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THE EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL
TO THE GALATIANS

BIBLICAL MANUALS
EDITED BY J. ESTLIN CARPENTER, M.A.

THE EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL
TO THE
GALATIANS
EXPLAINED AND ILLUSTRATED

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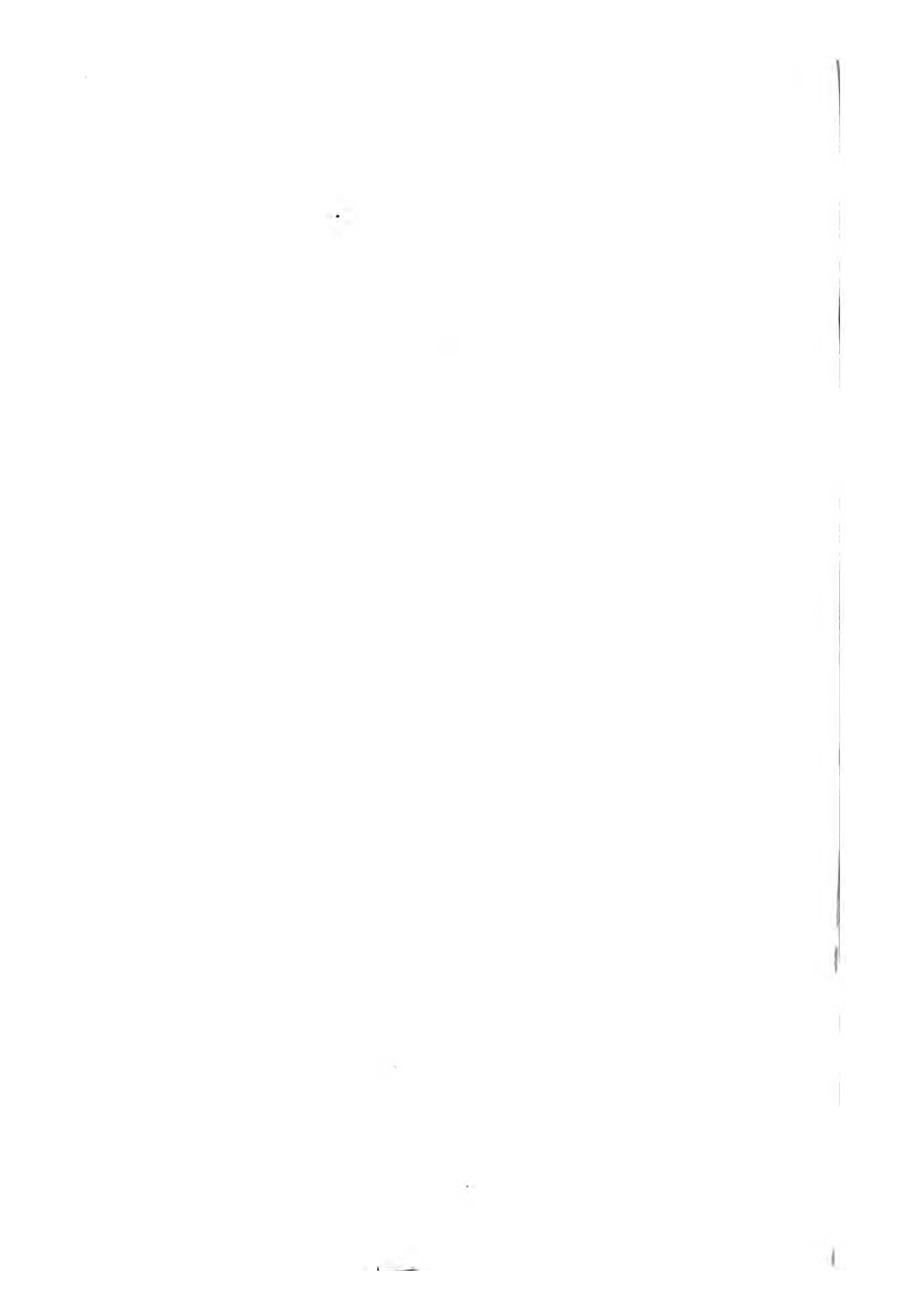
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PREFACE

THIS little commentary is intended for beginners, and therefore no apology is needed for the simplicity of its plan, and the absence of the more technical discussions which would be looked for in a work intended primarily for scholars. Still it endeavours to trace out and explain all the essential portions of the argument; and those who are familiar with the subject will be able to read between the lines rather more than is actually expressed. As it is almost wholly the result of my own study of the Epistle, I am not without hope that it may have some suggestiveness even for more advanced students, though its main purpose is to furnish an introduction to Pauline thought for those who are entering on the subject, and are at the same time sufficiently mature to grapple with some of the deeper problems of the spiritual life. The author will be amply rewarded for any trouble it has cost him, if it bring only a few readers nearer to the heart and mind of the great Apostle.

J. D.

OXFORD, DECEMBER, 1892.



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THE
EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS.

INTRODUCTION.

COMMENTARIES are said to be very dull. Why, then, should anyone write a commentary? And, still more, why should anyone read it? Simply because, though the commentary itself may be very dull, it may be necessary in order to give life and interest to some noble piece of literature. Writings which the world would not willingly let die are apt to contain allusions to people or circumstances which were generally known at the time when the writings were composed, but are forgotten as the years pass away; and, when they are some centuries old, they may through this cause have become so obscure that only a few learned men will care to read them. Then the commentator steps in, and hunts up ancient documents, and finds out as much as he can about the people or circumstances alluded to; and, though he himself may be dry as dust, and the information which he has collected may not be very interesting in itself, yet, if that information be once mastered, the original writings

will be again understood, and shine forth in all the splendour of the genius which produced them.

These remarks are applicable in an eminent degree to the Epistles of St. Paul. The Epistles are full of sublime thoughts and far-reaching principles, expressed with the utmost fervour of conviction, and often with marked beauty and dignity of style; so that, whatever view may be taken of their inspiration, we may at least say that they are aglow with religious genius, and must be placed in the first rank amid the spiritual treasures of the world. They are, then, worth studying with loving and scrupulous care; and yet by the majority of English people they are but little understood. They have frequent allusions to events and controversies of the time, and their everlasting truth is often expressed through forms of reasoning such as we no longer employ; and consequently we require some one to explain these things, and to show how principles of permanent value are involved in the discussion of questions which, considered simply in themselves, have long ceased to have any practical interest. If a commentator can do this, he may be very dull himself, and yet make Paul fascinating, and by causing us to see the inner life of that exalted soul add to our lasting gains, not only in literature, but in religion.

Further, there are some special difficulties in the way of understanding the Epistles. The very familiarity of their words and sentences often causes them to float idly through the mind, and it is not till we force our attention to dwell on them that we become aware of their deep meaning, and begin to

appropriate it as part of our own thought. Then there are several words, such as faith, election, atonement, Holy Spirit, Son of God, which have been adopted as theological terms, and now represent a complete system of doctrines. When we meet any of these words, we are apt to think at once of the system of doctrines which is connected with them in our minds. We ought, however, to pause, and ask whether that is what Paul really meant, and we shall find that that is a question not very easily answered. We require some knowledge, not only of Greek, but of the particular kind of Greek which Paul wrote. We must know something of the history of thought, and of the religious problems amid which Paul lived. Thus a long and careful examination is sometimes needed before we can feel at all sure that we have discovered what Paul really meant. Another difficulty lies in the depth and richness of the thought itself. It often deals with the profoundest religious experiences, and those who have nothing akin to these within themselves cannot hope to understand. When any passage presents a difficulty of this kind, it is best to wait, and not try to force into it some insufficient meaning; for the experience of life frequently makes clear what before was obscure, and sometimes flashes of spiritual light come in response to thought and prayer.

It is the business of the commentator to help the reader over these various difficulties, and enable him to see, not how this or that favourite doctrine may be supported, but what the Epistles really meant. We must never forget that letters are not formal dogmatic

treatises, but were written to particular people at a particular time, and about subjects in which these people were at that time deeply interested. We must therefore treat Paul's letters historically, and go back in imagination to the ancient days when Christianity was first struggling for recognition, and had not yet become fully conscious of its own principles or of the way in which these principles affected many social and religious questions. Hence the necessity for an Introduction to each Epistle before following its thought in detail. We wish to be sure whether Paul really wrote it; for we know that there are such things as forged letters. We want to know also what sort of people it was written to, and at what time and place, and with what object; and only when we have thus placed it amid its historical surroundings are we prepared to follow its argument step by step. We must now address ourselves to these preliminary questions in connection with the Epistle to the Galatians. But first let me advise the student (in accordance with the suggestion of Locke¹) to read the Epistle straight through at one sitting. This he should do in Greek if he be sufficiently acquainted with the language; but if not, he would do well to read it first in the Authorised, and then in the Revised Version, and to mark for himself the differences between them. He will thus at the same time make himself familiar with the contents of the Epistle as a whole, and realise that he is dealing with a translation and not with the original.

¹ A Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of Paul, Fourth Edition, 1742, pp. vii. and xii.

§ 1. Genuineness.

Under the head of genuineness we have to consider whether a writing is really the work of the man by whom it professes to have been composed, and, if so, whether it has come down to us in the form in which it was originally written.

In examining the question of authorship it is usual to divide the evidence into external and internal. The external evidence consists of the testimony of men who lived near the time of the supposed author, and had therefore opportunities of knowledge which are no longer open to us. The internal brings before us the indications which the writing itself affords of agreement or disagreement with the alleged authorship. Both these lines of evidence confirm our belief that Paul was the author of the Epistle to the Galatians.

The external evidence does not go back to a very early date, for a great deal of the Christian literature of the second century has been lost, and we know that books once existed which must have contained valuable information on some questions which are now under dispute. However, we have sufficient evidence that about the end of the second century the Epistle was ascribed without hesitation to Paul. It is quoted as his by Irenaeus of Gaul, Tertullian of Africa, and Clement of Alexandria. They quote it just as we might do, without any suggestion of doubt; and they are therefore not giving a critical judgment of their own, but are simply taking for granted the truth of what

had been handed down and was generally accepted. We are told that the heretic Marcion, about the middle of the second century, included Galatians among the Epistles of Paul. Beyond this period our knowledge does not extend. It may be thought that evidence which only brings us within eighty years of the time of Paul is not very strong; but we must remember that letters addressed to Churches would from the first be more or less public, and would be guaranteed by the Churches which received and preserved them, and, after all, a period that may be covered by a single life is not very long in a matter of this kind. It is also important to observe that there is no adverse testimony. The Ebionites indeed rejected the Pauline Epistles; but they did so, not because they doubted whether Paul wrote them, but because they believed that he did, and thought that he was an apostate whose teaching ought not to be received. The external evidence, therefore, is all in favour of the Pauline authorship of the Epistle; but still it is not of such conclusive force as to make the consideration of internal evidence superfluous.

Turning, then, to the Epistle itself, we find that it professes to have been written by Paul (i. 1., v. 2). It also contains allusions, in the first person, to incidents in the life of Paul. The writer says he was a Jew, and a most zealous observer of the Jewish traditions (ii. 15, i. 14). He had been a persecutor of the Church (i. 13, 23). He had been converted to Christianity, and this conversion was in some way connected with a residence in Damascus (i. 15-17).

