dissolving with fervent heat has been made vividly and terribly real, and its fulfilment has been brought ominously near, by the atomic bomb. Beyond the judgment lies the promise of a new world.

(4) The practical lessons (vs. 14-18). The Apostle's purpose is practical. He urges his readers, in view of the coming of the Lord, to seek earnestly to be blameless in His sight and preserve a quiet confidence; and he reminds them of what Paul wrote to them about the Lord's long-suffering as giving further opportunity of salvation (vs. 14-15).

Speaking of Paul's Epistles, Peter says that some

men, in their ignorance of the truth, wrest some passages in them from the meaning intended with disastrous results; and he warns his readers against being led away into the same wickedness (vs. 16-17). This is perhaps a reference to those who perverted Paul's teaching of justification by faith into antinomianism (Rom. 3:8). What Peter says here about the Epistles of Paul implies that their inspiration was recognized, and that they were being read in the churches as having the same Divine authority as the Old Testament Scriptures. The Apostle then sums up the whole practical purpose of his letter in a final appeal on the note with which he began: "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (v. 18).

## THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

THIS Epistle was evidently intended to be a companion to the Fourth Gospel. The Gospel was written that men might believe on Jesus Christ as the Son of God and have eternal life through Him (John 20:31). The Epistle was written unto those that do believe on the Son of God that they might know that they have eternal life (1 John 5:13). The name of the writer does not appear, but the Epistle leaves no doubt that he was the same person as the author of the Gospel, none other than the Apostle John. The two books are closely related in thought and feeling as well as in style.

The Epistle came from an eyewitness of the life of Christ (1:1-4; 4:14), and its tone of authority is such as only an Apostle would use. It was doubtless written soon after the Gospel, and was probably addressed first to the churches in Asia, among whom John spent the last years of his life. The closing warning (5:21) would have special significance in Ephesus and the neighbouring churches. There is no reference in the letter to the Old Testament, and its first readers seem to have been mainly Gentiles.

The theme of the Epistle is fellowship with God in the life eternal. There are two key-notes: "God is light" (1:5), and "God is love" (4:8, 16). These enable us to divide the book into two main parts. Fellowship with God means walking in light (Chs. 1—2), and walking in love (Chs. 3—5).

WALKING IN LIGHT  
(Chs. 1—2)

1. The Introduction (1:1-4). There is a simple but solemn majesty in the opening sentences. The great fact is stated of which John and his fellow-disciples were witnesses, that eternal life was manifested in the flesh in the person of Jesus Christ (vs. 1-2). The wonder of that fact, and the profound impression that John received from his fellowship with Jesus, can be felt in the very tone in which he writes, even after more than half a century has passed. Then he states his purpose. It is that his readers also may share this fellowship, which is truly fellowship with God the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ (vs. 3-4).

2. What Walking in Light Involves (1:5—2:11). This fellowship means walking in light, for God is light (v. 5). This simple but profound statement defines the moral character of God. Light is pure and clean, and it cannot be contaminated or defiled. It dispels darkness, and it reveals everything it touches. Then John goes on to explain what it means to walk in the light and have fellowship with Him who is light.

(1) Being cleansed from sin (1:6-10). This passage explains how we are kept free from moral defilement in our walk in the world. Its meaning becomes clear as its various expressions are understood. Walking "in darkness" means living in sinful ways or habits. "The blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin": the efficacy of His atoning work on the Cross keeps cleansing us, and the work of sanctification goes on. "If we say that we have no sin"—no sinful nature, the principle of sin

that is rooted in the flesh. "If we confess our sins"—our acts or words of sin as we discover them, as they are revealed to us in His light. "He is faithful and righteous"—because of the atonement accomplished in the Cross. "If we say that we have not sinned"—that we are not sinners and have not fallen into sin.

(2) Abiding in Christ (2:1-6). This is the main idea behind this passage. The Apostle makes a tender appeal to his readers: Christians are not to sin. Then he explains the provision that God has made for us in case any one should sin. It lies in the work of the Advocate whom we have with the Father, the great High Priest of Heb. 7:25, who deals with the sins of His people on the ground of the atonement that He has made for the sins of the whole world (vs. 1-2).

It is implied, of course, that the one who sins acknowledges his sin and commits his case to Christ, but nothing is said as to how Christ pleads with the Father. If this divine remedy for sins has been effective in our lives, it will be shown in obedience to Christ (vs. 3-4). It is thus that love for God is perfected in us, and that we keep abiding in Christ, walking as He walked (vs. 5-6).

(3) Loving the brethren (2:7-11). The "old commandment" to which John refers is the commandment of love, which was included in the first message of the Gospel as the rule of the Christian life. It is also a new commandment: it was new to the Apostles when given to them by the Lord (John 13:34); and it receives new meaning with every fresh experience of the power of the Gospel in Christian life (vs. 7-8). Loving one's brother is a

proof of being in the light. It puts no cause of offence in one's own way or in another's. Hating one's brother, on the other hand, involves complete ignorance of the way and the end of life (vs. 9-11).

3. What Walking in Light Excludes (2:12-29). The Apostle now deals with the perils that beset the Christian's walk in fellowship with God in light.

(1) The love of the world (vs. 12-17). He first explains that he is writing thus, not because of any doubt of his readers' Christian character or standing, but rather to caution them against temptations from which even they cannot be free, and also to encourage them to further achievement (vs. 12-14). In these verses there are six statements, arranged in two parallel series of three each. The first statement in each series is addressed to his readers generally. "Little children" is John's affectionate term for all the members of his flock. "I write unto you"—in the present letter. "I have written unto you"—probably a reference to the Gospel.

Then comes a solemn command in the form of a prohibition: "Love not the world". The love of the world is incompatible with the love of the Father (v. 15). By "the world" John means the whole system of human life on earth, the society of unbelieving men and women. He sums up "all that is in the world" under three false tendencies, which cover all the temptations that appeal to men to make the creature instead of God the end of life—"the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the vain-glory of life" (v. 16). These three tendencies correspond with the three temptations of the Lord as recorded in Luke (4:1-11), and with the three points on

which Eve yielded to the temptation in Eden (Gen. 3:6).

Then John adds a further reason for not loving the world. All that belongs to it—the whole external system of the present order of life—is fleeting and unsubstantial. But the Christian, “he that doeth the will of God”, belongs to another system, another order of life, which has an eternal character and will abide for ever (v. 17).

(2) The spirit of antichrist (2:18-29). Now John goes on to speak of another peril, which he calls antichrist, and which was to arise within the Christian society. For there were those in the Church who did not belong to Christ, and were not really members of the Christian fellowship (vs. 18-19).

John is the only New Testament writer who uses the term “antichrist”. It occurs again in 2:22; 4:3; and 2 John 7. The Old Testament knows nothing of an Anti-Messiah. (The prince who is announced in Dan. 9:26-27 is not the Antichrist, but the Messiah himself. See page 222 in Vol. II of this series). But the Lord had foretold the coming of false Christs (Matt. 24:5; Mark 13:6). John is not referring to these, however, but to the doctrine of a future Antichrist, which had arisen from a misunderstanding of these predictions, and which he now proceeds to correct.

So far from being a future event, the coming of antichrist has already taken place; and instead of there being only one Antichrist, there are many antichrists now in the world. These are not regarded by John as forerunners of a future Antichrist, for he says that their presence in the world



proves that it is already "the last hour". They had appeared in the Church, but they had gone out from it, showing that they did not belong to the Christian fellowship (v. 19). His readers have the power of discerning the real character of antichrists, for they have the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Because of this they know the essential nature of the truth, and no false teaching can deceive them (vs. 20-21).

The Apostle goes on to explain the meaning of the term. "This is the antichrist, even he that denieth the Father and the Son". In other words, "antichrist" meant for John the denial of the Incarnation (vs. 22-23). Whoever denies that Jesus is the manifestation of God in the flesh, is antichrist. Antichrists existed in John's day, and will always exist as long as the Divine Saviour is proclaimed in the midst of a gainsaying world.

It is possible that antichrists may increase in malignancy and in hostility to Christ until at last all that can be called antichrist is summed up in one great anti-Christian movement or in one great anti-Christian person—but if such is to be the case John does not refer to it. Paul's teaching about the man of sin in 2 Thess. 2 is not the same as John's teaching about antichrist here. In both cases, however, the result is the same—the suppression of the message of the Gospel.

The Apostle tells his readers that belief in the Incarnation is involved in the Gospel which they heard at the first. It is the foundation of the Christian life, and the source of eternal life (vs. 24-25). In view of the peril of being led astray by the spirit of antichrist, John reminds them that their security rests upon the presence of the Holy Spirit

in their hearts—"the anointing which ye received of him". Let them recognize the voice of the Spirit and abide in His teaching (vs. 26-27). Then the Apostle closes this part of his letter with another tender and practical appeal to his readers based upon it, which also contains ideas that he is about to develop in the next part (vs. 28-29).

#### WALKING IN LOVE

(Chs. 3—5)

1. As Children of God (3:1-12). The Father's great love has been shown in calling us His children, and He has made us such in reality by the Divine birth mentioned in the last words of the preceding chapter. For this reason men who live for this world do not understand us, because they did not understand God when He was revealed in Jesus Christ (v. 1). The fact that we share His nature in our present sonship, means that we shall share His likeness when He appears, for then we shall see Him in His glory. This great hope encourages us to strive after the purity of life that is His. John refers to the purity of the Lord's humanity, which was the result of His earthly discipline, and still abides in His glory (vs. 2-3). This is the only passage—beginning with 2:28—where John speaks expressly of the Christian hope, which both Paul and Peter refer to so often.

The character of the children of God is seen in their separation from sin. Every one that commits sin violates the divine law of his being, and also sets at naught the mission of Christ (vs. 4-5). Sin is inconsistent with Christianity. He that is in fellowship with Christ does not practise sin; and he that

practises sin has not known Him (v. 6). The character of the children of God is also seen in their righteousness. They practise righteousness because they have the righteous character of Christ Himself (v. 7).

It is in this relation of theirs to sin and righteousness that the children of God are distinguished from the children of the devil (vs. 8-10). Here John brings out the nature of the conflict between Christ and Satan: "To this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil". The works of the devil are gathered up in sin which the devil has wrought in men. They are described elsewhere as "works of darkness" (Rom. 13:12; Eph. 5:11), and "works of the flesh" (Gal. 5:19).

The Christian's antagonism to sin is brought out in two statements: he "doeth no sin", in the sense of practising it; and "he cannot sin", because sin cannot become the habit of one who shares the Divine nature. Then John goes on to state that the infallible mark of righteousness is love for the brethren, and hatred shows that righteousness is absent, as it was in the case of Cain (vs. 11-12).

2. With Love for the Brotherhood (3:13-24). The mention of Cain leads to the thought of hatred as the characteristic mark of the world. Love among Christians is a sign that we have passed out of death into a new life, a life that is eternal (vs. 13-14). This love should be patterned on the love of God, which is revealed in the sacrifice that Christ made for us (vs. 15-16). It should go out in compassion toward them that are in need, and should be expressed not only in word but also in act (vs. 17-18).

Having spoken of the pattern of love, John goes on to speak of its fruit. It results in the assurance that our lives are surrendered to the truth of the Gospel (vs. 19-21). It finds expression in prayers that are answered, because they arise from obedience to God and faith in His Son (vs. 22-23). This obedience issues in abiding fellowship with God through the Holy Spirit (v. 24).

3. In the Fellowship of the Spirit (4:1-6). Having referred to the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle begins a new step in his argument by explaining how the Spirit of God is to be known, and how false spirits are to be recognized. The test of spirits lies in their attitude to the Incarnation. The teacher who is inspired by the true Spirit confesses Jesus Christ to be God manifest in the flesh. The teacher who denies this is inspired by the spirit of antichrist (vs. 1-3). The test of men lies in their attitude to the truth. John's readers, being true Christians, have the Spirit of God, and are ready to hear the truth taught by Christian teachers. But they that are of the world listen only to those who express the thoughts of the world. They are possessed by the spirit of error (vs. 4-6).

4. In the Love of God (4:7-21). Love is the very nature of God, and love should characterize those who are the children of God and are born of Him. We should love one another, for love comes from knowing God (vs. 7-8). God's love toward us was manifested in the Incarnation and in the Cross—God sending His Son, that He might share His life with us (v. 9), and that he might bear the penalty of our sins (v. 10).

Our consequent duty and privilege is to love one

another. Thus we show that God dwells in us, and that His love finds its fulfilment in us. It is by the gift of His Spirit that He dwells in us and we have fellowship with Him (vs. 11-13). The Apostle bears witness to the love of God in the gift of His Son, and declares that those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God dwell in God and have the love of God in themselves (vs. 14-16). In no other book of the Bible does the noun "love" occur so often as John uses it in these chapters dealing with walking in love.

As regards the future, we can await the day of judgment in confidence, because we share with Christ a mutual love and a common hostility to the world. This love delivers us from all fear of punishment. Fear implies some ground for alarm, and that cannot exist where love is perfect (vs. 17-18). By loving us, God made it possible for us to love Him. The result of this love for God in our hearts is a love for our brethren also. Hatred of our brother is incompatible with love for God; and besides this, we have God's command to love both Himself and our brother (vs. 19-21).

5. In the Power of Faith (5:1-12). John now shows that the ground for the love of the brethren which accompanies the love of God is a common faith in Jesus Christ. Love for God carries with it love for the children of God and obedience to the commandments of God (vs. 1-3). Those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God have the faith that overcomes the world. This faith introduces them into the spiritual and the eternal, and so lifts them above the earthly and the temporal (vs. 4:5).

The grounds of this faith are the historic facts

of the Gospel: "This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ". By these phrases John means the Baptism and the Cross, the beginning and the ending of the earthly ministry of Jesus. The coming of the Spirit at Pentecost confirmed and sealed the redemptive work of Jesus, and the inner witness of the Spirit agrees with the faith that rests on these redemptive facts (vs. 6-8).

The first words of v. 7 in the A.V., "For there are three that bear record (witness)", should be connected at once with "the Spirit and the water and the blood" in v. 8. The intervening words contain a statement that is true in itself, but is irrelevant. The passage does not belong to the original text and is omitted in the R.V. It is a theological gloss, which crept into the Latin Bible and made its way into the later Greek manuscripts.

John goes on to say that we have also the witness of God to Christ which is greater than that of men; and those who believe have this witness within themselves (vs. 9-10). Then he sums up the Christian witness in its effect in them that believe. It is realized in their possession of eternal life and in their fellowship with the Son (vs. 11-12).

6. The Conclusion (5:13-21). The Apostle now restates the aim of his letter. His purpose is that his readers may know that they have eternal life (v. 13); and he proceeds on this note of assurance. This will give them boldness in prayer (vs. 14-15). This boldness will find expression in intercession for a brother who is seen committing a sin. Yet there is a limit to this kind of intercession. John cannot bid his readers intercede for a man in the case of "a sin unto death". The article in this phrase

should be omitted. What is meant is not some particular sin, but a course of sin producing a fixed attitude of the soul in opposition to God (vs. 16-17).

Finally, the Apostle summarizes the truths which his letter is intended to teach in three statements, each of which begins with "we know" (vs. 18-21). These are: (1) The sinless nature of the Christian life, the life that is born of God, and its safety from the attack of the evil one. (2) The divine nature of the Christian fellowship, and the evil nature of world fellowship. (3) The revelation of the true God in the presence among men of His Son Jesus Christ, and its profound effect in the lives of them that believe. Then John gives one last warning: "Guard yourselves from idols". The word was to be taken literally by John's readers. But in our day it means all that would seduce us from loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ.



## THE SECOND AND THIRD EPISTLES OF JOHN

THE writer of these two short letters calls himself "The elder", which implies that the title identified him and that he was well known. It marks his unique pre-eminence rather than his official position. It was probably the way that the last remaining Apostle had come to be known through the Church because of his great age. These letters reveal him in a new aspect, as the shepherd of individual souls. They also give momentary glimpses of church life in the province of Asia toward the close of the first century. One is mainly a letter of warning, and the other mainly a letter of encouragement.

The Second Epistle is addressed to "the elect lady and her children". This might be taken figuratively, as meaning a church and its members. But it is simpler and more natural to take it literally, and to think of John as writing to a Christian household. The salutation follows the usual type; the Apostle greets his readers in the fellowship of the truth (vs. 1-3). Then he states the occasion of this letter. He has met some members of the lady's family, and his joy in their Christian life and their fidelity to Christian truth prompted him to write to her (v. 4).

He urges the need of Christians continuing in love to one another and obedience to God, because there are many false teachers abroad who deny the Incarnation. They have the spirit of antichrist (vs. 5-7). Because of the presence of such deceivers

among the churches, his readers should practise watchfulness and self-examination, so that they may not lose ground in their Christian life, but abide in "the teaching of Christ" (vs. 8-9). They are not to give hospitality to any one who does not teach this doctrine, for that would be sharing in his evil influence (vs. 10-11). Then John closes by telling them that he hopes to visit them soon, and have the joy of speaking with them face to face (vs. 12-13).

The Third Epistle is addressed to "Gaius the beloved", who seems to have been a man of position and influence in the Christian community to which he belonged. The Apostle prays that his prosperity and his health may be equal to his spiritual condition; for he rejoiced greatly when brethren told him of his devotion to the truth (vs. 1-4). Then he commends Gaius for his hospitality to Christian strangers and travellers. These were probably itinerant evangelists, and John says that it is the duty of Christians to receive such as guests in order to help forward the truth (vs. 5-8).

John had written to the church; and he now writes to Gaius personally, condemning Diotrephes, whose ambition led him to oppose the Apostle and usurp authority, and even to go to the length of excluding true believers from the church (vs. 9-10). John bids Gaius beware of imitating such conduct. If an example of Christian conduct is needed, there is Demetrius, whose devotion to the truth is known to all, and who has the Apostle's commendation also (vs. 11-12). The letter closes in the same way as the second one. John hopes to visit Gaius soon and speak with him face to face. He adds a greeting of peace, and the salutation of friends (vs. 13-14).

## THE EPISTLE OF JUDE

THE writer calls himself, "Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James" (v. 1). This must be the well-known James, the author of the Epistle. Jude was therefore a brother of our Lord (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3). Nothing more is known of him.

His Epistle is addressed to Christians generally—"them that are called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ". The Jewish features it contains would show that Jude had in mind chiefly Hebrew Christians. Probably his readers were the same as those to whom the Epistle of James had been sent. Jude survived James, and perhaps in some measure succeeded to his authority and influence among the Christian Jews. It may have been thus that he came to write this letter.

There is no indication in it as to the time and place. Most probably it was written in Palestine. From the absence of any reference to the destruction of Jerusalem it may be inferred that it was written before A.D. 70, when that catastrophe occurred.

There is a close resemblance between Jude and 2 Peter 2:1-3:3, so much as to indicate that one writer must have borrowed from the other. A comparison of the two gives the impression that Jude's letter was the original one, and that Peter was influenced by the language he used, but it is impossible to decide. Another remarkable feature of Jude is

the large use made of historical matter taken from non-canonical books. We are not to infer from this that Jude regarded these books as inspired and authoritative. His references to them are like the mention of the Book of the Wars of the Lord and the Book of Jashar in the Old Testament (Num. 21:14; Josh. 10:13; 2 Sam. 1:18).

Jude begins with a threefold greeting of mercy, peace, and love (vs. 1-2), and then gives his reasons for writing. He was eager to write about the salvation of which he and his readers were alike partakers, and he felt constrained to exhort them "to contend earnestly for the faith", for there had crept in among them ungodly men whose coming had long been foretold, and who were "turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness" (vs. 3-4).

What is meant by "the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints", is not a body of doctrine, but the Gospel principle of salvation by faith in Christ alone. What is meant by contending for the faith, is not defending the Gospel against false teachers by controversy, but striving to exercise in their Christian warfare and illustrate in their Christian life the grace of God which they received when they put their trust in Christ". This grace transferred the control of life from external rules to the indwelling Spirit; but these ungodly men to whom Jude refers were turning the Christian liberty which faith gives into licentiousness. This was an incipient Antinomian heresy.

Jude goes on to give examples of the certain doom of such men from the destruction of the unbelieving Israelites, the eternal captivity of the

fallen angels, and the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah (vs. 5-7). These ungodly men not only set at naught the principles of Christian morality, but also attack the constituted authorities in the Church—they “rail at dignities”. Yet even Michael showed self-restraint in his controversy with Satan over the body of Moses (vs. 8-9). The words attributed to Michael here are recorded in Zech. 3:2 as spoken by the Lord to Satan. The incident that Jude relates was found, according to some of the early Greek Fathers, in a Jewish apocryphal book known as the Assumption of Moses, which existed in their day but is no longer extant.

These ungodly men whom Jude describes rail, not only at persons in authority above them, but also at truths that are above their knowledge. They follow in the footsteps of Cain and Balaam and Korah, and so will share their doom (vs. 10-11). A figurative and graphic description of them follows. They are “hidden rocks”, sources of unsuspected peril, or “spots” (marg. and A.V.), spoiling the fellowship of Christians, like blight in vegetation. They are like clouds that bring no refreshing showers, like trees that wither without bearing fruit, like waves of the sea that cannot rest, and like shooting stars of the sky that go out in darkness (vs. 12-13).

Jude quotes a prophecy of Enoch about the coming of the Lord to execute judgment upon ungodly sinners, which would have its fulfilment in the case of such men as these; and he follows it with a further description of them (vs. 14-16). This prophecy was contained in a Jewish apocalypse

called "The Book of Enoch" which probably preserved an authentic tradition about him.

Jude then reminds his beloved readers that the Apostles of the Lord had foretold the appearance of such men "in the last time", whose evil character and influence would be due to their being "sensual, not having the Spirit" (vs. 17-19). Jude is dealing with symptoms which show that the tide of spiritual force in the Church had begun to ebb and reaction had set in. This condition has appeared again and again in the history of Christianity, and the prophecy may await a further fulfilment. Jude continues his affectionate appeal by urging his readers to build up their character on the foundation of their faith, letting the Holy Spirit inspire their prayers, and committing themselves to the safe-keeping of the Father in the hope of eternal life through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ (vs. 20-21).

The meaning of the next verses is doubtful. They may be paraphrased thus: As for the ungodly men among you, have mercy on those who are deluded by them and are in doubt; save those whom you can snatch from their influence, as from a consuming fire; and let your compassion watch for opportunities of helping others, but take care lest you become in any way tainted with their impurity (vs. 22-23). Then Jude brings his letter to an end with a noble and beautiful doxology, which not only sums up the message of this Epistle, but also makes a fitting conclusion to the whole group of the New Testament Epistles (vs. 24-25).