He was associated with Barnabas and Titus (ii. 1, 3, 9, 13). He visited Jerusalem in the time of James, Cephas (Peter), and John (i. 18, 19, ii. 1-10). He was connected with Antioch, and had an interview there with Peter, whom he rebuked for his inconsistent conduct (ii. 11-14). He had preached the Gospel in Galatia (iv. 13, 11), and apparently was the founder of the Churches there (iv. 19). Finally he had suffered persecution in the cause of Christ (iv. 29, v. 11, vi. 17). Now, this claim to have been written by Paul is of great importance, because, if the Epistle was really not written by Paul, it was a forgery, and written with an intention to deceive. In this respect it is quite different from such works as the Gospels or the Epistle to the Hebrews; for they make no reference to their authors, and if any of them was not written by the man to whom it has been generally ascribed, we can only say that public opinion was mistaken, but not that a fraud was committed. We must ask, then, whether our Epistle bears the mark of forgery. Far from it. The allusions to the life of Paul are not brought in for the sake of effect, but arise quite naturally out of the subject. There is some difficulty in harmonising one or two of them with *Acts*; but *Galatians* has all the appearance of being the more original document, and the references to Paul's contemporaries are so spontaneous and unforced that we can see no reason whatever for doubting the fidelity of the writer. Then, observe the freshness, vigour and originality of the style. The man who could write this letter did not need to hide himself under a borrowed name, and

the elevated moral and religious tone forbids (to my mind) the supposition of fraud on the part of some morbid genius. Again, the work is aflame with personal emotion, which is quite suited to the occasion, and gives no sign of being a counterfeit. And lastly, the subject belongs to the Apostolic age, and is treated as we might expect Paul to treat it, while there is not a single allusion that seems to imply a later date.

Both our lines of evidence, then, point to Paul as the author of the Epistle, and I think we may rest in this conclusion without the slightest misgiving. One or two objectors may be found to everything; but here critics who are deemed the most advanced are satisfied that the traditional view is correct, and the exceptions are so few that we need not take them into account.¹

The second question coming under the head of genuineness, that relating to the *integrity* of the Epistle, may be quickly dismissed. In some writings considerable interpolations have been made, and from others portions have been omitted. Marcion is said to have omitted from the Epistles what did not harmonise with his own views. In the Gospel according to John the section about the woman taken in adultery is believed by many of the best critics to be an interpo-

¹ I allow this to stand after reading Steck's elaborate attack on the genuineness of the *Galatians*. His book is written in an unexceptionable tone; but it has not even made me feel that there is anything to answer. Rather does it raise the question whether 'criticism' may not be made to prove anything that a skilful author desires.

lation. Some doubt the genuineness of the last two chapters of *Romans*, and especially of part of the last chapter. But there is nothing in *Galatians* to awaken suspicion. At most a few words have got inserted through some error on the part of men who copied the Epistle. We may, then, assume that, with some little verbal uncertainty here and there (such as occurs in all books transmitted by writing), we possess the work as it came from the hand of Paul, and its genuineness under both heads is fully established.

§ 2. The Churches of Galatia.

We have next to inquire who and of what sort were the people to whom the Epistle was addressed; for we shall thus understand better, not only some of the allusions in it, but also the tone and style of writing, which differ considerably from those that characterise the letters to the Corinthians and to the Romans.

The letter itself calls the readers Galatians. The country of Galatia was situated in the very heart of Asia Minor; nevertheless the Galatians were a branch of the great Celtic race, whom we meet with under the name of Gauls in Roman and Greek history. The word itself is probably an allied form of the word Celts, and is the name which was generally given to the Gauls by the Greeks in the time of Paul. How is it, then, that we find these Gauls in Asia? They were fickle and restless people, and during a considerable period hordes

of them kept swarming off towards the East, in search of plunder and adventure, which attracted them more than the steady pursuits of industry. One of these hordes invaded Italy, and captured Rome. Rather more than a century later (278 B.C.) an army of these savage warriors poured into Greece; but the very horror of the invasion kindled in the Greeks a spark of the old heroism, and the Gauls, who were formidable only in the first attack, were defeated and driven out. The fugitives swelled the numbers of another division which had pushed on into Thrace, and the host soon arrived on the shores of the Propontis, where they exacted tribute from the neighbouring cities. Presently they were attracted by the fertility and wealth of Asia, and made their way in two divisions across the straits. Having united their forces, they sold their services to Nicomedes, king of Bithynia, and enabled him to obtain the victory in a war in which he was then engaged. The terror of their name spread throughout Asia as far as the mountain range of Taurus, and it is said that even the kings of Syria did not refuse to pay tribute. But these huge barbarians, with their flowing red hair, their immense shields, long swords, and wild chant as they charged upon the battle-field, could not permanently withstand the forces of civilization. Their courage depended on their fierce enthusiasm, and, when their martial rage cooled, they had little power of resistance. Antiochus, at a time and place unknown, inflicted on them a signal defeat, and was thence called Soter (saviour); and about a generation afterwards (about 237 B.C.) Attalus of Pergamum

obtained an unexpected success over them. . They, however, maintained their independence till the year 189 B.C., when the Consul Cn. Manlius Vulso, under the pretext that they had helped Antiochus the Great, attacked them, and reduced them under the Roman power. Even then they were allowed to retain their own kings till 26 B.C., when Amyntas, their last king, was murdered, and their country was made a province by Augustus.

The district called Galatia after it was permanently occupied by the Gauls, was distinguished by the fertility of its soil and the excellence of its climate, and had three considerable towns, Ancyra, Pessinus, and Tavium, which became the capitals of the three tribes of the conquerors. The mingled population of Phrygians and Greeks, which had yielded to the arms of the Gauls, was not exterminated, but became gradually amalgamated with the ruling race. The Greeks provided their masters with a new language, though the Gallic tongue lingered on to a late period. Probably, like the Welsh, they retained their Celtic speech among themselves ; but, in order to enter into a wider intercourse, it was necessary for them to speak Greek, which had become the common language in the vast territories conquered by Alexander the Great, and ruled by his successors. Hence Paul was able to write to these Eastern Gauls in Greek with the confident expectation of being understood ; and no doubt it was in Greek that he originally preached to them. The Phrygians too were not without influence on the impressible Celts. Polytheists readily adopted the

worship of the country where they dwelt; and the wild nature-worship of Phrygia, with its enthusiastic, and to us repulsive, rites, was just suited to the excitable temperament of the invaders. By the time of Paul there must have been a certain number of Romans settled in Galatia; but there is no allusion to them in the Epistle. A more important element of the population consisted of Jews, who were settled in considerable numbers throughout Asia Minor, and who, by the elevating influence of a religion of such enlightened doctrine and such venerable antiquity, at once prepared the way for Christianity and proved themselves the most formidable opponents of the new teachers.

From what portion of this mingled population the Churches of Galatia were drawn we are not directly informed; but we may infer from the Epistle itself that they were predominantly, if not exclusively, Gentile and Gallic. In iv. 8, Paul says to them, "At that time [that is, before their conversion], not knowing God, ye were in bondage to them which by nature are no gods," proving that they had been polytheists; and the statement in v. 2-4 shows that they were not Jews, for with Jews the question of *receiving* circumcision would never have arisen. Again, the expression, "You silly Gauls," in iii. 1, could hardly be addressed to any but a Gallic Church. With this conclusion the whole character of the Epistle corresponds. The readers are evidently an ardent, affectionate, fickle, and quarrelsome set, rushing, under the excitement of Paul's preaching, into the profession of a spiritual religion, whose depth they did not really understand,

and then, attracted by some new teacher, hurrying off into ritualism, and turning against the Apostle, because he told them the truth instead of flattering their vanity. All this points to the Gauls. There may of course have been some Jewish Christians among them; but they must have been relatively few, and I see no necessity for assuming their existence among the first converts. Even if Paul generally took advantage of his access to the synagogue, and preached "to the Jew first," it does not follow that he was always successful in gaining disciples, and in the case of Galatia it would appear that he intended merely to pass through the country, but, being detained by an illness, embraced the opportunity to preach to the people about him, evidently heathen people, who did not know God (see iv. 13, with the previous verses). These Galatian Churches, therefore, were probably in their origin exclusively Gentile.

How, then, are we to account for their readiness to adopt Jewish customs, and for the Jewish forms of argument and the appeals to the Old Testament which the Apostle addresses to them? One way of answering this question is by supposing that before their adoption of Christianity they were converts, more or less complete, to the Jewish religion. The Jews had considerable influence among the heathen inhabitants in the various towns where they established themselves, and made many proselytes; and it is thought that the Christian teachers would be more successful among these proselytes than among those who were still heathen. Thus the Gentiles in a Christian Church

may have been Jewish by conviction before they embraced Christianity; and therefore they would be acquainted with the Old Testament, and interested in Jewish questions, and the Judaizers (that is, those Christians who thought the whole Jewish law must be observed) would be able to influence them more easily. It is thought that iv. 9 supports this view in the case of the Galatians, because they could not be in bondage *again* to Jewish ceremonies unless they had been in bondage to them before their conversion to Christianity. But it seems evident from the whole passage that their coming to know God was after the first stage of bondage, and Paul would hardly treat as "not knowing God" those who had already been taught by Jews to know and worship him. But probably the adoption of the Jewish ceremonial by his converts seemed to Paul to spring from the old heathen tendency, and to be a return to bondage, which, though changed in its particular observances, was the same in its nature. In Paul's view the period before the coming of Christ was the period of the Law for both the Jewish and the Gentile world. The Jew had a full, the Gentile only a partial knowledge of the Law. The Jew had the written commandments of God; the Gentile had the light of nature, and was a law unto himself; but both were judged by their *obedience* to a standard of righteousness imposed upon them from without. Thus for a Gentile Christian to place himself under the Jewish Law was to relapse into the condition of things before Christ came, and "to be entangled again in a yoke of bondage." The

evidence, therefore, seems to be against the supposition that the Galatians were Jewish proselytes before Paul visited them; and the difficulty which the supposition is intended to remove must be got rid of in some other way. The simple fact is that at the time when Paul preached, the Old Testament was the Christian Bible, and every convert must have gained some acquaintance with it as a part of his Christian training. Christianity, however original and however independent of the Jewish Law, was still historically bound up with Judaism. Christ himself was a Jew and was spoken of as one who fulfilled ancient promises and prophecies, which were recorded in the Old Testament. The title Messiah or Christ was Jewish, and could not be understood without some knowledge of Jewish thought. The first teachers of Christianity were Jews, and they could not, even if they had wished to do so, rid themselves all at once of their old habits of thought and speech. In proclaiming the unity and the holiness of God, and maintaining a pure morality, Christianity and Judaism were at one. The assemblies for weekly worship were of Jewish origin. The argument for the truth of Christianity was largely based on the Old Testament; and even at a later time, when the Christian Churches must have been prevailing Gentile, some of the men who became best known for their zeal and ability were converted to Christianity by reading the writings of the Prophets. We must remember too that, if men once ceased to scoff at the Jewish religion, it must have presented to them a grand and imposing appearance. Here were a people

scattered over the Roman Empire who clung to their religion with a tenacity that nothing could shake, who constantly protested in the name of God against the prevailing idolatry, and who traced back their faith to a period far earlier than the earliest records of Greece or Rome; and independently of its birth on the sacred soil of Palestine, Christianity would inevitably challenge comparison with the great and venerable Church, and converts might still ask themselves whether, having gone so far in the direction of Judaism, they ought not to go a little further and embrace the entire system. We need not be surprised, therefore, at the amount of acquaintance with the Old Testament which the Epistle implies on the part of the Galatians, or at the bewitching spell (iii. 1) which the Law exercised upon their minds.

The Churches, as we have seen, were founded by Paul. Unfortunately the Book of *Acts* tells us hardly anything of the circumstances. It says that, on his second missionary journey, he "passed through the Phrygian and Galatian country" (xvi. 6), without any intimation that he staid to preach to the people. It was presumably on this occasion that he was detained by illness, and had his first experience of the warm-hearted Gauls. On the third missionary journey he again "passed through the Galatian country and Phrygia in order, confirming all the disciples" (xviii. 23). We get one more glimpse of the Galatians in *I Corinthians* (xvi. 1). Paul was collecting subscriptions for the poor Christians in Jerusalem, and he says that he had given instructions on the subject to

the Churches of Galatia. Beyond these scanty notices we must depend on the Epistle itself for our knowledge of these Christian Gauls.

§ 3. Time and Place of Composition.