**THE NEW TESTAMENT**  
**THE REVELATION**



## PROPHECY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

THE New Testament age was marked by a revival of prophecy. It began with the ministry of John the Baptist, the last prophet of the old order. The ministry of Jesus was regarded by the people as that of a prophet (Matt. 16:14; John 4:19; 6:14), and He accepted their view of His mission (Mark 6:4; John 4:44). An order of prophets arose in the early Church soon after Pentecost, and prophetic gifts were apparently exercised everywhere (Acts 11:27-28; 13:1; 15:32; 21:9-10). Paul's letters show that prophecy was very common in the Gentile churches (1 Thess. 5:20; 1 Cor. 12:28; 13:2; 14:3; Rom. 12:6). Next to the Apostles, the prophets were the greatest gift bestowed upon the Church by the ascended Lord. Their function was to build up the churches which the Apostles had established (Eph. 2:20; 4:11).

The Revelation is the only book of prophecy in the New Testament, and the only prophetic work that has come down from the apostolic age. It claims to be a prophecy (1:3; 22:7, 10, 18), yet it differs from prophecy in the ordinary sense. It is an Apocalypse, an "unveiling". A number of books belonging to the general class of Apocalypses had appeared among the Jews during the centuries immediately before Christ. This apocalyptic literature attempted to unveil the future. It had arisen from a misunderstanding of Messianic prophecy. Israel had lost

sight of the redemptive element in the work of their promised Messiah. The Book of Revelation, on the other hand, is the true Apocalypse. It is the proper consummation of Messianic prophecy. It breathes a different spirit from that which pervades the Jewish apocalypses. The mark of the Cross is in it, and the unmistakable note of inspiration. As the last book of Scripture, it forms a fitting close to the Divine revelation of redemption, the true theme of the Bible.

The title of the book is literally, "The unveiling of Jesus Christ". The reference is not to the unveiling of events hidden in the future, but to the unveiling of the hidden glory of the ascended Lord. On the Mount of Olives Jesus had disappeared from the eyes of His disciples into the unseen world of Heaven. Ten days afterwards the Holy Spirit came down to take His place. This did not mean that Christ had resigned His active function in the redeeming purpose of God to the Holy Spirit, and had retired into a state of passivity, waiting for the time of His return. Much less did it mean that the Person of the Son of God had been dissolved into the Third Person of the Trinity. Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, was active still. The very atmosphere of the Acts and the Epistles vibrates throughout with a sense of power, a power proceeding continually from the exalted and glorified Lord Himself.

Peter told the Jews on the Day of Pentecost that Jesus of Nazareth had been exalted to the throne of God in Heaven (Acts 2:33). Paul told his converts that He must reign till He has put all His enemies under His feet (1 Cor. 15:25). But no-

where are we shown how He was using the authority that had been given Him; nowhere do we see the procedure of His reign. Glimpses of His heavenly glory were given to Stephen at his martyrdom and to Paul at Damascus. But the veil was never drawn aside. Throughout the Acts and the Epistles, the Lord Jesus Christ remains hidden behind the cloud that received Him on the Mount.

And now comes the Book of Revelation to unveil Him. He is seen at last in the glory which He entered on that ascension day. Jesus Christ is the central figure of the whole vision that is unfolded, and He dominates the whole book. This is the first and most important thing to remember as we approach it. It was not intended to be an obscure and cryptic prediction of earthly events, but to show us the spiritual forces and mighty movements in Heaven which are the springs of earthly events.

The Revelation was given to John in the form of visions, and these visions compose the book. In the opening verses he declares that he bare witness "of all things that he saw"; and in the course of the book he uses the expression, "I saw", about forty times. It is obvious that the writer was occupied, not with events that were to happen in the future, but with visions that had passed before his eyes. His entire concern was to describe accurately and completely what he saw. If then we are to understand the significance of the book, we must read it primarily as a record of visions; we must see what John saw. We must see the visions also as he saw them, in their orderly sequence, and from the point of view which he occupied. Their sequence is not that of consecutive time, but of progressive move-

ment. It is the sequence of spiritual forces, not of earthly events.

The Revelation was shown to the Seer by the use of representative symbols. The Lord "sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John" (1: 1). The word "signify" properly means to show by some sort of sign. John uses it three times in the Gospel (12:33; 18:32; 21:19). It has therefore special force in a book of symbolic visions. The Revelation is symbolical through and through. Its symbolic nature is due to the impossibility of describing in ordinary language and in concrete terms the things that belong to a world beyond the reach of human sense and sight. The symbols are taken entirely from the Old Testament, and are to be interpreted according to the significance that Scripture has already given to them.

A prominent feature of the book is the frequent occurrence of numbers, which are manifestly intended to carry a symbolic meaning. The predominant number is "seven", which occurs fifty-four times. It signifies completion, or fulness of development. Many of the visions occur in series of sevens. These sevens are all arranged in the same systematic order, a group of four visions which are always similar, and a group of three which always vary.

It is obvious that visions such as these cannot represent events occurring in the course of history, for historic events do not happen in that systematic way. They represent, rather, the hidden movements that give rise to earthly events, the spiritual forces that operate behind world history. As "four" is the number of the world and "three" the number of the Godhead, it would seem that the series of sevens

represent movements in which earthly and heavenly forces are both in operation. Each series comes to a head in a culminating crisis, which is described in such a way as to suggest the coming of the Lord. This is the ultimate consummation toward which all the visions of this prophetic book converge. It comes to a close with this promise and hope (22:20). New Testament prophecy, therefore, has one final event in view, the Second Coming of Christ.



## THE BOOK OF REVELATION

THE writer of this book calls himself John, with no other designation, as though that name was well enough known to identify him (1:1, 4, 9; 22:8). This can be none other than the Apostle. The style differs very considerably from that of his Gospel and his Epistles, but the tone of authority indicates an apostolic author. No other writer in the early Church would have used this name without distinguishing himself from the Apostle John. And besides that, under the marked diversity of style there are some deeper features of resemblance which can scarcely be accidental, such as a similarity in language and imagery, and in the terms used to describe our Lord.

The Revelation which the book records was given to John during his exile on the isle of Patmos in a time of persecution (1:9). According to an early tradition, this occurred in the last years of the reign of Domitian, between A.D. 92 and 96, and this is the generally accepted view for the date of the book. The tradition, however, is not altogether unanimous, and there are other indications which point to the closing years of Nero's reign. This would date the book before the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. With this would agree the apparent implication in 11:1-2 that the Temple had not yet been destroyed. This is not decisive, however, for the measuring of the Temple is symbolical.

But what would be explained by the early date, are the Hebrew features in the style of the book, and its difference from the style of the Gospel. At that time John still retained the Jewish influences of his life in Palestine, while at the time the Gospel was written he had been under Greek influences in Ephesus for twenty or twenty-five years. The book breathes an atmosphere which fits the last days of Nero and the time immediately following, in which Rome and the whole Empire were in a state of chaos and confusion.

The book is addressed "to the seven churches that are in Asia", and they are named afterwards (1:4, 11). They were seven churches then existing in the proconsular province of Asia, whose chief city was Ephesus. As the number "seven" signifies completeness, the seven churches are meant to represent all the separate congregations that make up the whole Church. The Revelation was written at the command of the Lord (1:11, 19), and was intended for the warning and comfort of His people (22:16). There is a repeated refrain in the separate letters to the seven churches in chs. 2—3, which emphasizes the solemn importance of the message of the book: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches".

The structure of the book is indicated in the words used by the Lord in commanding John what to write (1:19). This command was uttered after John had seen the first vision which the book describes, and it may be rendered as follows: "Write therefore the things which thou sawest (the vision already described), and the things which they are (which they signify), and the things which shall

come to pass hereafter (in another vision to be seen hereafter)". The entire reference of the command is to things that are seen in visions; none of it refers to things that happen in events. To take it otherwise is to break the logical unity of the sentence.

The phrase in our English Version, "the things which are", is a literal rendering of the original Greek, but the rendering given above is equally correct and is more consistent with the general sense and feeling of the passage. The Lord goes on in the next verse to define the things which John saw more particularly, and then to explain what they "are", using the same word as in v. 19, and in each case "are" means "signify".

Had the Lord intended John to write "the things which are" in the sense of the existing things, it is more than probable that a different form of words would have been used in the original Greek. There are two other passages in the New Testament where the words, "the things that are", occur in that sense (Rom. 4:17 and 1 Cor. 1:28), and in both cases the Greek expression is different from the one used here. In the two former cases, transliterated, it is "ta onta", while in Rev. 1:19 it is "ha eisin".

John was commanded to write an account of two visions, and this gives the book a twofold division. One was the vision described in ch. 1, to which he was to add its significance, making the first division of the book (Chs. 1-3). The other vision, which he saw afterwards, is described in the rest of the book, but nothing is said about its significance. It is composed of a continuous series of visions and makes

the second division of the book (Chs. 4-22). These visions are seen from two different points of view and present two different aspects of the glorified Lord. In the first vision the Seer is on the earth and beholds Christ in the midst of the churches as represented by the seven golden candlesticks. In the second vision he is caught up into Heaven and sees Christ in the midst of the Throne. On this basis the book may be analyzed as follows:

- I. Jesus Christ in the Midst of the Church—  
Chs. 1—3
  1. The Glorified Son of Man (Ch. 1)
  2. The Letters to the Seven Churches  
(Chs. 2—3)
- II. Jesus Christ in the Midst of the Throne—  
Chs. 4-22
  1. The Throne in Heaven (Chs. 4—5)
  2. The Opening of the Seven Seals  
(Chs. 6—7)
  3. The Sounding of the Seven Trumpets  
(Chs. 8—11)
  4. The Foes of Christ and His Church  
(Chs. 12—14)
  5. The Seven Bowls of the Wrath of God  
(Chs. 15—16)
  6. The Doom of the Foes of Christ  
(Chs. 17—20)
  7. The New Heaven and the New Earth  
(Chs. 21—22)

THE GLORIFIED SON OF MAN  
(Ch. 1)

1. The Introduction (vs. 1-8). The opening words contain the title of the book and state the

theme (v. 1). The phrase, "the revelation of Jesus Christ", when used elsewhere, always means the unveiling of the glorified Lord (1 Cor. 1:7; 2 Thess. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:7, 13). Even in Gal. 1:12 Paul uses the word "revelation" in the same sense. He means that he came to understand the Gospel through the unveiling of Jesus Christ in his Damascus vision. The words, "even the things which must shortly come to pass", are a further explanation of the theme. The unveiling of the hidden Lord in Heaven involved the revelation of what would happen in the world because of His enthronement there. The visions would show that the passing scenes on earth depend on the eternal scene in Heaven. The words, "which God gave him", do not mean that God gave Christ something to reveal, but that God gave Him this work to do. The angel who showed John the visions is mentioned again in the last chapter (vs. 6, 8, 16).

The words, "the testimony of Jesus Christ" (v. 2), probably mean the message of the whole book. But possibly John is referring to the general character of his teaching. As an Apostle he had been an eyewitness of the life of Jesus Christ on earth; now he was to be a witness of His glory. The peculiar importance of the message of the book is emphasized by the special blessing attached to it (v. 3). It was to be publicly read in the churches, and both the reader and the hearers would be blessed. Six other blessings are promised in the course of the Revelation (14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14).

The dedication of the book (vs. 4-6) includes a threefold salutation from the Persons of the Trinity. Jesus Christ is described in His three offices of Pro-

phet, Priest, and King—as the Revealer of God, the Redeemer of men, and the Ruler of the world. Then comes an ascription of praise to Him. It is a two-fold doxology, the first of four doxologies in the book. There is a threefold doxology in 4:11, a four-fold doxology in 5:13, and a sevenfold doxology in 5:12 and 7:12. The next verses give a summary of the truth contained in the book in two fundamental declarations regarding the Lord Jesus Christ—the coming event of His glorious appearing (v. 7), and the present fact of His almighty power (v. 8).

2. The Occasion (vs. 9-11). John was an exile on Patmos for Christ's sake, sharing with his readers the tribulation endured by the followers of Jesus Christ. It was a time of persecution, and all Christians were suffering. He "was in the Spirit on the Lord's day". It was the first day of the week, and the Apostle was in an exalted spiritual state, probably thinking of the churches of Asia assembling for worship, as they were accustomed to do on the day of the Resurrection. The Christians were beginning to call their day of worship, "the Lord's Day". Then there came a sudden voice, so strong and clear and authoritative as to claim his whole attention. The command to write, which is given here for the first time, occurs twelve times in the book.

3. The Vision (vs. 12-16). John turned in the direction of the voice and saw seven golden candlesticks, each one no doubt like the seven-branched candlestick of the Temple. In the midst of them stood the Son of Man, clothed in royal dignity and heavenly glory. His personal appearance, which is described by symbolic features, was so awe-inspir-

ing that the Apostle fell at His feet as dead. It was a vision of the glorified Lord, the Head of all the churches, standing among them as the source of their life and power, upholding and superintending their work and ministry. There are seven features in the vision, and each one has its own special significance in revealing the perfect glory of the Lord's Person. These features are referred to separately in each of the letters to the seven churches.

4. The Voice (vs. 17-20). The first words spoken by the Lord were for John's encouragement, and may be rendered thus: "Fear not; it is I, the first, and the last, and the Living One". Then He describes His redemptive work: He went down into death, and now He is alive for evermore. As a result, He has the keys of death and of Hades. He has power and authority over the realms that hold the bodies and the souls of men.

Then follows the command to write, which gives the plan on which the book is arranged. This is explained on page 273. The last verse explains the secret significance of the seven stars and the seven golden candlesticks. The stars are the angels of the churches, their inward and prevailing spirit; while the candlesticks are the churches in their outward and visible form. In this book every person and every element in nature has its angel (7:1; 9:1; 14:18; 16:5). This is required by the symbolic and dramatic character of the Revelation.

#### THE LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES

(Chs. 2—3)

There is no break between chs. 1 and 2. The voice which began to speak in 1:17 keeps on speak-



ing through chs. 2 and 3, and commands John to write these letters. They explain the significance of the vision in ch. 1 to each of the seven churches. They are addressed in each case "to the angel of the church", but are intended for the actual church itself and describe its characteristic spirit.

These seven letters have a peculiar tone of majesty and finality. They are the Lord's last messages to His Church on earth till He comes again. They are intended to encourage and strengthen His redeemed people while carrying on their witness for Him in the world. They are all constructed on the same general plan. There is first an impressive introduction, containing a command to write and a title of Christ: "These things saith he that—". Each title is taken from some feature of the vision in ch. 1, and is specially fitted to the condition of the church addressed.

The body of each letter is an appropriate message in three parts. The Lord usually begins with commendation: "I know—". There is an exception in the last epistle; in the church at Laodicea He finds nothing to praise. This is usually followed by condemnation: "But—". The searching eyes of the Lord find the faults of the church. There are exceptions in the second and sixth epistles: the Lord gives no rebuke to the churches in Smyrna and Philadelphia. Then comes His counsel: "Remember therefore—", or "Repent therefore—". He gives a warning to each church to prepare for His coming, which is always implied, and is explicitly mentioned in the last four letters.

Each letter ends with a solemn conclusion, containing both an appeal and a promise. The appeal

is always the same, and there is an impressive solemnity in its sevenfold repetition: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches". The promise is given "to him that overcometh", which implies that the church is engaged in a conflict, and that each member is to overcome. The rewards promised form a chain of blessings, linking together all the stages of redemption from the Garden of Eden to the Throne of God (2:7, 11, 17; 26-28; 3:5, 12, 21). In the first three epistles the appeal comes first, and in the last four it follows the promise. This divides the seven letters into two groups of three and four.

The seven churches were local congregations in the province of Asia in John's day. Each letter describes the conditions that actually existed in the church addressed. The letters, therefore, have a special application to individual churches. But they have also a general application. Taken separately, the seven churches represent different aspects of the Church of Christ. Taken collectively, they represent the whole Church in all the world. It is possible also that, taken consecutively, they may represent successive stages in the history of the Church through the whole Christian age.

1. Ephesus (2:1-7). This church had a splendid record for patient and persevering toil, intolerance of evil, and zeal for the truth. But its devotion of heart to Christ Himself had cooled: "Thou didst leave thy first love". The Lord counsels it to remember its former devotion, and "do the first works", the things it used to do for Jesus' sake. Then love for Christ would be kindled again, and the heart would grow warm to Him. The Nicolaitans, whose

'works were hated by the church in Ephesus, were probably Antinomians, the special class of heretics described by Jude. The reward promised in the letter is restored access to the source of life that was lost in Eden.

2. Smyrna (2:8-11). This church's testimony consisted in suffering, of which she endured three kinds—tribulation, poverty, and calumny. The Lord sees the malice of His own great adversary behind the persecutions suffered by His people. The outlook before them was still more suffering; but the ultimate reward would be the crown of life. This letter is full of praise, and is instinct with life and joy. Its promise is a life beyond the reach of the second death (20:6).

3. Pergamum (2:12-17). This church was in a difficult position—"where Satan's throne is". Pergamum was an official centre of Roman authority, a great stronghold of heathen worship, and a city of wealth and fashion. In the midst of it the church had been loyal to the Person of Christ—"my name"—and to the truth of the Gospel—"my faith". It had maintained its loyalty in the face of persecution; one of its members had died for the faith. But it failed in the matter of discipline. It tolerated some who compromised with the world and followed the teaching of Balaam (Num. 31:16), and also some who were Antinomians.

The "hidden manna" in the promise to this church is an allusion to the manna which was laid up in the sanctuary (Exod. 16:33-34; Heb. 9:4). The "white stone" with a new name written upon it is probably a reference to the Urim and Thummim carried by

the high priest under the precious stones of his breastplate (Exod. 28:30).

4. Thyatira (2:18-29). This was the city from which Lydia came (Acts 16:14). As she is not mentioned in the letter to the Philippians, she may have gone back to Thyatira and taken the Gospel with her. The church is commended for its abounding ministry of love and faith and patience. Its last works were more than the first.

But an evil thing had been allowed in the church: "Thou sufferest the woman Jezebel". A woman in the church, whom the Lord calls by that name because of her Old Testament prototype (1 Kings 16:31), claimed to be a prophetess and was teaching what the Lord calls, in irony, "deep things of Satan". Some members of the church, allured by her pretence of deeper knowledge, were being seduced from Christian living into pagan immorality. The Lord warns that she and her followers would be thrown into deep tribulation unless they repented.

The others in Thyatira were to hold fast the one burden of responsibility which Christ had laid upon His servants, that of witnessing for Him. The promise given in this letter takes us down to the time of David. It is that of sharing in the Messianic Kingdom (Psa. 2:9), and in the glory of the new day to be ushered in by the morning star.

5. Sardis (3:1-6). This church apparently had great advantages. There is no reference in the letter to persecution or to heresy. The church had a good name; but it lived on its reputation, and was spiritually dead. Its ministry was carried on in the eyes of the world, and not in the eyes of God: "I have found no works of thine perfected before my

God". And yet some of its members kept themselves unspotted from the world; they had not defiled their garments by compromise with it. The "white garments" mentioned in the promise allude to the white robes of the priests, whose names were enrolled for service in the temple of Solomon; and the blessing promised is that of fellowship with God in the heavenly temple.

6. Philadelphia (3:7-13). This was one of the weaker churches: it had "a little power". But it was faithful to the open door of opportunity set before it. It was also loyal to Christ: "Thou didst keep my word, and didst not deny my name". Because of its faithful testimony, some of the Jews who were hostile to Christ would be brought to acknowledge Him. Because they had kept His word, the Lord pledges Himself to keep them in the time of trial that was to come upon the world. The reward promised in the letter is a place of honour in the heavenly temple, and eternal fellowship with God in the heavenly city. The background of this promise is the return from the Exile, when the temple and the city were rebuilt.

7. Laodicea (3:14-22). This was a lukewarm church — "neither cold nor hot". It was not untouched by grace, but it had no enthusiasm. It was self-satisfied and self-complacent—"I am rich, and have need of nothing". The Lord's attitude toward it is twofold. The church as a whole, He treats with stern severity and loathing—"I will spue thee out of my mouth". And then He describes its true condition, of which it was unaware. "The wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked".

To the individual members of the church, He gives

a tender entreaty to let Him in and sup with them—"Behold, I stand at the door and knock". This letter is the saddest of the seven, and yet the most tender and beautiful. None of them makes more evident the yearning compassion of the great heart of the Son of Man. The promise it contains is the highest reward in His possession to give—a share in His throne.

#### THE THRONE IN HEAVEN

(Chs. 4—5)

Here the second main division of the book begins. The Seer is taken to a new point of view, from which he is to behold the rest of the scenes. The same voice that introduced the first vision (1:10), now introduces the second vision (4:1), which continues to the end of the Revelation. The voice spoke to John from a door set open in Heaven, calling him to come up hither and be shown "the things which must come to pass hereafter". The reference is not to events that were to happen in the future, but to the second vision announced in 1:19. The scenes of this vision were to pass before his eyes after the first vision had passed away. At once he found himself in the heavenly world, and in the presence of the Throne (Psa. 103:19). From this point onward he is to see things as the angels see them. The Throne is the background of all that follows. The word is used thirty-five times.

1. The Creator on the Throne (Ch. 4). "There was a throne set in heaven, and one sitting upon the throne" (v. 2). The scene is described with reverent awe and dignified restraint. It breathes an atmosphere of calm and majestic peace. John was

conscious of a Presence on the Throne, but he saw no form. His eye was arrested by the flashing of gemlike colours which symbolized the glory of the Throne (v. 3). The jasper stone was probably the diamond, the pure sparkling whiteness of which fittingly set forth the holiness of God, His essential glory (21:11). The fiery red of the sardine stone would set forth the justice of God. The rainbow of emerald green encircling the Throne would be a symbol of the Creator's everlasting covenant with the earth (Gen. 9:11-17). The elders seated around the Throne represented the redeemed of Old and New Testament times (v. 4). This is evident from their number, which is twice twelve, the number of the patriarchs of Israel and the Apostles of the Church.

A further description of the central Throne is given in symbolic terms, which suggest the sovereign and almighty power that proceeds from it and the presence of the Holy Spirit in its operations (v. 5). The shining surface of the sea of glass would suggest to the Seer the vast distance that separated him from the Throne (v. 6). Round about the Throne were four "living creatures" (not "beasts" A.V.), which combined features of the seraphim in Isa. 6 and the cherubim in Ezek. 1. They represented the fulness and variety of life in the natural world, and its ceaseless activity under the Creator's rule (vs. 6-8). Their hymn of praise, which was that of Isa. 6:3, was followed by the worship of the elders. They, too, joined in the praise of the Creator on the Throne (vs. 9-11). As yet there was no word about redemption.

2. The Sealed Book (5:1-5). This book, like all ancient books of that time, was in the form of a



scroll. It was rolled up and sealed on the back. The words describing it should probably be punctuated as follows: "written within, and on the back close sealed with seven seals". Scrolls were not usually written on the back. The words mean that what the book contained was written within, and could not be read till every seal on the back was opened.

In order to understand what the book symbolizes, we should keep in mind all the circumstances of the scene. Being in the right hand of the Creator on the Throne, it must have something to do with the world over which He rules. The symbol should be sought in the Old Testament, if it is to be interpreted in the light of Scripture. The story of Jeremiah's purchase of a field in his home-town of Anathoth (Jer. 32:6-14) mentions the sealing of the document that contained the title-deeds of the property, and a sealed copy was laid up for safe-keeping. To take the sealed book in this vision as containing the title-deeds of the world, and as representing the right to the kingdoms of the world, meets all the conditions of the scene.