In modern times a letter is usually headed by the address of the writer, and the date. If this useful practice had been followed in ancient days, and the heading had been preserved in copies issued to the public, we should have been saved from much trouble and uncertainty. We have, however, no such easy way of settling when and where Paul wrote his various Epistles. The Authorised Version, indeed, has notes appended to the Epistles, which profess to give the places from which they were severally written. But these notes are not contained in the oldest and best manuscripts, and there is no doubt that they were added long after the time of Paul, while it is equally certain that several of them are incorrect. The Revised Version, therefore, properly omits them. They are ascribed to Euthalius, a deacon of Alexandria, who published an edition of St. Paul's Epistles, A.D. 458. No doubt the private messenger who carried the letter told the original readers all that they wanted to know; but we have to draw conclusions as best we can from the contents. Sometimes there are references which place the matter beyond question: for instance in *1 Cor.* xvi. 8 we read, "I will tarry at

Ephesus until Pentecost," and hence we learn that the letter was written at Ephesus; and in *Philippians* iv. 22, when we find the words, "All the saints salute you, especially they which are of Cæsar's household," we safely infer that the letter was written at Rome. In *Galatians*, however, we have no distinct indication of this kind, and consequently there has been the widest difference of opinion, some making it the first of the Epistles, and others the last. An intermediate view is more generally held, I think on sufficient grounds. Let us open the Epistle and see what we can learn from it.

(1.) It was written after Paul had paid two visits to Jerusalem (i. 18, ii. 1), and had a meeting with Peter at Antioch (ii. 11). It is uncertain which of the visits recorded in *Acts* is meant by the second. The question will be considered in the notes on the passage. Meanwhile we may take it as probable that the visit of which a long account is given in *Acts* xv. is the one intended, and that Paul does not refer to the second visit of *Acts* xi. 30 and xii. 25. If this view be correct, the Epistle was not written earlier than A.D. 50. The visit to Antioch in which he rebuked Peter may then have occurred in the journey "through Syria and Cilicia," mentioned in *Acts* xv. 41, or just before the second journey to Galatia, as related in *Acts* xviii. 22-23.

(2.) It was certainly written after a visit to Galatia (iv. 13), and the first visit to Galatia mentioned in *Acts* (xvi. 6) was after the council at Jerusalem, so that by a distinct line of evidence we reach the same date, A.D.

50, before which the Epistle cannot have been written. Some think we may go a step farther, and say that Paul had paid two visits to Galatia. In the verse just referred to (iv. 13) the Authorised Version translates "I preached the Gospel unto you at the *first*," and this becomes in the Revised Version "the *first time*," clearly implying a second time: and this, I think, is correct. The Greek expression may indeed mean "formerly;"¹ but that implies something in the past opposed to the state of things in the present, and would yield no very good sense here, so that Paul most probably refers to the "former" of his two visits. A second visit seems to be referred to also in iv. 16, "So then am I become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" or, as I prefer translating it, "Have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?" This implies Paul's knowledge that the Galatians were inclined to look upon him as an enemy, and must therefore refer, not to what he was writing to them, but to something that had taken place when he was among them. On the first visit they were full of the warmest friendship; and it appears likely that on the second visit he found such a falling off that he was obliged to speak very plainly to them, and then his opponents in Galatia chose to represent him as their enemy. If this reasoning be correct, the letter must have been written some time after the beginning of the third missionary journey, and cannot be placed earlier than 54 A.D.

(3.) The absence of allusion to Paul's last visit to

¹ So it is used in *John* vi. 62 and ix. 8.

Jerusalem (the history of which is given in *Acts* xxi. 17 sqq.), and to his imprisonment, makes it probable that the Epistle was written before these events; that is, not later than the year 58.

(4.) That it was not later is also rendered probable by the expression in i. 6, "I marvel that ye are *so quickly* removing from him that called you." These words may, no doubt, refer merely to the *suddenness* of the change, whenever it took place; but as the mischief seems to have been already begun at the time of Paul's second visit to the Galatians, it is most natural to suppose that the quickness of the change has reference to the shortness of the time that had elapsed since he was among them. If this be so, the Epistle cannot be much later than the year 54.

(5.) The literary relation between this Epistle and those to the Romans and Corinthians makes it probable that they were written pretty nearly at the same time. Indeed these are so closely akin in style and thought, and differ so considerably from the other Pauline Epistles, that the great German critic, Baur, believed, for this as well as for other reasons, that they alone were genuine works of Paul's. It seems especially as if *Romans* must have been written while the themes treated of in *Galatians* were still running in the Apostle's mind. To a considerable extent the subject is the same; but the argument which in *Galatians* is struck out in short and burning lines, and with constant reference to the immediate needs of the readers, is, in the longer epistle, presented with calm elaboration, and without the vehement personal appeal

which characterises the former. *Galatians* is an argument with wavering or faithless disciples; *Romans* partakes of the nature of a treatise, as if Paul had worked out for his own satisfaction, and for the instruction of the Church at large, the thoughts which he had so briefly, though firmly, sketched in his letter to the Galatian Churches. It seems likely, therefore, that the latter was written not very long before the Epistle to the Romans, which was composed in Corinth early in 58 A.D.

These various considerations all point to the same period in the Apostle's life-time, 54-58 A.D. Accordingly some suppose that the Epistle was written during the long residence at Ephesus, which lasted from the autumn of 54 till Pentecost of 57 (see *Acts* xix., xx. 31, 1 *Cor.* xvi. 8). Here Paul might easily have obtained news from Galatia. Others think it was written in Corinth during the three months' visit to Greece (*Acts* xx. 2, 3). Others, again, are of opinion that it was composed on the journey between the two cities, either in Macedonia, or on the way from Macedonia to Achaia. The late Bishop Lightfoot adopted the last view, and his work on *Galatians* contains an interesting argument, founded chiefly on literary considerations, to show that the Epistle was written after those to the Corinthians and before that to the Romans. These minor points cannot be determined with any certainty; but for the reasons given above it seems highly probable that the Epistle was composed within three or four years after Paul's second visit to Galatia, and before he left Greece for his final visit to Palestine.

§ 4. Origin and nature of the controversy referred to in the Epistle.

According to the account in *Acts* a difference of feeling manifested itself very early in the history of the Church. We are told (vi. 1) that, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, "there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration." The word translated "Grecians" in the Authorised Version becomes "Grecian Jews" in the Revised; and there is a marginal note saying that the Greek is "Hellenists." It will be best for us to use this last term, which prevents all ambiguity. The beginner is apt to think that the Grecians in our English translation are the same as Greeks; but they are in fact, as the revisers have it, "Grecian Jews," Jews who have Hellenised (that is, adopted to a certain extent the Greek language and manners), hence called Hellenists. The Hebrews, on the other hand, were the Jews of Palestine, who clung to the language and the customs of their fathers. To understand the meaning and origin of this distinction we must go back a few centuries, and notice what has been called the "Dispersion"¹ of the Jews.

If we pass over some doubtful legends, the Dispersion began with the Assyrian captivity of the northern tribes of Israel, after the fall of Samaria in 720 B.C. More important in its results was the

¹ For the term "dispersion" in the New Testament see *John* vii. 35, *James* i. 1, *I Peter* i. 1.

subsequent Babylonian captivity of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. When the Jews were allowed to return to their own land, 537 B.C., the majority chose to remain, and make a home in the country of their exile, and thus became the founders of a permanent Jewish colony in Babylonia, with off-shoots in Persia, Media, and Parthia. In the remote east they were secluded from the overwhelming influence of Greek life and thought, and were able to give themselves up to the study and elaboration of their own Law. Here in process of time the Babylonian Talmud grew up, and reached its final form about the close of the fifth century of our era. This immense work contains traditional laws, which were said to have been handed down orally from the time of Moses, and the interpretations of learned Rabbis. From its pages, and from the Jerusalem Talmud which was completed somewhat earlier, we learn the character of those "traditions of the fathers" for which Paul, before his conversion, was so "exceedingly zealous" (*Gal.* i. 14). The Eastern Dispersion, therefore, sided with the "Hebrews," and helped to carry legal Judaism to its extreme development.

Very different, however, were the fortunes and tendencies of the Western Dispersion. When Alexander the Great founded Alexandria (332 B.C.), the population was in the main composed of Greeks, Egyptians and Jews; and on the last Alexander bestowed the full privileges of citizenship, placing them on a par with his own Macedonians. The same enlightened policy was followed by his successors, so

that in the course of time a very large Jewish population was settled in Egypt. Antioch in Syria became in like manner the seat of an important Jewish colony. Partly under compulsion, partly guided by the requirements of trade, the Jews gradually spread themselves over the Roman Empire, so that in the time of Paul they were to be found, sometimes in considerable numbers, in all the principal cities, not excepting Rome itself. Now not only in Greece, but in Egypt, Syria, Asia Minor, and even Italy, Greek was the language of communication between people of different races. Thus it came to pass that the Jews of the Western Dispersion were familiar with Greek, at least with the colloquial language, and that those of them who lived in the parts of the Empire east of Italy were mixed up with Greeks, and were surrounded on every side by the life, the thought, the art, the institutions of Greece. They were indeed considered to be very exclusive; they continued in the strict observance of their own law; and as they were compelled, by fidelity to their religion, to keep aloof from everything associated with idolatry, and therefore from the greater part of the public life and amusements of the people, they were looked upon as sour and unsocial. Still they could not live in the same town, and speak the same language, as the Greeks, without becoming larger and more tolerant in their views, and feeling the charm of the rich and varied genius of a people who were so unlike themselves, and supplemented, by the width of their culture and the vivid play of their intelligence, their own deficiencies. As early as the

third century before Christ, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, known as the Septuagint, was begun in Alexandria. The existence of this translation not only threw the Scriptures open to any Greeks who cared to read them, but must have cut off the Jews of the Dispersion more and more from the traditions of Palestine. Alexandria became a celebrated seat of learning, and had a magnificent library, where the students could wander at will amid the choicest products of poets, historians and philosophers. It was here especially that educated Jews were caught by the fascination of Greek literature, and found, to their surprise, in Greek philosophy not only such depth and subtlety of thought, but such moral and spiritual truth, that Moses himself appeared to be the fountain of its inspiration. Nay, even Moses had to be newly interpreted. Before the sublime ideas of the greatest thinkers some of the notions in the ancient Scriptures seemed childish and unworthy; and for this very reason, it was thought, the narratives containing them must have been intended to mean something far deeper than appeared upon the surface. The Greeks had already found the same difficulty in their mythology, and accordingly treated the old stories about the gods as allegories, which would be foolish and false if taken literally, but, when properly interpreted, expressed some profound philosophical truth. The Jews gladly availed themselves of this "allegorical interpretation," and turned the simple stories of Genesis into symbols of exalted ideas. For instance, Eden is wisdom or reason, and

its four rivers are the four cardinal virtues. This mode of interpretation, though it was reduced to some sort of rule, and was thought in its time to be a grand instrument for drawing out the true meaning of Scripture, is quite arbitrary and indefensible; but it must have helped to liberate the minds of the Hellenists from bondage to the letter of the Law, and have made them more capable of receiving new ideas. It is not wonderful, then, that in the course of centuries a felt difference of tendency arose between the Hebrews and the Hellenists, and that the intolerance of the former sometimes found vent in denouncing "the learning of the Greeks." Still we must remember that, so far as their practice was concerned, the Hellenists clung to the observances of the Law; and, though they sometimes turned these into allegories in order to make them seem reasonable to the Greeks, they did not allow any laxity in their own conduct. Although their principles may have helped to prepare the way for the wider view of Paul, they were not themselves aware of this tendency; and the most distinguished men among them seem to have had no anticipation of a spiritual faith which would disregard the requirements of the Jewish Law, and gather men, without regard to their nationality, into a new religious communion.