A challenge is issued in Heaven: "Who is worthy to open the book?" The challenge goes unanswered. No one was found worthy in all the universe, and John was profoundly grieved. Obviously what was written in the book was of great concern to him. Then one of the elders, representing the redeemed who also were concerned in the matter, comforted the Seer with the announcement that "the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath overcome (hath won a victory which gives Him the right) to open the book and the seven seals thereof".

This scene can be set in the frame of our Lord's

life. During His temptation in the wilderness, Satan offered Jesus the kingdoms of the world on one condition (Matt. 4:8-10). He must have had the right to make the offer, for otherwise it would have been no temptation to Jesus. In some strange way, unrevealed to us, authority over this world was given to Satan at the beginning, undoubtedly before his fall. The Lord Himself recognized him as "the prince of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). But Jesus rejected Satan's offer and undertook to win the right to the kingdoms of the world by a victory over him. That victory was won on the Cross.

3. The Lamb in the Midst (5:6-7). Now John saw something that had not appeared before. In the midst of the Throne there was "a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain". Here is a manifest and unmistakable symbol of Jesus Christ, fresh from the Cross and newly ascended. He has just taken His place on the Throne. The symbol also represents the Redeemer in the fulness of His Divine power and world-wide energy. The Lamb had "seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God". It is from Him that the operations of the Holy Spirit are "sent forth into all the earth". When the Lamb took the book "out of the right hand of him that sat on the throne", it meant that the title-deeds it contained were now His, and He claimed the right to the kingdoms of the world. From this time on, "the Lamb" dominates the whole Revelation. The name occurs twenty-nine times.

This scene representing Christ taking His place in the midst of the Throne in Heaven takes us to the Ascension. This is the pivotal event upon which

the whole Book of Revelation turns. This is the point of time from which all its scenes proceed. What the Seer was shown is the change that was made in Heaven by the exaltation and enthronement of the Son of Man. In that light, and from that point of view, the book reveals the significance of the Cross in human history.

4. The Praise of the Lamb (5:8-14). This sublime scene, with the grandeur of its magnificent symbolism, is a revelation of what took place on the heavenly side of the cloud that received the Lord on the day of His Ascension. It is Heaven's welcome to the triumphant Redeemer. Volumes of adoring praise, in which all the heavenly hosts engage, sweep out from the central Throne in ever widening circles. It begins with the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders, who sing "a new song", the song of redemption (vs. 8-10). It is taken up by the voice of the angels, whom John now sees in their myriads (vs. 11-12). It is continued by the whole creation in all its parts. Creation's doxology is four-fold, as that of the angels is sevenfold (v. 13). The theme of the universal anthem is, "Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain". The work of God's redeeming grace has been accomplished. When at last the sounds of praise die away, John sees the elders, representing all whom the Lamb has redeemed, fall down before Him in silent adoration (v. 14).

#### THE OPENING OF THE SEVEN SEALS

(Chs. 6—7)

The opening of the seals does not mean the unfolding of the roll. Every seal must be opened be-

fore it can be unfolded at all. The final purpose is to see what is written therein. By opening the seals Christ is making His claim to the title-deeds of the world and declaring His right to the rule of its kingdoms. As each seal is opened in Heaven, a corresponding scene takes place on earth, representing what is happening there. The Seer is shown how things on earth appear in the light of Christ's redemptive work and from Heaven's point of view.

There is an evident parallel between ch. 6 and Matt. 24, which contains the Lord's answer to the disciples' question, "What shall be the sign of thy coming?" and describes the character of the present Christian age. The vision of the seals, therefore, may be taken to set forth the signs of Christ's coming in the sense of showing the world's need of Him. They describe the conditions that prevail on the earth while Satan continues to rule and Christ is still rejected. Their sequence is not that of events in time, but that of movements in operation. The first four seals form a group by themselves. After the sixth seal there is a pause before the last seal is opened.

1. The First Four Seals (6:1-8). As these seals are opened one by one, the four living creatures cry, "Come!" not "Come and see" (A.V.). It is the cry of creation for the coming of Christ. It corresponds with the groaning of the whole creation as it waits for the manifestation of the sons of God, which Paul describes in Rom. 8:19-22. As each seal is opened in Heaven, a horseman appears on earth. We have here the reaction of the kingdoms of men to Christ's claim to be the Ruler of the world.

The horses are all of one kind, though of different colours. The white horse here is very different from the white horse of 19:11. His rider was given a crown, and "he came forth conquering, and bent on conquest", as the word may be rendered. He appears as a splendid and imposing figure, a fit symbol of man's self-will going into action in the cause of self-interest. This is the spirit that has pervaded the human race since the Fall, and has always inspired the kingdoms of this world. In its final form it is the lust of conquest, the desire to dominate the world.

The white horse is followed by the red horse of war, the black horse of famine, and the pale horse of plague. This grim procession represents the dire consequences that inevitably flow from the pride of conquest in human history. This is what the rejection of Christ's claims has brought upon the world. Creation's sympathy with suffering humanity in the midst of all this is shown in the protest against hunger that comes from the living creatures (v. 6). It is a pleading request that a day's wage may provide a day's sustenance, and that a limit may be set to want.

2. The Fifth Seal (6:9-11). The martyrs represent the whole Christian Church, which is always presented in the Revelation in its ideal condition, as God sees it. During the present age, the true Church is characterized by tribulation (1:9). It is a martyr Church. The cry of the martyrs corresponds with the cry of creation, and represents the prayer of the Church for the coming of Christ (Luke 18:7-8).

3. The Sixth Seal (6:12-17). Here is an ac-

cumulation of spectacular and portentous symbols taken from Old Testament prophecy, and arranged so as to lead to a climax that is terrifying in its awful sublimity. It is the symbolism used by the prophets in foretelling the overthrow of world kingdoms (Isa. 2:17-22; 13:9-13; 34:4). The vision represents the collapse of the kingdoms of this world, and the utter failure of all human efforts to build a world order without Christ. This has never had a better illustration than in the world of our own day. The sixth seal brings us to the eve of Christ's coming, the day of the wrath of the Lamb. In view of that day the question is asked, "Who is able to stand?"

4. An Interlude (Ch. 7). This chapter contains a parenthesis between the sixth and the seventh seals. It answers the question with which ch. 6 ends, by describing two scenes representing the redeemed people of God.

(1) The sealing of the servants of God (vs. 1-8). John saw four angels on the earth holding back the winds of judgment, that the day of grace might be prolonged and the servants of God might all be sealed (vs. 1-3). The scene has its Old Testament parallel in Ezek. 9:3-4. The seal is the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13), and the vision represents the salvation and separation of the people of God by the preaching of the Gospel during the present age.

This is signified and emphasized by the precise and elaborate account of "the number of them that were sealed" (vs. 4-8). Israel is used in this book in a representative sense for all the people of God on earth. It is Israel after the spirit, not Israel after the flesh (Gal. 3:7; 6:16). Their number is repre-

sented as being complete and all-inclusive. A hundred and forty-four thousand is the number of redemption, squared and multiplied by a thousand. As a number, a thousand is always associated in this book with that over which God rules. It is ten, the number of world rule, raised to the third power, that is, made divine.

Then the passage goes into particulars. Twelve tribes are named one by one, and twelve thousand is the number mentioned as sealed in each tribe. Taken literally, this gives no reasonable meaning; but taken in the spirit of the Revelation, it makes this one of the most comforting visions in the book. It is a symbolic way of magnifying the grace of God. It sets Him forth in His patience and long-suffering, not willing that any should perish, but waiting until all His redeemed have been sought and found in all parts of the world, not one missing.

(2) The great multitude before the Throne (vs. 9-17). The Seer next beheld a vast company in Heaven, so great that it could not be counted. They were gathered from all nations and tongues in all the world, and were robed in white. With palms in their hands, they were keeping the true Feast of Tabernacles, and they were praising God and the Lamb for their salvation. The angelic host around the Throne took up the song with a sevenfold ascription of praise (vs. 9-12). Then one of the elders intervened to explain the vision to John. He described the white-robed throng in terms which express their complete and perfect bliss (vs. 13-17).

"These are they that come out of the great tribulation". The expression in the original is timeless, and does not refer to any special event or any par-



ticular period. In the Revelation the Christian age is always described from the heavenly point of view. It is the period of "the great tribulation" for the saints on earth. Some of the imagery here is taken from the Old Testament (Isa. 49:10; 25:8). The vision represents the innumerable company of the redeemed of all the ages, who have borne their witness to Christ amid the trials of the world, and have passed on into His immediate presence. They have fallen asleep in Jesus (1 Thess. 4:13-14). Their spirits are now with Him (Phil. 1:23; Heb. 12:22-23), and their entire occupation is worship. This passage throws light on the state of the soul after death.

#### THE SOUNDING OF THE SEVEN TRUMPETS (Chs. 8—11)

The trumpet visions issue from the seventh seal (8:1-2). When the last seal was opened, "there followed a silence in heaven about the space of half an hour". To get the significance of this silent pause, we must keep in mind the dramatic character of the Revelation. It is not a static series of isolated visions, but a progressive movement of living scenes that develop one into the other. When the seventh seal was broken the scroll lay open, and what was written therein could be read. That was what John, and all Heaven, had been waiting for since the challenge of 5:2 was issued and the Lamb undertook to open the book. The silence, therefore, is dramatic in its suggestiveness. What the roll contains is being read. The claim of the Lamb is vindicated; the title-deeds of the world are proved to be His. This means that Satan is now a usurper and must be

dethroned. Hence the trumpet visions announce the conflict with him.

Trumpets are signals of war and judgment. The sounding of the seven trumpets signifies that the sovereignty of Christ in the world is to be established only after a long-drawn-out conflict, and through a series of judgments. Corresponding with each trumpet blast in Heaven, something is seen to take place on earth. The first four trumpets form a group by themselves. They announce judgments affecting the natural world, the sphere of man's life. The other three are called "woes" (8:13), and are judgments of a spiritual kind. The purpose of these judgments is to call mankind to repentance; but men do not repent (9:20-21). Because the world does not repent, the final judgment comes (11:14). Between the sixth and seventh trumpets another pause occurs. At the seventh and last trumpet, Heaven announces that "the kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ" (11:15). His reign on earth begins.

1. The Commission of the Angels (8:1-6). This scene sets forth the heavenly preparations for the judgments on the earth. There is a calm and solemn deliberation about it. God's judgments are not arbitrary. They are His answer to the prayers of His saints (6:10), which are mingled with the prayers of Christ Himself. This is signified by the way the incense given to the angel was offered upon the golden altar before the Throne. The casting of fire from the censer into the earth means that, in answer to the prayers of His suffering people, the fire of God's judgment is about to descend upon the world. The lightnings and voices and thunders

which proceed from the Throne in 4:5 appear here again. They may mark the real conclusion of the vision of the seven seals, for the same signs occur in 11:19 and 16:18, where the two series of the seven trumpets and the seven bowls are ended. The seven trumpets, like the seven seals, cover the whole Christian age.

2. The First Four Trumpets (8:7-13). These trumpets introduce destructive plagues falling successively upon the earth (v. 7), the sea (vs. 8-9), the rivers and streams (vs. 10-11), and the sky and the heavenly bodies (v. 12). These four realms make up the whole natural world as the sphere of man's life. A third part in each case was smitten by the plague. They are warning judgments, similar to the plagues of Egypt. As God was warning Pharaoh then, so these plagues symbolize warnings which He gives to the world by smiting the natural surroundings of man's life on earth and turning into a curse what was intended for man's blessing.