The division between Hebrews and Hellenists which is mentioned in *Acts* is thus seen to have sprung from prolonged differences of culture, resulting in divergent tendencies of thought. These tendencies were destined, under the influence of

Christianity, to pass from the quiet domain of theory, which was content to leave ancient usages unaltered, into the sharp conflicts of practical life. It is curious that Paul himself, who became indisputably the leader of the larger view, belonged by early conviction to the narrow party. We must, indeed, if we judge by the place of his birth, call him an Hellenist; for he was born at Tarsus, which was renowned as a seat of Greek culture. If the Greek life around him had any influence on his growing thought, he seems to have been quite unconscious of it. He tells us he was a Hebrew sprung from Hebrews, a Pharisee blameless in the observance of the Law (*Phil.* iii. 5-6), and he advanced in the Jews' religion beyond many of his own age, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of his fathers (*Gal.* i. 14). In his writing he traces nothing to Greek influences. He makes no attempt to form his style or to mould his thought after Greek models. He expresses no admiration for Greek thinkers, and alludes to philosophy only to point out the emptiness of a wisdom that gave no real knowledge of God. To the last the Gentile world with its luxury and splendour, its literature and art, seems to have had no attraction for him, but appeared as the dark background of idolatry and sin, which threw into stronger relief the bright purity and faith of the little assemblages of brethren in Christ. Jews remained for him distinct from "sinners of the Gentiles" (*Gal.* ii. 16), and it was towards his own race that his heart went forth in continual sorrow and prayer (*Rom.* ix. 2, x. 1). In spite of some superficial

resemblances, and some approach in the width and spirituality of their conceptions, he and the great Alexandrian Hellenist, Philo, belong to wholly different worlds. The latter broadened his mind by an extended culture, and surrendered his heart to the piety of a traditional faith, which he widened and spiritualized by the ingenuity of a mind trained to philosophical reflection. Paul burst from the trammels of Pharisaism through the sudden might of a spiritual revelation, which changed him to the very centre of his being, and made him the herald of a victorious gospel. It is only, then, by right of locality and not of education or of tendency, that we can speak of the Apostle as an Hellenist. His universalism had a higher and more majestic source than the creeping transformations of culture.

But though this may be true of Paul, the case was probably different with minds of less original gifts. The Hellenists must have been more ready to receive the gospel than the Hebrews, and more willing to extend it, on liberal conditions, to the Gentiles. At all events a Church of Jews and Gentiles (Hellenists and Greeks) was formed at Antioch, which became, in the East, the head-quarters of the Gentile mission. It seems to have been taken for granted that the Gentile converts were not to be required to observe the Levitical Law, and the Jewish Christians may very likely have observed it with greater laxity than they allowed themselves before their conversion. But to the Hebrew Christians, at all events to many of them, this was a very startling change. Their belief in

Jesus had not suggested to their minds that their venerable Law was to pass away, and that crowds of Gentiles would be admitted to the Kingdom of God without any regard to the ancient conditions; and nothing could be more natural than that a strong protest should be raised against such very radical proceedings. The minds of ordinary men only slowly accommodate themselves to new spiritual facts; and it was very difficult for believers living in Jerusalem to admit that their own higher faith involved the ultimate destruction of the national privileges and the national customs in which they had been brought up. They had been taught from infancy that the Law was the Divine Word to man, and everything dear and touching in their piety was associated with its language and its ritual. We must not blame these men because, confined within the circle of Palestinian thought, they were unable to follow the eagle flight of Paul, and treated his revolutionary proceedings at first with doubt, and then with protest and opposition. They were true to convictions which to them were very precious, and do not deserve blame for their opposition, but for allowing it to become bitter and violent. Some of these men went to Antioch, and by their strong representations so disturbed the minds of the disciples that Paul and Barnabas went up to Jerusalem to see if it might not be possible, in consultation with the heads of the Church, to reach an agreement. Paul so far carried his point that James, Peter, and John gave the right hand of fellowship to him and Barnabas, and a

sort of working compromise was entered into. This, however, did not satisfy all parties. Some stiff Judaizers remained unconvinced, and made it their business to insist, wherever they could, on the necessity, or at all events the advantage, of observing the Law. We gather from the Epistle that one or more of such men must have reached Galatia, and have succeeded in diverting the fickle minds of the Galatians from the spiritual gospel preached by Paul. Hence the occasion for the letter, in which Paul endeavoured to correct what he regarded as a dangerous and even destructive error. Further notice of the details of the controversy we may now reserve for our commentary.

§ 5. The Contents of the Epistle.

Before we begin to explain the Epistle verse by verse, it may be helpful to the reader to have a general survey of the contents. We have no minute account of the efforts which were made by the Judaizers to mislead the Galatians; but it is evident from the line of argument which is used in reply to them, that they insisted on the advantage, if not the necessity, of circumcision and of other parts of the Jewish ritual, and that, in order to reach their end, they depreciated Paul, and tried to show that he had no independent apostolic authority. They seem even to have attacked his character, and insinuated that he

preached different doctrines according to circumstances, and sought merely to please his audience. Paul, therefore, had both to assert his own authority, and to prove by argument the correctness of his teaching; and we may reasonably suppose that the assertion of his authority was more important than the proofs in the case of an excitable and affectionate people, who were accustomed to follow their leaders, and had little skill in the exercise of their judgment. These two themes are mingled together throughout the Epistle, which is not composed with the careful order of a treatise, but rushes forth like a torrent, as though the Apostle had just heard the dreadful news of the Galatians' apostasy, and did not wait to compose his thoughts before hurrying to the rescue. Still the occasion naturally suggested three main topics, and though these are not kept distinct from one another, they nevertheless supply the prevailing characteristic of three divisions of the Epistle. The first two chapters ¹ contain a personal defence, largely in the form of a narrative of some of the leading

¹ The reader must never forget that the division into chapters and verses is a comparatively modern invention, adopted simply to make it easier to refer to any particular passage. The original epistle, if we may judge from our general knowledge of the mode of writing at that time, had no such divisions. The oldest manuscripts seldom use a stop, or even divide the words, so that the text flows on in an unbroken stream of letters thus:—PAULANAPOSTLENOTFROMMEN NEITHERTHROUGHMANBUTTHROUGHJESUSCHRIST ANDGODTHEFATHERWHORAISEDHIMFROM THEDEAD.

events in the Apostle's life. The next two are argumentative and explanatory, setting forth Paul's doctrine, and the grounds on which he supported it. The last two are hortatory. Under these larger heads there are several minor divisions. These we will now follow.

The Epistle begins, as usual, with an address and greeting to the readers (i. 1-5). The main subject is then abruptly introduced, with an expression of astonishment that the Galatians could so quickly desert the gospel which they had received, and an energetic assertion that the gospel which Paul preached was alone to be accepted (i. 6-10). This is followed by the first line of argument, an historical defence of Paul's position and teaching (i. 11-ii. 21). He had not received the gospel which he preached through any human commission, but by a direct revelation of Christ (i. 11, 12). This assertion he proceeds to establish by a review of the facts. It was well known that before his conversion he had been a zealous persecutor of the Church, and an extreme supporter of the traditional Judaism (i. 13, 14). After his conversion he kept aloof for a considerable time from those who were Apostles before him (i. 15-17); and it was only after three years that he went to Jerusalem, where he spent a fortnight with Peter, and saw also James, the Lord's brother, but none of the other Apostles (i. 18-24). It was not till after fourteen years that he went again to Jerusalem, to give an account of his gospel to the authorities there. While there, he made no concession to false brethren; and the pillars

of the Church recognised the legitimacy of his preaching, and added nothing to him (ii. 1-10). So far indeed was he from making concessions that he rebuked Peter himself at Antioch for his hypocrisy in first eating with the Gentiles and then refusing to do so (ii. 11-21). The account of this rebuke contains a doctrinal statement, which prepares the way for the second division. The line of thought leads up to the grace of God manifested in the death of Christ; and Paul is so transported by the vision of this grace, that, remembering how vividly he had set it before the Galatians, he thinks their departure from it an evidence of the most foolish infatuation. So he turns upon them with a bantering question, that serves to introduce the arguments that follow (iii. 1).

These arguments may be classed under three heads. First he appeals to their own spiritual experience, and shows that they were inverting the true order of progress (iii. 2-5). Secondly he appeals to the Old Testament; first, to the case of Abraham, whose faith was counted for righteousness (iii. 6-18), and, later on, to the allegorical meaning of the history of Sarah and Hagar (iv. 21-31). Thirdly, he gives a philosophical review of the course of man's spiritual history, tracing his progress till he becomes a son and heir of God (iii. 19-iv. 7). The second and third arguments, though sufficiently distinct in themselves, are yet so closely and naturally connected that they in fact overlap, and the consideration of the case of Abraham is not dismissed before the end of the third chapter.

The argument from the case of Abraham, with the

reflections arising out of it, may be thus summarized and paraphrased. The real sons of Abraham, and heirs of the promise made to him, must be the men who share his characteristic quality. That quality was faith ; and it was because God intended to justify the Gentiles by faith that the Gospel was announced beforehand to Abraham, "In thee shall all the Gentiles be blessed." There are, then, three words which go together, faith, promise, blessing ; and these are in direct contrast with the principle of the Law. The Law, instead of accepting faith, the trustful resting of the heart and will in God, demands works, an outward obedience to the letter of its commandments. Instead of conveying a divine promise of the Spirit, to help our infirmity and bestow a new power of inward life, it throws the whole burden upon the human will, and leaves us to struggle with the weakness of the flesh as best we may. Instead of pronouncing a blessing, it pronounces a curse on everyone who does not keep all its enactments. Under the Law there is no escaping from this curse ; for the Scripture itself declares that it is by faith that the righteous shall live. Christ, however, bought us out of the curse, by becoming a curse for our good. Not that he fell under the curse of the Law through disobedience, for this would have left the curse in full force ; but he fell under it in the very act of self-denying love and submission to the Divine Will ; for the Law contains the words, "Cursed is everyone that is hanged on a tree." By the mere fact of touching *Him* the curse loses all its power ; and to him who has entered into the faith of Christ the Law,

with its crowd of commandments and prohibitions, and its dreadful maledictions, becomes a thing of the past, for the very principle of his life is changed, and he has risen from a lower into a higher state of spiritual being.

It might be objected to all this that the Law, which was given later, marked a more advanced spiritual condition than the simple faith of Abraham, and therefore superseded the Covenant made with him. But this would be quite contrary even to human custom ; for when once a covenant has been ratified, it cannot be set aside or added to. Now the promises were made to Abraham, who lived long before the Law was given, and also to his seed, referring, as the word itself shows, not to all his posterity regarded in their plurality, but to a single line, of which Christ is the representative. It is impossible, then, that the Law can have superseded or altered a promise which was given so long beforehand, and was not to be fulfilled till so long afterwards.

All this naturally suggests an inquiry into the purpose of the Law, and this again leads to reflections on the spiritual growth and ultimate destiny of mankind. The Law, as we have seen, had no power to change the character ; but it changed into clear transgressions against the will of God things which might have been done thoughtlessly or ignorantly, and therefore with comparative innocence before. Its object was, not to make men righteous, but to bring out into sharp relief the fact of human sin, and the need of a Divine deliverance. Its very object, then, proved it to be temporary, although it was given through the ministry of angels, in the hand of a mediator, Moses.

It is, however, true that a mediator implies an agreement between two contracting parties, and it was the same God who gave both Promise and Law, so that a fresh covenant might have been entered into. Is the Law, then, against the promises of God? This cannot be supposed, for the object in each case is different. If a law had been given which was able to impart life, righteousness would be dependent on the Law, and not on the Promise, and then there would be a contrariety; but, as it is, everything has been shut up under sin, that the promise may be at last fulfilled to those who have faith, to those who, apart from the Law, commit themselves unconditionally to God. Thus the Law prepared men for the fulfilment of the Promise. In Christ, all are sons of God through faith, and so the difference between Jew and Gentile falls away, and all who by baptism had put on Christ were Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. But an heir, though in his own nature lord of all the property, is nevertheless, during his infancy, in the same position as a slave. So men, although they were in fact sons of God, had to pass through a period of infancy and subjection until the appointed time arrived; but then God, having sent forth his Son to redeem men from their state of slavery, sent forth the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, and raised them to their native rank of sons and heirs.