The character of these symbolic plagues indicates that God's judgments come as the natural consequences of misusing His gifts. The warning voice that followed these four trumpets (v. 13) announced more terrible judgments to come upon "them that dwell on the earth". This expression is used hereafter to distinguish the unrighteous and ungodly world from the saints of God.

3. The Fifth Trumpet and First Woe (8:1-12). This is an appalling judgment manifestly of a demonic character. John saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth. The words do not mean that he saw it fall. It was the symbol of a fallen angel, probably Satan himself (vs. 11; Isa.

14:12; Luke 10:18). The "pit of the abyss" represents the abode of the devil and his angels. Swarms of locusts came out of it to attack those who had not the seal of God upon their foreheads (7:2-3). This means that only they that are sealed with the Holy Spirit are immune from their attack.

Here obviously is the demonic plague of spiritism. The clouds of smoke out of the pit symbolize the spiritual darkness in which it makes its way. The description of the power and appearance of the locusts has frightful significance as indicating the supernatural nature of spiritism and its deadening effect upon the soul. Physical death is no escape from it. The "five months" may allude to the five midsummer months in which the locusts usually commit their ravages, and may be intended to signify that this spiritual judgment would be limited in its duration.

4. The Sixth Trumpet and Second Woe (9:13-21). Another judgment of a similar kind, but coming from an earthly origin. An army of horsemen, whose number is so great that it cannot be a literal army, is set loose from the Euphrates to overrun the world and destroy a third part of men. This means another divine warning of terrible import. In the Old Testament the Euphrates was the seat of the great heathen powers which God used for the chastisement and judgment of Israel. The Euphrates, therefore, may be taken to represent the pagan or godless world. The description of the horses and their riders shows that we have here another judgment of an infernal character, which sweeps over the world. It is a revival of paganism, releasing forces of spiritual evil that have hitherto

been hidden and held in check behind the curtain of the pagan world. The world that refuses to be Christianized cannot but become paganized. Both of these woes have broken out upon the human race in the two world wars of our generation.

The purpose of all these plagues and judgments is to warn the world and lead it to repentance. They are divine warnings, becoming more ominous and terrifying all the time. And yet men will not repent and turn to God. And so the third woe must come. In the meantime another pause occurs, and another interlude is introduced into the progress of the Revelation.

5. An Interlude (10:1—11:14). This section corresponds to the parenthesis between the sixth and the seventh seals. It makes a pause in the movement of the trumpet visions in order to explain the preparations for the seventh and last trumpet. These preparations are shown first on the heavenly side, in the descent of the strong angel (ch. 10), and then on the earthly side, in the prophetic ministry of the two witnesses (11:1-14).

(1) The strong angel (ch. 10). John saw an angel of overpowering aspect descend from Heaven and set one foot upon the sea and the other upon the earth, as if he were taking possession of the world (vs. 1-2). All the features of the vision suggest the glory of the Son of Man in ch. 1. The great voice as of a lion roaring, and the seven thunders (vs. 3-4), whose voice John heard but was forbidden to record, suggest that here we have a prophetic picture of Christ coming to administer the final judgments of God (John 5:22-29; Acts 17:31). The angel's oath also points in the same direction (vs. 5-7). Its im-

port is contained in the words, "there shall be delay no longer". The prayer of the suffering Church in 6:10-11 is now to be answered. "The mystery of God" is now to be finished; that is, the manifestation of God in Christ has come to its consummation.

All this symbolism means that the developing Revelation has reached the eve of the Coming of the Lord. The angel had in his hand "a little book open" (v. 2). This was the book of 5:1, which has had its seven seals all broken and is now held open, in order to show that the title-deeds of the world are Christ's, and to proclaim His right to its dominion. The Seer was commanded to take the book and eat it up, which meant that he was to receive and appropriate the revelation it contained (Ezek. 2:8; 3:3). It was sweet to his taste, but bitter when he digested it (vs. 8-10). The hope it gave brought joy to John, but there was bitterness in realizing that judgments were involved in it. He was told that he "must prophesy again over many peoples and nations and tongues and kings" (v 11). This refers to the contents of chs. 12—22.

(2) The two witnesses (11:1-14). The account of these witnesses is introduced by a command to the Seer to "measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein" (vs. 1-2). This meant that the true Church, represented by the sanctuary, was to be set apart for security, and was to be preserved from the judgment that was coming. The outer court was not to be measured: "for it hath been given unto the nations". Possibly it represents the visible and organized framework of the Church, which does not belong to the spiritual order, but rather to the present world. But more

probably it represents the old Jewish system in the midst of which the Church began. The next statement would agree with this: "The holy city shall they tread down forty and two months". These words no doubt refer to, and are a repetition of, our Lord's prophecy in Luke 21:24: "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled". This covers the whole Christian age.

Here, then, we get the key to the symbolical period during which the two witnesses were to prophesy (v. 3). It is the present Gospel age. A thousand two hundred and threescore days are the same as forty-two months, the month being counted as thirty days. It is a period of three years and a half, and corresponds to the second half of the last week of Daniel's prophecy of the seventy weeks (Dan. 9:27). The ministry of Christ fulfilled the first half of that week, (See page 223 in Vol. II of this series). The second half of the week would represent the period in which Christ's witnesses were to finish His work in the world. Thus it becomes a symbol of the age of the Church. It is mentioned again in 12:6 and 13:5, and is described in 12:14 as "a time, and times, and half a time" (Dan. 7:25; 12:7).

The two witnesses are described in terms which show that they are to be taken symbolically (vs. 4-6). The olive trees and the candlesticks refer to the vision in Zech 4, and indicate the spiritual qualities and functions of the witnesses. The miraculous powers with which they are equipped recall incidents in the history of Moses and Elijah, and represent the supernatural forces that are put in operation by prayer. All this goes to emphasize the fact



that these two witnesses represent the Christian Church during the present age. The Lord calls them "my two witnesses", because of the two Divine elements in the witness of the Church—the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. They are to carry on their ministry "clothed in sackcloth", because the Church bears witness to a Saviour whom the world has crucified and rejected.

The account of the end of their ministry contains a symbolic prophecy of remarkable significance. They are to be slain by the beast out of the abyss, and "their dead bodies lie in the street of the great city" (vs. 7-8). This would seem to indicate that a time should come when a Satanic attack upon the Church would destroy its spiritual power and leave it in the world as a lifeless organization, with no more power to touch the conscience or convict of sin. The expression, "the great city", is used seven times after this, and never of Jerusalem. Its description as "spiritually called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified", marks the godless world in its threefold character as morally corrupt, defying God, and rejecting the Saviour. The passage goes on to give a graphic account of its patronizing attitude toward the organized Church, and of the relief it would manifest when the authority of the Word of God and the sense of the Spirit's presence should die out of the Church's witness (vs. 9-19).

But this condition is described as lasting for a very brief period—"three days and a half". The victory of Satan and the world would be transitory. Then the writer reverts to the past tense, and describes the culminating event as if it had already

taken place (vs. 11-12). It is symbolical of a great spiritual revival of the Church and its profound effect upon the world, and of the rapture of the Church, as following immediately afterwards. The breath of life entered into the witnesses and they stood upon their feet. Then a voice called them up into Heaven, and their enemies beheld their ascension. Thus the scene brings us at last to the Coming of the Lord (1 Thess. 4:16-17). The whole section dealing with the interlude closes with a great earthquake and its effect upon "the city", and we are prepared for the last trumpet and the final judgment (vs. 13-14).

6. The Seventh Trumpet and Third Woe (11:15-19). This corresponds with the last trump of 1 Cor. 15:52. A proclamation is made in Heaven that the Kingdom has been established on earth and the reign of Christ has begun. The twenty-four elders respond with an ascription of praise to God because the time of judgment and rewards has come. But having reached this point, the vision suddenly comes to an end without disclosing any of the accompanying or subsequent events. Instead of that, we are told that the temple of God was opened in Heaven; and we are thus prepared for another series of visions, for out of this temple the subsequent judgments proceed (14:15, 17; 15:5; 16:17). Then is heard again the artillery of Heaven, which brings each of the series of seven visions to a close (8:5; 11:19; 16:18).

#### THE FOES OF CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH

(Chs. 12—14)

From ch. 4 to ch. 11 inclusive we have had a

continuous series of scenes, which represent the progressive development of spiritual forces that began with the Ascension of Christ and come to a climax at His Second Coming. They show how His claim to the sovereignty of the world is vindicated, and how His dominion over the world is finally established. The special theme of this part of the Revelation may be defined as Jesus Christ making the world His Kingdom. A break occurs at the end of ch. 11, and a new series of visions begins with the Ascension again. It comes to a climax at the end of the book with a vision of the Church as the Bride of the Lamb, sharing with Him the glory of His reign. In this series we are shown how He fulfils the promise of 3:21, and prepares the Church to share His throne. The special theme of this part of the Revelation may be defined as Jesus Christ making the Church His Bride. The scenes in the present chapters show us the foes who must be overthrown, and the nature of the conflict with them.

1. The Great Red Dragon (Ch. 12). John first describes the sign of a woman arrayed with the sun, who represents Israel as invested with heavenly glory, and as the mother of the promised Messianic King (vs. 1-2). Then Satan appears as a great red dragon in the fulness of his power over the kingdoms of the world; and, having dragged a third of the angelic hosts in his fall, he now waits to destroy the Messiah when He comes (vs. 3-4). His attempt on the life of Jesus is frustrated, and we are brought again to the Ascension of Christ in the statement, "her child was caught up unto God and unto his throne" (v. 5). The flight of the woman into the

wilderness, where she is kept and nourished for twelve hundred and sixty days, represents the preservation of national Israel during the present Christian age (v. 6).

The war in Heaven against the dragon results in the expulsion of Satan from the presence-chamber of God (vs. 7-9). This event occurred at the Ascension. Since the return of the Saviour there, Satan has no longer any right to accuse the saints at the bar of God (John 12:31; Rom. 8:33-34). A song of triumph is then heard in Heaven, announcing that the work of salvation has been accomplished and the accuser of the brethren has been cast out. Their victory came through the sacrifice of the Lamb, but "those who dwell on the earth" are to feel the wrath of the devil, for only a brief opportunity is left to him (vs. 10-12).

The dragon proceeds to persecute the woman who gave birth to the man-child. But she is preserved from his attempts to destroy her. Israel has never been overwhelmed by the floods of persecution and tribulation that have pursued her throughout the Christian centuries (vs. 13-16). Then the dragon in his rage turns his attention elsewhere. He "went away to make war with the rest of her seed, that keep the commandments of God, and hold the testimony of Jesus" (v. 17). This is clearly a reference to the persecution of the Christian Church.

2. The Beast out of the Sea (13:1-10). The first words of this chapter belong to the preceding chapter, and should read: "and he stood upon the sand of the sea". The dragon halts upon the shore to call up his great ally out of the sea of the nations. This monster, which is a combination of the four

beasts of Daniel's vision (Dan. 7:1-8), is endowed with the power and authority of the dragon (vs. 1-2). The beast is a symbol of world power in the course of its historical development. As a system, the political power of the nations of the world is inspired and energized by Satan. Under the guidance of the prince of the world, it constantly opposes and often persecutes the Church of Christ. It is the devil's policy to disguise his operations under the forms of the world. In John's time that power was centred in Rome; and the fascination which the Empire has imposed upon the human race even in its fall is vividly portrayed in the next verses (vs. 3-5).