This finishes the main argument of the Epistle, and Paul now quits his reasoning to remonstrate with the Galatians for having given up such a glorious inheritance, and turned back into slavery (iv. 8-20).

He then suddenly takes up an argument specially addressed to those who were so fond of the Law, and shows from the case of Sarah and Hagar that the free sons of promise were the genuine heirs of Abraham, and that the mere fleshly descendants, who were born in bondage, and persecuted the spiritually free, were to be cast out (iv. 21-31).

We now come to the hortatory portion of the Epistle. First, the writer urges his readers to stand fast in their liberty, from which some false persuasion was leading them astray (v. 1-12). Then he warns them not to abuse their liberty, but to serve one another in love. The flesh and the spirit were opposed to one another, and the same spirit which made them independent of the Law would save them from all the sins which spring out of our fleshly nature (v. 13-26). Instead of being factious and unloving, they ought to be forbearing and gentle even towards one another's faults (vi. 1-5), and to give liberally to their teachers, and do good to all men, especially those who belonged to the faith (vi. 6-10). Here the Apostle seems to have taken up the pen, and finished the letter in a large hand-writing of his own (vi. 11). He warns them once more against the Judaizers, and shows in his own person that a far higher principle of life had been revealed (vi. 12-16). He refers to the marks of Christ in his own body (vi. 17), and closes with a benediction (vi. 18).

It may be useful to present the above analysis more clearly to the eye in the following table :—

GREETING AND INTRODUCTION i. 1-5.

Statement of the subject i. 6-10.

I. *Historical defence of Paul*, i. 11-ii. 21.

Statement of the case: he received the gospel by direct revelation, and was not dependent on the older Apostles, i. 11-12.

- (1.) He had been a persecuting Jew, i. 13-14.
- (2.) After conversion he kept aloof from the Apostles, i. 15-17.
- (3.) After three years he went to Jerusalem, but saw only Peter and James, i. 18-24.
- (4.) After fourteen years he laid his gospel before the authorities at Jerusalem, who gave him the right hand of fellowship, ii. 1-10.
- (5.) He rebuked Peter at Antioch, ii. 11-21.

II. *Doctrinal portion*, iii. 1-iv. 31.

Introductory appeal to the readers, iii. 1.

- (1.) Appeal to their spiritual experience, iii. 2-5.
- (2.) The case of Abraham, iii. 6-18.
- (3.) Purpose of the Law, and spiritual growth of man, iii. 19-iv. 7.
- (4.) Appeal to the better feeling of the Galatians, iv. 8-20.
- (5.) Argument from Sarah and Hagar, iv. 21-31.

III. *Hortatory portion*, v. 1-vi. 17.

- (1.) Stand fast in liberty, v. 1-12.
- (2.) Do not abuse your liberty, but walk in the Spirit, v. 13-26.
- (3.) Bear one another's burdens, vi. 1-5.
- (4.) Be liberal and do good, vi. 6-10.
- (5.) Beware of Judaizers, and remember the cross, vi. 11-16.
- (6.) Let no man trouble the Apostle, who is Christ's, vi. 17.

Benediction, vi. 18.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF PAUL'S LIFE.

To the end of the third missionary journey.

Conversion ("a young man" at the martyrdom of Stephen, <i>Acts</i> vii. 58) about	A.D. 35
First visit to Jerusalem (<i>Gal.</i> i. 18-24 ; <i>Acts</i> ix. 26-30) about	38
Second visit (<i>Acts</i> xi. 30 ; not in <i>Gal.</i>) about	44
Summoned from Tarsus to Antioch by Barnabas (<i>Acts</i> xi. 22) about	45
First missionary journey, through Cyprus and parts of Asia Minor (<i>Acts</i> xiii., xiv.) about	46
The Council in Jerusalem about imposing the Law on the Gentiles (<i>Gal.</i> ii. 1-10 ; (<i>Acts</i> xv. 1-31) about	51
Return to Antioch : (?) Peter's visit (<i>Gal.</i> ii. 11) about	51
Second missionary journey, through Syria, Galatia, Macedonia, Athens, Corinth, where he remained a year and a half (<i>Acts</i> xv. 36-xviii. 22) about	51-54
Epistles to the Thessalonians probably written during the visit to Corinth about	53-54
Third missionary journey, through Galatia and Phrygia to Ephesus, which was his headquarters till Pentecost, 57 (<i>Acts</i> xviii. 23, xix., xx. 31 ; <i>1 Cor.</i> xvi. 8) ; through Macedonia into Greece, where he spent three months ; returned through Macedonia to Troas and Assos, from which he went by sea to Cæsarea, and thence to Jerusalem about	54-58
Epistles to the Galatians, Corinthians, and Romans written during this journey. <i>Gal.</i> probably from Ephesus ; perhaps after he left. <i>1 Cor.</i> from Ephesus. <i>2 Cor.</i> from Macedonia. <i>Rom.</i> from Corinth.	

COMMENTARY.

§ 1. *Address and Greeting, i. 1-5.*

IN modern times the writer of a letter (except in the most formal style) begins by addressing the person to whom he writes, and ends by signing his own name. But Paul, according to the custom of his time, always begins with his own name, and then adds the name or description of the people whom he addresses. "So-and-so to so-and-so greeting," was the regular way of beginning a letter, and examples of this form may be seen in *Acts* xv. 23, xxiii. 26, and *James* i. 1. Paul, with his warm affection and deep religious feeling, was not content with the usual polite phrase, but, while retaining the general form, substituted for "greeting" (*khairein*) a word which in the Greek has a somewhat similar sound and appearance, "grace" (*kharis*). We shall see presently that this was a favourite word, and full of meaning. To this he added another word, also rich in meaning, "peace," which some think he borrowed from the Hebrew salutation, *shalôm*, peace or welfare.

The student will find it interesting to compare with one another the openings of the Pauline Epistles, and

see how the writer varies the description both of himself and of his readers, and lengthens or shortens the address according to the object which he has in view at the time of writing. He will soon observe that the beginning of Galatians has some marked characteristics. In asserting the divine origin of his own apostolic commission, Paul first insists that it was not of human appointment, in evident allusion to the attempts which were made to weaken his authority. He addresses his readers simply as "The churches of Galatia," without any expression of endearment or approval, or any intimation that they were churches in any high sense. The Greek word means nothing more than "assemblies," and accordingly Paul elsewhere adds some descriptive phrase, "The Church of God" (1 and 2 *Cor.*), "The Church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (1 and 2 *Thess.*). He did not feel that the Galatian assemblies could be truly described in such terms. Accordingly he does not add to the salutation an expression of thanks to God for them. The Epistle shares this characteristic only with 2 *Cor.*, which was also written under the stress of wounded feelings.¹ We should notice also how the doctrinal allusions are suggested by the subject of the Epistle: the raising of Christ from the dead, so that he is an ever-living spiritual power; his having given himself for our sins, that he might take us out of the present evil age, and so deliver us entirely from the dominion of the law.

¹ In *Ephesians* the thanksgiving is postponed to i. 15.

1: Not from men, neither through man.—The two expressions are used to show that neither the ultimate source of his apostleship nor the agency through which it was conferred was human. An office might be divine in its origin, and yet be conferred only through the instrumentality of men. For instance, many think that the office of the clergy is divine in quite a special sense, and nevertheless believe that it can be bestowed only through particular human agents; and, just as the Judaizers despised Paul, they have a great contempt for those who claim to be ministers of Christ without having passed through a human ordination. None now, it is true, have the special experiences of Paul or his transcendent gifts; but we lose much of the deepest and most valuable teaching of the New Testament, when we look on the Apostles as mere miraculous exceptions, and think it would be profane to apply the lessons of their lives to ourselves. They, in fact, made manifest the hidden spiritual life of man, and Paul represents those who, without some particular human sanction, feel impelled to speak to their brethren what the Spirit of God has already spoken in their own hearts. The world's greatest teachers are found at least as much outside as inside of any official class.

The change from the plural "men," to the singular "man," may be due to the fact that an appointment would be derived from a body of men, but would be conferred through the agency of one.

Through Jesus Christ.—This is clearly contrasted with "through man"; and yet Paul himself speaks of Christ as "the second man," in opposition

to the first, Adam (1 *Cor.* xv. 47). But it is obvious that he is here referring to men still living upon earth, and he properly contrasts with them one who had passed into the unseen world, and was at the head of a great spiritual empire. When and how he received his apostleship through Christ we cannot say with certainty. He fully believed that he had seen the risen Christ, but he does not tell us that he had spoken with him. We may fairly suppose that all the inward experiences which attended his conversion were to him a voice of Christ, bidding him take up the cross and preach the Gospel. But his thought cannot stop here. It was God who raised Jesus from the dead, and, therefore, it was through the operation of God himself that he was called to be an Apostle. God is "the Father." In the New Testament this name has not lost its fulness and freshness of meaning, and sunk into a mere theological term. It always implies the fatherhood of God; and it is appropriate here because Paul has to teach, in the course of the epistle, that men are sons of God, and therefore heirs of a grander and freer life than that to which the Galatians were stooping. Christ was *the* Son, that he might be "first-born among many brothers" (*Rom.* viii. 29); and thus true Christians are a brotherhood of men who know that in and with their great leader they are sons of God.

2. **All the brethren which are with me.**—The words "with me" show that this expression must refer, not to the members of the Church in the place where Paul was staying, but to his companions in his travels.

Instead of naming one or two of those who were with him, as he does in several of the other epistles, he includes them all, to make it clear that there was a general concurrence in his views. But though his companions agreed with what he said, and joined with him in addressing the Galatians, the letter itself is entirely his own, and accordingly in the sixth verse he speaks in the first person singular, and he does so throughout the rest of the epistle.

3. Grace to you and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ.—The word translated “grace” is an old Greek word, but in Christian teaching it has acquired a special religious meaning. The word in this special sense is not confined to Paul in the New Testament; but it is used by him so much more frequently than by other writers, and is so necessary to his thought that we may perhaps ascribe to him its introduction into the language of Christian theology. In classical Greek it denoted, first, outward grace or beauty, and then the gracious or kindly feeling of either the giver or receiver of a favour. The classical writers used it most commonly of the receiver; and hence its meaning of gratitude or thanks, a sense in which it is sometimes used by Paul (for instance, *Romans* vi. 17). From the feeling it is transferred to the gift by which the feeling is expressed. The Apostle generally uses it of the giver, God; and, when referring to him, it must mean, not gratitude, but his gracious feeling towards those whom he benefits. So constantly is it used with this meaning that it is not always qualified as “the grace of God,”

but stands by itself simply as "grace;" and in this sense it is contrasted with "law" as a principle of the Divine government (see *Romans* vi. 14). On the human side faith is opposed to legal works; and similarly on the divine side the grace which freely blesses men is opposed to the law which only exacts obedience. It differs from love in excluding all notion of desert in its object, and expressing the absolutely free and unmerited kindness of God (see *Romans* iv. 4; iii. 24; *Eph.* ii. 8, 9). Further it is a kindness exercised towards the souls of men, and when it denotes a gift, it means the spiritual graces which God bestows. Thus in ii. 9, we are told that Peter and James and John perceived the grace that was given to Paul; and when we compare this with the previous verse, we see that this grace was an inworking of God, fitting Paul to be an Apostle of the Gentiles. In this sense the grace may be of various kinds and degrees, and comes to denote the particular quality of spiritual excellence that is given by God, now to one, and now to another, for some special purpose (see *Romans* xii. 6 sqq.; *Eph.* iv. 7 sqq.). Paul, however, speaks not only of the grace of God, but of the grace of Christ. The notion is thus modified, by introducing the great agent through whom the Divine grace, manifested in the Gospel, was dispensed; but its contents remain essentially the same. Christ was regarded as the full receptacle of all the grace that was possible for man; and if Paul could say that it was not he, but the grace of God, that did the work (*1 Cor.* xv. 10), much more was it the free and bound-

less love of God that lived and poured itself forth in Christ. The grace of Christ, then, without ceasing to be his, and to come from him as its proximate source, was still the grace of God, not indeed in its immediate operation in the soul, but as visible and active in one who was wholly surrendered to the guidance of the Spirit. It was his gracious influence upon the heart, an influence truly divine, because uncontaminated by human self-will; and its result upon him whom it affected was to lay upon him the same spiritual impress, and make him consciously a child of God. Thus the grace of God assumed in Christ a definite and intelligible form; and Paul's thought would not be complete without this reference to Christ, which brings to a clearly defined focus what would otherwise be a vague and cloudy image. (For the thought, compare *1 Cor. i. 4.*)

We may suppose that Paul so clearly perceived the reality of Divine grace, and attached such importance to it on account of his own religious experience. He felt that his own conversion had been the result of grace. It came directly across all that he had been working for. He was changed down to the very roots of his spiritual being from no effort of his own, nay, in opposition to his own efforts. The alteration in his view was nothing short of a revelation. He felt that his own striving had been all wrong, a wild running in the dark; and he could only bow in thankfulness to God whose grace had found him, and to the Saviour whose self-denying love had forced its way into his unwilling heart. To him, then, the grace of God

meant the deepest, the most real, the most wonderful and adorable thing in his experience, and it was marvellous to him that any who had ever felt it could fall away.

The word "peace," though not of such constant occurrence, is frequently used by Paul. It seems to denote an inward and spiritual peace, the holy calm of a reconciled heart. How much it must have meant for the passionate nature of the Apostle, this calm of perfect trust and love, breathed by the new Spirit which had been given him. How rich and full, then, is this greeting which he always sent to the beloved disciples whom he had turned from their idols and their sins to God. Every word is glowing with religious feeling, and with the affection of a fervid and grateful heart.

4. **Who gave himself for our sins.**—In explaining these words it is very easy to refer them to the doctrine of a much later time; but as interpreters we are not to go beyond what the words themselves express. As they stand they describe a fact, and not a doctrine; and this fact is embraced within the earthly history of Jesus, and was obvious to those who really understood the spirit of his life. The fact is not on this account less grand and momentous. "He gave himself" denotes all that it is possible for love to do. A benevolent man will give a subscription, or some portion of his time and labour to a good cause; but Jesus gave himself. Giving up his life on the cross was the final act of self-sacrifice which made his devotion to the will of God and his love to man quite plain to all who were not spiritually blind, and by the

power of its tragic pathos moved and took captive the human heart as nothing else has ever done. But this event derived its meaning from all that had gone before. Two thieves were crucified along with Jesus; but they had lived for their own pleasure, plundering and injuring others instead of blessing them, so that, though we may shudder at the brutality of their punishment, we think they deserved it. But Jesus had given himself to God and man, and to his great cause; and it was the power and beauty of his life that made his cross so impressive. He was hanged as a criminal, not because he had committed crimes, but because bad men, and ignorant and prejudiced men, hated him on account of the commanding authority with which he rebuked their wickedness and falsity, and on account of the love with which he swayed the popular heart, so that old abuses seemed to be placed in jeopardy by his very presence.

The thought would not be complete without the addition of the words "for our sins." Men may give themselves for their country, or for truth, or for some pet scheme of their own; and patriots and martyrs do not die in vain, but their spirit rises from the ground where their blood was shed, and brings the glow of high resolve into many a bounding heart. The work of Christ was concerned with sin.¹ He wished to lead men to victory over their inward foes, to make

¹ The preposition in the Greek is uncertain. According to one reading we should translate, literally, "in relation to," and according to the other, "on behalf of." The difference is not very material.

them conscious of their divine birthright, and bring them into their true relation to God ; and it was for this that he gave himself, and all who have entered by faith into the meaning of this death-struggle with sin have felt the power of a new life of holiness and love stirring within their longing souls. This effect upon man was what he aimed at, as we learn from the following words :—“ That he might deliver us out of this present evil world,” or “ age.” The Jews distinguished two ages, the present age, before the coming of the Messiah, and the future age, marked by his advent and reign. Paul adopted this division ; but as he looked upon the present age as one of sin, and the future as one of righteousness, the distinction with him seems to refer more to a moral difference than to a mere change of time. The Christians were looking forward to the return of Christ, when the future age would begin ; but meanwhile, although they were actually living in the present age, they might regard themselves as delivered out of it, because they had been freed from its moral corruption, and their “ citizenship was in heaven ” (*Philip.* iii. 20). Thus the purpose and effect of Christ’s self-sacrifice in the conflict with sin were to transfer his disciples spiritually from the sinful present to the righteous future ; and they were virtually the first citizens in that better world to which we are still looking forward.

According to the will of our God and Father.—Paul traces all spiritual blessings up to the will of God. Christianity was not, in his view, a mere accident in human history, but was the outcome of a providential

purpose which all through the centuries had been guiding the destinies of man. It was in obedience to that Will, clearly revealed in his own heart and conscience, that Jesus gave himself for the work of redeeming men from the slavery of sin. It is in accordance with that Will that the world makes progress through the self-sacrifice of its noblest children, that the just suffer for the unjust, the wise for the foolish, the loving for the selfish, and that in this self-sacrifice they not only give life to the world, but themselves find their own truest and deepest life. This law of love may sometimes, in our lower moods, appear harsh and unwelcome; but love understands and accepts it. This is one of the spiritual things that must be spiritually discerned. Deny yourself in simple love for some erring brother, and you will understand more of the heart of Christ, and of the Heavenly Father's love.

5.—To whom *be* the glory for ever and ever,—literally, “unto the ages of the ages,” as it is given in the margin. The word “*be*” is in italics to show that it is not in the Greek. In English we are obliged to supply something to complete the sense; but we might supply “is” or “belongs.” “*The* glory,” meaning the glory which is his due. The glory and honour which we ought to render for this and for our other blessings belong to God, from whose Will all blessings ultimately come.

Amen, a Hebrew word used in the synagogues as a response at the end of prayers, meaning “so it is,” or “so let it be.” From Jewish it passed easily into Christian use, and we may suppose that when

Greek churches began to be formed, the word had become so familiar as the solemn closing of the prayers that men did not like to translate it; and so it has passed on into other languages, including our own.

§ 2. *Paul's surprise at the falling away of the Galatians, and introduction of the subject of the letter* (i. 6-10).

6. Quickly. The exact reference of this word is doubtful. It may mean—so soon after your conversion, or, so soon after my visit, or, so suddenly, with so little time for reflection.

Removing. Observe the change from A.V. "removed." The Greek tense is present, and denotes that the change was taking place, and was not yet accomplished.

From him that called you. This refers to God, from whom, in the teaching of Paul, the call to a higher life always proceeds. This expresses very forcibly the nature of the Galatians' conduct. In embracing the spiritual gospel they had acknowledged a Divine call; and now they were turning away to something lower, so that they were rejecting what they themselves had felt to be from God, and were thus forsaking God himself. The fault is repeated in another form, whenever we yield unworthily to the persuasion of others, and abandon a course which we ourselves have felt to be the noblest.

In the grace of Christ. Observe "in," not "into," as in the A.V. It was in the free loving-kindness which was manifested in Christ that God had called them. This makes their desertion still more astonishing. They were not leaving a hard taskmaster, but were turning back into bondage from one whose love had sought them, and called them into the freedom of children of God.

Unto a different Gospel. No doubt the false teachers represented what they taught as a "Gospel," a preaching of glad tidings; but in Paul's view it was not only different from his, but it was so different that it was no Gospel at all.

7. It is not another Gospel except to this extent, that the disturbers want to pervert the real Gospel. The word translated "pervert" is really stronger; it is to turn a thing round, so as to be the opposite of what it was. What the Galatians were being taught might look like the Gospel, but it was really just the reverse, and was a return to the slavery from which the Gospel had delivered them. We should have been glad to know more definitely who the disturbers were. The readers of course knew, and it was not necessary to describe them by a more precise word than "some."

8. Paul has been censured for the very strong language which he uses in this and the following verse, and perhaps it is hardly consistent with his own precept, "Bless, and curse not" (*Rom. xii. 14*). From the tenth verse it seems clear that he was himself conscious of its unusual vehemence, and that he used

it to make it quite evident that he would have no compromise. He was apparently accused of trying to please men, and having no settled doctrine. He exclaims in effect, "If my endeavours to be conciliatory, and to make concessions to Jewish prejudices so far as I can do so without sacrifice of principle, are only turned against me, and made a source of injury to the Gospel, then I will speak so that there can be no mistake, and plainly devote to their self-chosen destruction those who persist in violating our Christian liberty." At first he expresses this by proposing an imaginary and impossible case: "Though the false teaching should be preached by us, myself and my company, or by an angel from heaven, false it remains, and let the preacher of it be cut off from the service of God."

Anathēma means a thing devoted. The classical form is *Anathēma*, and is used habitually in a good sense, of votive offerings dedicated in temples. It occurs once in the New Testament, *Luke* xxi. 5, where it refers to the offerings which adorned the temple in Jerusalem, such as the golden vine presented by Herod the Great. The other form, *anathēma*, is generally (in the new Testament always) used in a bad sense, of that which is alienated from God, and devoted to destruction. Hence, in later times, it came to mean "excommunicated," separated from the Church, and therefore, according to the belief then prevalent, devoted to perdition. In Paul's usage there is nothing to make us think of any formal act on the part of the Church: but it expresses complete alienation from the blessings of the Gospel.

9. The word "we," contrasted with the following "I,"¹ must include Paul's companions, and the reference is probably to something that took place during the second visit to Galatia. This verse is not a mere repetition of the preceding. There an impossible case was supposed, so as to lay down a general principle; but here the "if" does not express a doubt, and the full force of the Greek might be given by translating "If, as is the fact, some one is preaching." We have no longer "some" in the plural, as in verse 7, but "some one," pointing to a leader. He was probably very noisy, and had grand airs at the time: but Paul leaves him in the obscurity which rightfully belonged to him. Perhaps the Apostle did not wish to be too personal; he may even have known very little about his opponents, and therefore he attacks no one by name, but argues about the question on its own merits.

Ye received. These words strengthen the case against the Galatians. Not only did "we preach" to you, as in the last verse, but "ye received" a truth which now you are giving up.

10. **If** connects this verse with the preceding passage, and shows that it is intended to explain its vehement language. It is as though he said to his opponents—"You have accused me of kissing hands all round; am I doing so now? If you want open

¹ In Greek the pronouns, not being emphatic, are not expressed, and the contrast is between the singular and plural of the verbs.

war you shall have it, for I wish for the favour of God, and not of men."

If I would still please men. This may refer to the time before his conversion; but as men-pleasing was not characteristic of Paul before his conversion, it is more likely that "still" is not meant to refer to any particular time. The meaning is rather,—“Supposing I ever acted on the principle of pleasing men, if I were still doing so, I should not be Christ’s servant” (or, more correctly, “slave”). To be the slave of Christ is completely opposed to living merely for the favour of men. This is always true; but the simple statement of the principle, apart from the circumstances of the time, would hardly have been enough for Paul’s purpose, for his enemies might deny that he was really a slave of Christ’s (see *2 Cor. x. 7*). Paul’s preaching, however, involved him in constant persecution. The marks of his Lord were branded on his body by stripes and stoning (see *vi. 17*), and his endurance of these afflictions was sufficient proof that he was not a man-pleaser.

§ 3. *Statement of Paul’s independence of human authority* (i. 11, 12).

11. For. It is not certain that this word is genuine. If we retain it, it may refer to the previous verse,—“I do not try to please men, for it was not from men that I received my Gospel.”