The awful influence of this beast was to continue throughout the whole Christian age ("forty and two months"), and to extend over the whole world ("every tribe and people and tongue and nation"). It would oppose the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ and persecute His people (vs. 6-7). The human race as a whole, the unregenerate among men, would yield to the spell of this world power (v. 8). Then there comes a warning which is somewhat obscure, but probably means that believers are to suffer with patience and without resistance (vs. 9-10). The patience and faith of the saints will be displayed in their confidence in God and in their meek endurance of persecution.

3. The Beast out of the Earth (13:11-18). "He had two horns like unto a lamb, and he spake as a dragon"; that is, he looked like Christ, but was inspired by Satan (v. 11). This beast uses the power of the first beast, and counterfeits divine miracles (vs. 12-13). It represents a religious power

in alliance with political power. This symbolism has its historical parallel in the rise and progress of the Papacy. It casts a glamour of deceit over "them that dwell on the earth", as the Papacy has done over the unregenerate human race (v. 14). It revived the life of the first beast, as Papal Rome revived the power and influence of pagan Rome (v. 15).

This beast exerts a controlling influence over the ordinary life of all classes of men by putting its own mark of identification upon them (vs. 16-17). Here we have an apt symbol of the subtle and sinister tyranny which Papal Rome exercises through its world-wide secret organization. John closes his account of the beast by calling attention to its number, in order that its significance may be considered. "It is the number of a man, and his number is Six hundred and sixty and six" (v. 18). If any number could represent the Deity, it would be seven hundred and seventy-seven, the threefold seven. Six hundred and sixty-six aims at that but comes short of it. This number therefore represents an attempt to usurp the place of God. No institution in all human history answers to this description as the Papacy does. And the Papacy is always centred in "a man," the reigning Pope of the time.

4. The Followers of the Lamb (14:1-5). Opposing these three foes whom he has described, the Seer beheld the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand (v. 1). This is the same company that were sealed in 7:1-4. They represent the true Church of Christ on earth, standing on the sure foundation (Psa. 2:6; Heb. 12: 22-24). They have "his name, and the name of his

Father, written on their foreheads", in contrast with those that have received the mark of the beast (13:16). Then John heard a song from Heaven of mingled majesty and sweetness, a new song which only that redeemed company could learn to sing (vs. 2-3). Their character is described in terms which signify complete separation from the defilement of the world, entire devotion to the service of Christ, and blamelessness in the sight of God (vs. 4-5) They represent the redeemed people of God, the "first-fruits of his creatures" (Jas. 1:18).

5. The Heavenly Proclamations (14:6-13). In this passage John records four angelic announcements, which reflect the nature and course of the conflict between Christ and His foes.

(1) The everlasting Gospel (vs. 6-7). The preaching of the Gospel is a testimony to the nations of the world against a background of judgment (Matt. 24:14; Mark 16:15; Acts 17:30-31).

(2) The fall of Babylon (v. 8). This announcement anticipates the judgment described in chs. 17—18. The imagery is taken from Jer. 51:7-8. Babylon represents the godless world, as Jerusalem represents the Church.

(3) The fate of the godless (vs. 9-12). This symbolic scene is the most appalling picture of the punishment of the wicked in all Scripture. It is represented as taking place, "in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb". This signifies their acquiescence in the justice and necessity of God's awful judgments. "Here is the patience of the saints": knowing the terrible judgment of the Lord, they endure the terrible persecution of the beast.



(4) The blessedness of the holy dead (v. 13). "The dead who die in the Lord from henceforth", mean all believers who die during the present Christian age, or since the Lord's Ascension, the point of time from which the Revelation begins. The message, however, was specially intended for the comfort of those who were enduring persecution in that day.

6. The Harvest and the Vintage (14:14-20). The issues of the conflict are now set forth in two symbolic scenes of sublimity and grandeur.

(1) The harvest of the earth (vs. 14-16). This means the reaping of the good, the gathering out of the righteous. The Son of Man is represented as doing this Himself, and the imagery suggests His Coming in glory. A message from God out of the innermost shrine of Heaven tells Him that the time of the harvest has come (Matt. 13:30).

(2) The vintage of the earth (vs. 17-20). This means the gathering and punishing of the wicked, and an angel is commissioned to perform the task. The imagery is that of a winepress, so deep that the juice of the grapes, which appears like blood, comes up to the bridles of the horses trampling them. A symbolic number is introduced to indicate the world-wide nature of the judgment: "As far as a thousand and six hundred furlongs". This is the number of the world multiplied by itself to express intensity, and then by a hundred, the number of the world's kingdoms multiplied by itself. There is no escape from the universal efficacy of the sharp sickle by which the wicked are gathered to their doom.

## THE SEVEN BOWLS OF WRATH

(Chs. 15—16)

The Revelation is now approaching the end of the long conflict between Christ and His foes, between the Church and the world. There is a sense of finality and completeness in these chapters. The judgments described here are distinguished from all that came before them as being "the last". They complete the manifestation of the wrath of God.

1. The Preparation (Ch. 15). There is a sense of sublime and awful significance in this scene. It is marked by calm and majestic deliberation. It introduces seven angels who are to execute the final judgments (v. 1). John saw first "them that come off victorious" in the conflict with the beast. The same word is used here as in the promise "to him that overcometh" in chs. 2-3. They were standing beside the sea of glass before the throne (4:6), singing the song of Moses and the Lamb—the song of the saints of both dispensations—and praising the Lord God almighty for His righteous judgments (vs. 2-4).

After that John saw coming out from the innermost sanctuary of Heaven—the presence-chamber of God—the seven angelic agents of these divine judgments, magnificently arrayed. They were given seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God (vs. 5-6). These were not narrow vials (A.V.) but wide bowls, whose contents could be poured out in one sudden action. The fact that these bowls were presented by one of the living creatures would indicate that the plagues were to be inflicted on the natural world of man's abode. The cloud of smoke that filled the sanctuary closed all access to the Divine

presence. These judgments would bring man's day of grace to an end (vs. 7-8).

2. The First Four Bowls (16:1-9). These four judgments are parallel with those of the first four trumpets (8:7-12). They fall upon the same objects, and in the same order. But there is an important and significant difference. In the case of the trumpets, a third of each object was smitten: in the case of the bowls, the whole of each object is smitten. The trumpets were warning judgments: the bowls are final judgments. This would indicate that when judgments or signs that were formerly local and partial become universal and affect the whole world, then the day of God's wrath has come, and the Coming of the Lord is at hand. Two voices are heard in the course of these bowls (vs. 5-7). The angel of the waters acknowledges the justice of the judgment and its cause. The voice from the altar represents the souls of the martyrs, whose prayers are now being answered (6:9-10). These plagues bring no repentance, but only deeper enmity to God (v. 9).

3. The Fifth Bowl (16:10-11). This judgment falls upon the throne of the beast, the political power of the world. "His kingdom was darkened": the light by which the subjects of the beast have been allured dies away, and men see the failure of their hopes. "They gnawed their tongues for pain": the system in which they had trusted breaks down, leaving them in misery and despair (Luke 21:25-26). And still there is no repentance on the part of the human race.

4. The Sixth Bowl (16:12-16). When this bowl is poured out two scenes take place.

(1) The Euphrates is dried up to prepare the way for "the kings that come from the sunrising" (v. 12). The east, or the sunrising, has been mentioned before as the seat of Divine authority and action (7:2). Therefore those who come from the sunrising must be agents of God. The Euphrates has appeared in a former vision as the seat of the paganizing power of the nations of the world (9:14). The drying up of the Euphrates is used in the Old Testament as symbolical of the Lord's preparation of a highway for the return of scattered Israel (Isa. 11:15-16). It would seem therefore that the kings from the sunrising represent His own redeemed people who are being prepared to share the throne with Christ (3:21). They are clearly to be distinguished from the kings in the next scene.

(2) The kings of the whole world, under demonic instigation from the dragon and the two great beasts, are gathered together "unto the war of the great day of God, the Almighty" (vs. 13-14). Here is an obvious symbol of the nations of the world being driven on by the self-interest of their national policies to the final judgment of God. Their gathering place is called Har-Magedon (A.V. Armageddon), which means the mount of Megiddo (v. 16). This name marks the plain in central Palestine where most of the great battles of the Old Testament were fought. Here Barak defeated Sisera and Gideon defeated the Midianites. Here Saul was defeated and slain by the Philistines and Josiah was defeated and wounded to death by the Egyptians. In interpreting this scene, the symbolical character of the Revelation must not be forgotten. This is no local battle-field, but a symbolical picture of uni-

versal war, and a prediction of God's final judgment upon the nations of the world. It is parallel with the appalling scene in Jer. 25:15-29.

Into the midst of this passage is thrust a parenthesis, which has no connection with the context (v. 15). It is a warning of the sudden and unexpected coming of the Lord. This is the only place in all the Revelation where such a warning is given; and it evidently means that the event will occur when the conditions portrayed in this vision are realized. The imagery is taken from the night-watchmen in the Temple. If one of them should be seen without his outer garment, it would mean that he had been found asleep at his post and it had been taken from him.

5. The Seventh Bowl (16:17-21). This plague falls upon the air, the realm of Satan, "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2). All else has been smitten; it only remains to smite the source of evil. The voice that came from the Throne, "It is done", corresponds with the cry that came from the Cross, "It is finished". In the one case it marked the climax of the first coming of Christ; in the other case it seems to mark the climax of His Second Coming. The event itself is not described, but the remainder of the passage gives a summary of its tremendous import.

The last bowl has brought us to the same point of time as the last trumpet, which announced the victory of the Kingdom of Christ over the kingdoms of the world (11:15). Chapter 16 ends with the same crisis as chapter 11. The remaining chapters of the book carry out the issues of that event. The angels who poured out the seven bowls remain upon

the scene until the end of the Revelation (17:1; 21:9).

### THE DOOM OF THE FOES OF CHRIST

(Chs. 17—20)

The visions which now appear set forth the circumstances relating to the Coming of Christ, and the ultimate consummation of His work of redemption. We are shown His foes being overthrown one by one, until at last Satan himself is eliminated, and death, "the last enemy" (1 Cor. 15:26), is abolished.

1. The Mystery of Babylon (Ch. 17). The judgment of Babylon, which has been announced twice already (14:8; 16:19), is now to be revealed. John is called to come and be shown "the judgment of the great harlot", a significant name for an apostate church (vs. 1-2). He is carried away into a wilderness, and sees a woman sitting upon a scarlet-coloured beast. The beast is that of 13:1, representing the political power of the world; and the whole appearance of the woman indicates the Church of Rome (vs. 3-6).

Her position on the beast symbolizes Rome's attitude toward political power. She seeks to manage it, and make it serve her interests. The woman is "arrayed in purple and scarlet": Rome's worldly pomp. She is "decked with gold": Rome's worldly wealth. She has the name "Mystery" on her forehead, claiming to be the Bride of Christ (Eph. 5:32). But her true name is, "The Mother of Harlots". She was "drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus". This is more truly descriptive of the Roman Church than of the Roman Empire. She



has shed more innocent blood and put more Christians to death than any other institution in history.

As John wonders at the sight, the angel proceeds to tell him "the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her". The details of the description are difficult and obscure, but as a whole they make up what is manifestly a composite picture of pagan and Papal Rome (vs. 7-14). History has confirmed and substantiated the parallel; for as time went on Papal Rome succeeded to the power of pagan Rome. The angel follows his account of the woman with a prediction of her ultimate destruction by the very powers with which she had been in league (vs. 15-17). Through them God would accomplish His will, and bring down His judgment upon her. Finally the angel identifies the woman with the great city of Rome itself, which was then the capital of the world (v. 18).