I make known to you. Paul must have dwelt on the Divine nature of the Gospel when he preached it to the Galatians; but as they seemed to have forgotten it, it was necessary to make it known once more.

Brethren. At the beginning of his argument he addresses them more tenderly: *they* were not yet anathema.

The Gospel which was preached by me. Does Paul refer here to *everything* which he taught the Galatians, and are we to suppose that he learned nothing about Christ from those who were Christians before him? Two things suggest a limitation. He must be referring chiefly to what was characteristic of his doctrine, and was objected to in it; for the facts of Christianity, such as the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, were not in dispute, and did not require any defence. Again, his Gospel was received through revelation. It is easy to say that God might reveal whatever he pleased in some miraculous way; but we must judge as well as we can from what we know of the general laws of the Divine action. Now we have no reason to believe that God reveals mere matters of fact, which must be learned either by witnessing them ourselves, or, directly or indirectly, from others who have witnessed them. The revelation is concerned with the meaning of the facts, and this we perceive spiritually. When we are not thinking of theology, we still use the word in this way. If we have thought badly of a man, and suddenly perceive that we have been quite mistaken, and that he is really most noble and disinterested, we say that the

greatness of his character is quite a revelation to us. Again, we say that it is a revelation if we suddenly see a great depth of meaning in words with which we have been long familiar, but which never before made any impression on us. In the same way it was a revelation to Paul when he saw the Christian facts in a wholly new light. Before his conversion he must have known quite well that Jesus had been crucified ; but then he believed that Jesus had been a dangerous fanatic or impostor, and there was no Gospel to him in the fact. Suddenly he saw that in this crucifixion which he had so miserably misunderstood, there was an expression of Divine love, and a manifestation of that filial spirit which was the law of man's eternal life, and as open to the faith of a Gentile as of a Jew ; and this was a revelation, and its announcement a Gospel for mankind. In this opening of the inward eye he could not feel himself to be alone. It was not a slow climbing by his own effort to a higher point of view ; but the light flashed in upon him, and dispelled his own cherished darkness, and he felt that Christ himself communicated the revelation, and through him God shined in his heart. The Gospel, then, consisted not in the facts, but in the interpretation of the facts ; and Paul's statement is not, I think, inconsistent with his having learned the accepted Christian facts from other men. These were the common stock of the Judaizers and Pauline Christians alike ; the difference lay in the use which was made of them.

Paul says of this Gospel that it was "not after

men," that is, it was not such as a mere human gospel, wrought out by thought and learning, would have been. It was not a system which men could gradually find for themselves by careful study ; it had to be seen as a Divine truth by the immediate gaze of the soul, or not at all.

12. "I" is emphatic in the Greek, and therefore contains an implied reference to others. The most natural explanation is—neither did I any more than other teachers. One way of damaging Paul's teaching was by saying that he was entirely dependent on those who were Christians before him, and could communicate only what he had been taught. This he expressly denies. The Christian facts spoke with a new and higher meaning to him, and this meaning carried in itself its own divine sanction. It was not from men that he had received it.

Nor was I taught it. In this and the previous statement Paul may have had in mind the mode of instruction to which he had been so well accustomed when he was a young Pharisee in the school of the Rabbis. The Greek word for "receive" is used of teaching which is transmitted from one to another, and would apply to the "traditions," explanations of scripture, and legal requirements, which were handed down from generation to generation, and "received" by each new set of pupils. "Taught" may refer to the systematic drill by which lessons were impressed on the memory. Paul's vision of the Grace of God in Christ was in complete opposition to all this. The advent of living truth, into whose face he looked with

his own eyes, had snatched him from the tedious pedantry which was bound hand and foot by ancient custom, and which tortured the scriptures by its official rules of interpretation.

It came to me. These words are printed in italics in the Revised Version to show that they are not in the Greek, but are put in by the translators to complete the sense. They are hardly necessary, as the meaning is sufficiently implied in “received” and “taught.” Though these latter words are specially applicable to the kind of teaching which Paul had left, they might be used also in a higher sense.

Through revelation of Jesus Christ. For the contrast between “man” and “Christ” see note on the first verse. On account of this contrast we must understand by the words “a revelation made by or through Jesus Christ.” For the general sense see the note on the last verse.

§ 4. *His Gospel was in direct opposition to the teaching and the prejudices of his earlier years* (i. 13, 14).

The general sense of these verses is sufficiently clear, and has been referred to in the Introduction (p. 32).

13. **Ye have heard :** more correctly, “ye heard ;” no doubt at the time of Paul’s first visit.

The Church, literally, the assembly or congregation. Here it refers to the Christian society as a whole, whereas in verse 2 it referred to single con-

gregations. The Israelites collectively are often called "the congregation" in the Old Testament, so that "the Church (or congregation) of God" expresses the belief that Christians were the true representatives of the ancient people, in opposition to the "Synagogue," which was adverse to the new movement, and represented quite different principles.

14. **Traditions** : the interpretations of the written law, which were handed down by word of mouth, and were particularly observed by the Pharisees.

§ 5. *The original character of his conversion, which induced him at first to keep aloof from others* (i. 15-17).

15. **Separated**, that is, set apart, devoted to a special purpose (see *Rom. i. 1*). Paul felt that from his birth, before he himself was capable of forming any choice, his life's work had been determined for him by his Creator. We have here a doctrine of predestination, but one which is not inconsistent with a reasonable doctrine of free-will and responsibility. Men do not create their own natures, aptitudes, or surroundings. We may say that Plato was born to be a thinker, Shakespeare to be a poet, Bonaparte to be a general; and yet the use which men make of their gifts, and the faithfulness with which they follow the Divine leading, may depend upon themselves. They may try to

appropriate the gift of God, and use it to gratify and exalt themselves, and then, though they may be great men because they are used by providence to accomplish great ends, they will not be great in character. But they may recognise the call of God, and see how their life's work has been shaped by him, not in order to glorify themselves, but that they may lose all sense of personal merit, and devote themselves without any thought of self to the task which has been laid upon them; and then, having thus humbled themselves, they are great in the kingdom of God. So it was with Paul. There was a spirit in his eager boyhood which he did not understand, and which, taking the form of zeal for the law, was destined to burst the trammels of the law. The influences around him were leading him whither he knew not, and whither at the time he would have disdained to follow. But when the light came, though every worldly consideration must have tempted him to stifle the new thought, he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but humbly yielded himself into the hand of God, and sought only to do the higher Will, and declare the redeeming love of which he had become so vividly conscious. This change occurred at a definite time. When he had gone through the needed experiences, God called him through his grace. The circumstances attending Paul's conversion may have been already known to the Galatians, and accordingly he dwells exclusively on its inward aspects. We learn, however, two facts from the context. It took place at

or near Damascus. It was sudden, as we may infer from the word "immediately," which points to a clearly marked date.

16. To reveal his Son in me. These words are understood by Lightfoot as meaning, "To reveal his Son to others through me," on the ground that three stages in the history of the Apostle's consecration are mentioned, the predestination to his office, the conversion and call, the entering upon his ministry,—the last being described by the words we are considering. It seems to me that this view is not agreeable to the context. "That I might preach him" is the end aimed at by the revealing, and therefore subsequent to it. Again, "Immediately I conferred not" naturally refers to the time immediately after the conversion, and before the beginning of his ministry. The words must, therefore, be understood of an internal revelation, and denote not so much something subsequent to the call as the form and meaning of the call itself. We have here Paul's central thought, the thought which possessed his mind the moment he ceased to be a persecutor. He suddenly saw, by an internal light, that Jesus was not an impostor, who was deluding people to their ruin, but "the Son of God." He nowhere defines what he means by the Son of God, but he very nearly approaches a definition in *Rom. i. 4*, where he calls Jesus the Son of God "according to the Spirit of holiness." Quite in conformity with this he declares that "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (*Rom. viii. 14*).

Whatever metaphysical notions Paul may have had, they are with him quite subordinate to the moral and spiritual. It is the possession of God's Spirit of holiness that constitutes a Son of God; and he who first illustrated this grand and inexhaustible conception of sonship, on whose nature the seal of sonship was set from the first, and who was the founder of the new spiritual race of men, as Adam had been of the earthly race, was *the* Son of God. That Jesus realised and revealed this higher life of the Spirit, and that those who received him into their hearts by faith became sharers of his life, and passed from slavery into sonship, was made clear to Paul, not by learning new facts, but by looking at the old facts with new eyes.

We must now observe how appropriate are the words which Paul chooses. "The Son" is not with him a mere proper name, for which we might substitute "Jesus" or "Christ" without any change of meaning. It carries with it the idea of sonship to God in all its breadth and power, and all its vast consequences to the human race. The spirit of holiness, which brings man into communion with God, and makes him cry, "Abba, Father," knows no distinction of Jew and Gentile, and is not tied up in the bonds of any ritual or any code of laws, but is wide as humanity, and asks only for a soul of faith in order to step in, and become the earnest of complete redemption and immortal life. Thus preaching to the Gentiles, apart from all obligations of the Jewish Law, was wrapped up in the very

notion under which Christianity presented itself to Paul at his conversion. No one taught him this Gospel. It was not an affair of argument; for spiritual things are spiritually discerned. His awakened and astonished soul saw that the persecuted was one who lived in the spirit of holiness, the fulfilment of Israel's highest hope, the founder of a new creation peopled with the children of God; and in this conception the whole of his Gospel was implicitly contained.

Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood. I did not seek human advice and instruction. We can easily understand why. He already saw more clearly than the older disciples the deep spiritual significance of the Christian movement, and its far-reaching issues; and he naturally wished to be alone, that he might reflect on the momentous change in his own life, arrange into order and consistency the new thoughts that were crowding on his mind, and gain in communion with God that consecrated purpose which was to carry him through so many years of trial to a martyr's grave.

17. Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were Apostles before me. This statement is involved in the preceding one, but is added in order to make his independence perfectly clear. An ordinary man would naturally have gone to head-quarters, declared his conversion, and asked for a commission to preach; and probably most people would say that this would have been the right and proper course to follow. But Paul's inward experiences

were too deep and original to allow him to submit them to the judgment of other men, and he may have already felt that he saw a vaster purpose in the Gospel than had yet been disclosed to the older apostles.

But I went away into Arabia; and again I returned unto Damascus. The reader ought to compare the account in *Acts* ix. 19 sqq., which differs considerably from that here presented by Paul himself. The writer of *Acts* does not mention the visit to Arabia, of which perhaps he had not heard. If Paul had not happened to mention it here, we should know nothing of it; and, as it is, we do not know to what part of Arabia he repaired, or how long he stayed. Three years were spent between Damascus and Arabia, but how the time was divided we cannot tell. A few months or even weeks spent amid the stern solitude of Mount Sinai,¹ hallowed by memories of Moses and Elijah, while amid the silence of the desert a still small voice whispered a holier message than Moses or Elijah had ever heard, would fill a large space in the memory of the Apostle, though friends and neighbours may have scarcely marked his absence. That he spent a considerable part of the time in Damascus, preaching with energy and success, may be inferred from the fact which he records elsewhere (*2 Cor.* xi. 32, 33), that he had to escape from the city in a basket let down from the

¹ See Lightfoot's Note, "On St. Paul's sojourn in Arabia." Many think he did not go beyond the neighbourhood of Damascus, which was reckoned in Arabia.

wall. Verse 23 of the present chapter, also, implies that his reputation as a preacher had gone abroad.

§ 6. *Paul's first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion*
(i. 18-24).

18. Then after three years. This might mean three years after the return to Damascus; but as the words seem to stand in contrast with "immediately," in verse 16, they probably refer to the same point of time, and mean three years after the conversion.