2. *The Fall of Babylon (Ch. 18)*. Here the imagery changes, and Babylon is represented as a city. She now becomes a symbol of Satan's crowning achievement, the counterfeit of the Kingdom of God on earth. This he accomplished with the aid of his two great allies of ch. 13, who are referred to hereafter as the beast and the false prophet. It is an alliance of political power with religious apostasy. Babylon's fall is announced in terms taken from the Old Testament predictions of the desolation of ancient Babylon (vs. 1-3; Isa. 21:9; 13:20-22; Jer. 50:39; 51:37). The people of God are warned to come out of her, that they may have no fellowship with her sins, and no share in her punishment (vs. 4-8). This call for separation from the world rings all through the history of redemp-



tion. It is a summons to maintain aloofness of spirit in the midst of the world's business.

Then there comes a lamentation over Babylon's fall, in which the catastrophe is described as it affects the kings (vs. 9-10), the merchants (vs. 11-17), the sailors and shipmasters (vs. 17-19). The social and economic order of the world has been overthrown; the commerce and trade of the nations has been destroyed. All the laments are of a selfish character, indicating that all this world order has been ministering to human self-indulgence and luxury. A significant note comes in at the end of v. 13. It has trafficked in the "souls of men"; it has been destructive of spiritual life.

A very different effect is revealed in Heaven, which is called to rejoice that God has avenged His servants (v. 20). The suddenness and completeness of the fall of Babylon is emphasized by the threefold repetition of the phrase "in one hour" (vs. 10, 17, 19). The same thing is illustrated by a symbolic act on the part of the angel (v. 21), who then brings his prediction to an end with a dirge over Babylon of exquisite beauty and sublimity (vs. 22-24).

3. The Overthrow of the Beast and the False Prophet (Ch. 19). This is the main theme of the chapter. It begins with a triumph-song in Heaven over the fall of Babylon, a fourfold Hallelujah, in which the angels, the elders, and the living creatures all take part, representing the whole universe under the reign of the Lord God Almighty (vs. 1-6). Now that the harlot church has been judged and put out of the way, they rejoice that the marriage of the Lamb has come, and the true Bride has made herself ready for her union with Christ in glory (vs. 7-8).

This song of the marriage of the Lamb is the last of seven songs in the Revelation. The others are, the praise of the Creator (4:8-11), the praise of the Lamb (5:8-14), the song of redemption (7:9-12), the song of the Kingdom (11:15-18), the song of triumph over Satan (12:10-12), and the song of the victors on the glassy sea (15:3-4). The prospect of the bliss of the marriage supper overwhelmed John, and he fell down to worship the angel, who at once reminded him that the angels in Heaven are but fellow-servants with the followers of Jesus on earth (vs. 9-10). "They that are bidden to the marriage supper" are not to be distinguished from the Church. The redeemed are both the Lamb's guests and the Lamb's Bride.

At this point a scene is described of grand and appalling symbolism. A Rider upon a white horse comes out of Heaven with the angelic armies in His train (vs. 11-16). His whole appearance, and the statement that "in righteousness he doth judge and make war", indicate that we have here the coming of Christ with the angels of His power to render vengeance on His foes (1 Thess. 3:13; 2 Thess. 1:7-10). On His head were many crowns, and He is represented as having four names. He was called "Faithful and True", as having given a true and faithful revelation of God. He had a name written which no one knows but himself—His own inherent nature, which is beyond the capacity of man to understand. "His name is called, The Word of God": it is thus He is known to the Church. On His garment, where it fell over His thigh, a name was written that all could read: "King of kings and Lord of lords". It is thus He is to be known to the world.

The vision was accompanied by a proclamation, made by an angel standing in the sun (vs. 17-18). This was intended to mark the universal character of the judgment executed by the Rider on the white horse. His victory over the beast and the false prophet is described in the next scene (vs. 19-21). It results in the destruction of Satan's two great allies, which are both cast into "the lake of fire". This signifies the ultimate and complete elimination of the two organized agencies of the world which oppose the cause of Christ—a political system based on human self-will and self-interest, and a religious system usurping the function of the Saviour of men.

4. The Overthrow of Satan (Ch. 20). The arch-foe still remains to be judged. The main theme of this chapter is not the millennial reign of Christ, which is only an incident in the vision, but the final victory of Christ over Satan, and his ultimate doom. The Seer first beholds Satan bound, and consigned to the abyss from which he released the plague of demonism upon the earth (9:1-3), where he is imprisoned for a thousand years (vs. 1-3). Ever since he was cast out of Heaven at the Ascension, he has been waging war on earth against the followers of Christ (12:9-12; 1 Pet. 5:8). And now he is cast out of the world and banished for a time from the affairs of men. This clears the way for the reign of Christ over the earth, and the martyrs (6:9-11) and those who have come victorious through the conflict with His foes come to life again and reign with Him. This is the first resurrection (vs. 4-5).

As all the numbers in the Revelation are symbolical, so also is the number "a thousand". Ten is

the number of the kingdoms of the world, or the manifestation of world power (13:1; 17:3, 12). Here it is raised to the third power, which gives it a divine character. The thousand years, therefore, means the age of God's reign upon earth, during which the cause of Christ will be triumphant. Nothing is said as to the nature of this period, nor is there any suggestion that Christ and His glorified saints will dwell on earth. They reign from Heaven. A blessing is pronounced upon those who have part in the first resurrection and are thus enabled to share in this reign (v. 6). This is the fifth of seven beatitudes in this book. It is distinguished from the other six by the addition of "holy" (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 22:7, 14).

At the end of this period, for some reason unexplained to us, Satan is to be released from his prison. He will gather the hosts of Gog and Magog against the saints of God (vs. 7-8). This symbolism is taken from Ezek. 38-39, where Gog and Magog represent nations on the utmost limits of the world. Here they probably represent spiritual hosts of wickedness, which Satan summons from the utmost limits of his world of evil for a final attack upon the Kingdom of God. The reign of Christ and His saints does not cease. The struggle is as brief as it is fierce. Fire from Heaven destroys the foes, and Satan's doom is sealed. He is cast into the lake of fire, where the beast and the false prophet are (vs. 9-10).

Then there comes a sublime and awful scene, which takes place before "a great white throne" (v. 11). The whole description implies that the final judgment of the wicked has come. It is an enlarge-

ment of 11:18. John saw "the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne" (v. 12). These were "the rest of the dead" of v. 5, whose resurrection he proceeds to describe in detail (v. 13). "And books were opened"—the records of the lives and deeds of men. The sentence of the Judge is not arbitrary; it rests on evidence.

"And another book was opened, which is the book of life"—the roll of the citizens of the Kingdom of God. The other books would be vouchers, as it were, for the book of life. "Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire" (v. 14). This means that all the results of Satan's work are eliminated from the world. John describes, in the language of symbolism, what Paul has already told us in direct words (1 Cor. 15:26, 54). When the judgment of the white throne is ended, all that are not enrolled in the Kingdom are consigned to the lake of fire; and this is "the second death" (v. 15). As there is a second and higher life, so there is a second and deeper death. As after that life there is no more death, so after that death there is no more life.

#### THE NEW HEAVEN AND THE NEW EARTH

(Chs. 21—22)

The long conflict is over, and the final judgment is passed. What the Revelation was intended to show to the servants of God has been accomplished. The Lamb has triumphed over all His foes. It now remains to reveal His union in glory with the Church, which has shared the conflict with Him. This blissful vision is set in the frame of the new heaven and the new earth.

1. The New Creation (21:1-8). When "the earth

and the heaven fled away" from the face of the Judge in the preceding vision (20:11), the way was prepared for "a new heaven and a new earth" to come into the Seer's view (v. 1). In this new world, "there was no more sea", for in John's mind the sea was associated with the restless nations. The metropolis of the new earth was not a new Babylon, but a new Jerusalem, built of heavenly material (v. 2). It was to be the dwelling-place of God, where He would have fellowship with men as His own people, and all the woe that sin had brought into the world would be done away (vs. 3-4). John heard a voice from the Throne announce an entirely new creation, which would be the final result of the Redeemer's work (vs. 5-6). In this new creation all the promises given to His people would be realized, and from it all evil would be banished (vs. 7-8).

2. The New Jerusalem (21:9-27). There is a striking parallel noted at once between this vision (vs. 9-10) and that of Babylon (17:1-3). Each vision is announced by one of the seven angels that had the seven bowls. There John was shown the great harlot: here he is shown the Bride, the Lamb's wife. There he was taken into a wilderness: here he is taken to a mountain. Evidently the intention is to mark the contrast between the apostate woman and the faithful wife. The vision of the new Jerusalem is of surpassing grandeur and beauty. The features of its symbolism are not to be taken literally, but are given us to brood over in wonder, till their mystic meaning comes stealing into our souls. They are profoundly significant of spiritual realities.

(1) Her outward appearance (vs. 11-14). The number "twelve", identifying the Church, occurs

five times in these verses. The city shone with the glory of God, represented in the white brilliance of the jasper stone. With three gates on each side, the city was open to all the world.

(2) Her perfect measurements (vs. 15-17). The numbers here are all multiples of twelve. The city lay foursquare, and was a perfect cube, the same shape as the Most Holy Place in the tabernacle, where the symbol of God's presence dwelt.

(3) Her general structure (vs. 18-21). The description here reaches the sublimest heights of which human imagination is capable. It is a grand enlargement of the splendour of Zion described in Isa. 54:11-12. The twelve foundations of the city wall were precious stones; and John names them one by one, as his eye delights to dwell upon their loveliness. These are not architectural details, but symbolized spiritual realities. They are beautiful suggestions of grace and glory. Precious stones cannot be manufactured by man, but are formed in the crucible of the Creator out of ordinary earthly elements. The holy city is not the product of human efforts at reform, but is built of sinners saved by Divine grace. "The twelve gates were twelve pearls" —the only stone in all the list that comes from a stab of pain in a living creature. The way into the city is by the Cross.

(4) Her inward life (vs. 22-27). The Lamb is the centre of all the life and light within the city. He takes the place of sun and moon. No temple is needed, for God is worshipped and adored directly. "There shall be no night there", for there will be no sin or foe to lurk in the darkness. Some of the



features here are drawn from Isaiah's prediction of the glory of Zion (60:3, 11, 19-20).

3. The New Paradise (22:1-5). The figure changes here, and the Garden of Eden blends with the New Jerusalem. The curse of the Fall and all its results have been removed, and the source and secret of life are now available to all. This is the meaning of the symbolism. The river of life and the street run side by side through the city, and trees of life grow there in rows, which never cease to yield their fruit. The closing feature of the vision brings its bliss to a climax. The servants of the Lamb see His face, and His name is on their foreheads. In the light of His glory and in the fellowship of His presence, they share His everlasting reign.

4. The Conclusion (22:6-21). The Revelation has come to an end, and the angel, who was commissioned to show it to John (1:1), now confirms it in the name of Christ (vs. 6-7). So astounding was the closing vision that the Seer forgot the warning recently given him (19:10), and prostrated himself before the angel, and received from him the same rebuke (vs. 8-9). Then the voice of Christ is heard giving a final warning. When the judgments to be administered at His Coming have taken place, the state of the righteous and the unrighteous will be fixed for ever (vs. 10-12). This is followed by a statement summing up the message and the purpose of the whole book (vs. 13-15).

Jesus continues His testimony by repeating and emphasizing the purpose for which the Revelation was given (vs. 16-17), and uttering a solemn protest against wilful perversions of the teaching of the

prophecy (vs. 18-19). The Lord sounds the keynote of the Revelation again in one final word, to which the Apostle adds the prayer of the Church (v. 20). There is nothing more to be said; and the book now closes with a brief benediction, indicating that it was intended to be read in the churches, like the Epistles (v. 21).

THE END