I went up to Jerusalem. This visit is clearly the one of which an account is given in *Acts* ix. 26 sqq. The circumstances related in the two narratives are quite different, though they cannot be said to be strictly contradictory. How far they may be harmonised cannot be considered here; and it is only necessary to point out that Paul is not attempting to make any complete statement of his personal history, but selecting certain facts which were of importance to his argument. In order to prove his independence he declares, (1), that for a good while after his conversion he did not see any of the Apostles; (2), that then he saw only Peter and James; (3), that his visit lasted only fifteen days; (4), that he was not even known by face to the Christian churches of Judæa. But he does not tell us how he was introduced to Peter, what he did during the visit, or why he left in so short a time. The intimation, however, that the churches kept hearing of his preaching would seem to show that he was not idle.

To visit Cephas. Cephas [pronounce the C hard like κ] is the Aramaic name of which Peter is the Greek form. The word translated "visit" means, to become acquainted with by visiting, and is used of going to see some remarkable place or person. Why did Paul wish to become acquainted with Peter? Was it simply that Peter was a leader among the Apostles, or had Paul heard anything that led him to expect greater sympathy from Peter than from some others? What influence had the two men on one another? Did Paul's fervent faith help to inspire Peter's vision (*Acts* x. 10-16)? These are questions we cannot answer. But we cannot dismiss the visit as one of no importance. It may not have affected in any way the central light of Paul's faith; but these two Apostles can hardly have spent a fortnight together without talking over their views and plans, comparing their spiritual experiences, and conversing about the character and teaching of the Master whom they both served, and with whom Peter had been so intimate during his life on earth. Possibly Paul may have been assured that Jesus had not contemplated any Gentile mission, and yet have become more firmly convinced than ever that the whole spirit of that wonderful life and death pointed to a religion more universal than Pharisaic Judaism. These are only conjectures; but, as not altogether without probability, they are not to be lost sight of in view of subsequent events.

19. Apostles. It is only a later usage that restricts this term to the twelve men chosen by Jesus

to be his more intimate and constant followers. These are spoken of as "the twelve" (several times in the Gospels, and by Paul in *1 Cor.* xv. 5). "The Apostles" were a larger class, embracing not only Paul and Barnabas, but other less distinguished men outside the circle of the twelve.

Save: in the margin "but only." The expression may refer exclusively to the word "saw":— I saw no other Apostle; I did, however, see James. If we are to extend the exception to the whole clause, according to the more natural construction, then James was an Apostle, but, as we have just seen, not necessarily one of the twelve.

James the Lord's brother. Opinion has been greatly divided as to this James. Some think that he was the brother of Jesus, being a son of Joseph and Mary; others that he was a step-brother, being the son of Joseph by a previous marriage; and others, again, that he was a cousin of Jesus, and the same as James the son of Alphaeus, one of the twelve. A discussion of these opinions would occupy too much space, and be rather dry and technical for our present purpose; so, as the question does not seriously affect the interpretation of the Epistle, I must be content with stating my own opinion, that he was the full brother of Jesus and head of the Church at Jerusalem, and that he is the same as the James mentioned in the next chapter (ii. 9 and 12). From the way in which he is mentioned, we must suppose that Paul had not at this time much intercourse with him. Though he was a man of character and weight, he

had not Paul's mobility and depth of thought, and, except in their common love of the same great teacher, they may have found it difficult to sympathise with one another.

20. What might seem the unnecessary strength and solemnity of this assertion may be due to the very misleading representations which had been made by Paul's opponents.

21. According to *Acts* ix. 30 he went from Cæsarea to Tarsus, where Barnabas found him when he wished for his assistance at Antioch (*Acts* xi. 25). It is not Paul's object to describe his journey, but to intimate that the next scene of his activity was remote from Jerusalem and its influences.

22. **The Churches of Judæa which were in Christ.** The latter words are added to make it clear that he referred to congregations which were not only Jewish, but Christian. It is probable that these Churches, being composed of Jews, and situated so close to the centre of the national life, continued to observe the law; but Paul nevertheless fully recognises their Christian position. So elsewhere he calls the Christians in Jerusalem "saints,"—the high term by which he so often designates the followers of Christ (*Rom.* xv. 25, 26, *1 Cor.* xvi. 1, *2 Cor.* viii. 4, ix. 1, 12). It was one thing for Jewish Christians to continue in the observance of ancestral customs, which were in themselves a matter of indifference; and quite another for Gentile Churches to adopt a foreign law as something without which the faith of Christ was not perfect. The large-hearted tolerance, or rather charity, of Paul,

his readiness to become all things to all men, is as little understood by some of his modern admirers as by his ancient enemies. His rebuke was called forth only by what he believed to be moral or spiritual deterioration.

23, 24. The Churches on their side felt, at that time at all events, no enmity against Paul. The news that was spread of him was altogether delightful. The former persecutor was preaching the faith; and this led the Churches to glorify God for the power and love which had wrought so wonderful a change. "Faith" here may denote the Christian religion, the object of belief, rather than the inward sentiment with which the religion is regarded. Yet it may possibly have its more ordinary application,—he was preaching that very sentiment of faith which formerly he sought to destroy.

§ 7. *Second Visit to Jerusalem* (ii. 1-10).

1. **Then after the space of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem.** Owing to certain difficulties in reconciling the narrative before us with that in *Acts*, there have been great differences of opinion as to the visit which is here intended. It must suffice to give a brief survey of the principal reasons on which our judgment must rest.

First, what date is intended? The reader will observe that in the margin another translation is suggested, "In the *course* of fourteen years." This means that the revisers regarded that as a possible translation, though they did not think it so likely to be

correct as the one which they have placed in the text. If we accept that translation, the meaning would be that during the course of fourteen years, which elapsed up to the time of writing the Epistle, Paul paid one more visit to Jerusalem; and then it would be possible for us to place the visit at any time within the fourteen years. If this were allowable, the visit, so far as the date is concerned, might be the second recorded in *Acts* (xi. 30). It is for Greek scholars to decide whether such a translation is admissible, and in a commentary like this I can only give my own opinion that it is not admissible in a case like the present, where a single and definite act is referred to. Whether a difficulty in regard to *Acts* is thereby created or not, I think the usage of the language constrains us to understand Paul as meaning that there was an interval of fourteen years before he went up again to Jerusalem.

Next we must ask, from what point are we to reckon the fourteen years? Some think we are to date again from the conversion. The form of expression, "after the space of," or "passing over an interval of fourteen years," will hardly admit this interpretation, for the interval which is passed over is naturally reckoned from the event last spoken of.

If we have correctly understood the language of the Epistle, the visit here mentioned cannot be the second in *Acts*; for that took place not later than 46 A.D., the year of the famine, and apparently (in *Acts*) about the year 44, when Herod Agrippa died. From whatever point we reckon the fourteen years,

this would throw back the conversion of Paul to too early a date. We may add that there is no hint in *Acts* of the occurrence of such important events as are mentioned in the Epistle, and that, if these events had happened, the third visit would have been unnecessary. Again, the visit cannot be the fourth referred to in *Acts* (xviii. 22); for Paul had at that time separated from Barnabas (xv. 39). Moreover, we cannot suppose that he would pass over the third visit (*Acts* xv.), which was far the most momentous in determining the future progress of the Gospel. The last visit, during which he was arrested, is of course out of the question.

On the other hand, various circumstances point to the third visit as the one intended. (1.) The date, about A.D. 51, is suitable. (2.) The place where the dispute arose was Antioch. So it is expressly said in *Acts* (xiv. 26; xv. 22, 23, 30, 35), and it is implied in *Galatians* (ii. 11). (3.) The controversy was provoked, according to *Acts*, by certain men from Judæa, who came to Antioch, and by "certain of the sect of the Pharisees who believed," at Jerusalem (xv. 1, 5). The disturbers in *Galatians* are described as "false brethren privily brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty" (ii. 4). These were apparently in Jerusalem; but we can hardly help thinking that the spying out the liberty of the preachers to the Gentiles must have taken place at Antioch. (4.) The subject at issue was the circumcision of the Gentiles (*Acts* xv. 1, 5; *Gal.* ii. 3). (5.) According to *Acts*, the cause of the Gentiles was maintained by Paul,

Barnabas, and certain others of the Church at Antioch (xv. 2); in the Epistle, Paul, Barnabas, and Titus are named (ii. 1). (6.) In *Acts* James and Peter are prominent; in *Gal.* James, Peter, and John. (7.) In both accounts the question is decided in favour of Paul and Barnabas. This concurrence of circumstances is so remarkable that we cannot suppose it to have happened twice, especially when we reflect that on the supposition of there being two visits of this kind the first would have rendered the second superfluous.

There are, however, certain difficulties in the way of this conclusion:—(1) Paul was *appointed* to go to the Council (*Acts* xv. 2); he himself says he went “by revelation.” (*Gal.* ii. 2.) (2) The Council was public (*Acts* xv. 4, 12, 22); Paul speaks only of a private meeting (*Gal.* ii. 2). (3) Paul makes no mention of the Council and of the decree relating to the Gentiles. These differences are not unimportant; indeed they are so important that Paley thinks the two narratives must refer to different occasions, of which the one described by Paul is omitted in *Acts*.¹ Still I think the importance of the difference has been sometimes exaggerated. Paul is evidently giving a mere summary of what took place, and picking out a few salient facts which seemed to him to have an immediate bearing on the subject in hand, namely his own independence of the earlier Apostles; an historian, writing many years after the event, and not from personal recollection, might give a substantially correct account of the public facts, and yet convey

¹ See *Horæ Paulinæ*, Chap. v., No. x.

a very different impression from that made by the glowing words of one of the chief actors, whose object it was, not to write a history, but to touch on the incidents affecting himself. Thus Paul may have been inwardly moved to go to headquarters, and procure, if he could, a decision which would silence the Judaizers; and still the Church at Antioch may have given their approval, and, by appointing an embassy, have turned into a public occasion what else might have had only a private significance. There is some indication of this in the statement of the historian that "Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and questioning" with the false teachers at Antioch (*Acts* xv. 2). Paul speaks as the instigator and leader of the whole movement, while the recollection prevailing in the Church would be that he and others had been appointed to go to Jerusalem. Lightfoot compares *Acts* ix. 29, 30, where the historian says that the brethren sent Paul to Tarsus, with xxii. 17 sqq., where Paul, in a speech, ascribes his departure to a vision. He refers also to *Acts* xiii. 2-4, where the outward event and the inward suggestion are mentioned together.

In regard to the Council the narrative in *Acts* is imperfect. It is clear that there were at least two meetings (xv. 4 and 6), and there may very well have been private conferences, about which the historian had no information. In verse 2 he says that Paul and Barnabas were to go "unto the *Apostles and Elders*," and in verse 6 that "the *Apostles and the Elders* were gathered together to consider of this matter." The

letter, too, was written in the name of the "*Apostles and the Elder Brethren*" (xv. 23). These might be the men of repute referred to in the Epistle (ii. 2), and it is possible that we have here some indication that the proceedings were really more private than the author of *Acts* supposed. The notion that the Council was a great public assembly is founded on the allusion to "all the multitude" in verse 12, and to "the whole Church" in verse 22; and these rather casual expressions, which are hardly in agreement with the more formal statements, might be due to misapprehension, or perhaps to a failure to distinguish public and private meetings, both of which were held. On the other hand the Epistle does not appear to furnish any reason for limiting the men "of repute" to the Apostles. James, Cephas, and John are singled out as "pillars." They were leaders, and representative men, and, in giving right hands of fellowship, may have acted in more than their individual capacity. "False brethren," also, made their appearance on the scene, and an attempt, evidently formidable, was made to have Titus circumcised; so that there must have been events of greater publicity than the private statement of his gospel made by Paul to the heads of the Church.

Paul's omission to mention the decree of the Council, and the letter to the Gentiles, might be due to a want of complete satisfaction with the results which he was able to secure. Practically he carried his point; but the decision, as recorded in *Acts*, seems to rest on no such principle as Paul contended

for. It is apparently taken for granted that the Jewish Christians were bound by their ancestral law, and that therefore, if they were to hold communion with Gentiles, the latter must at least abstain from what would be most offensive to a Jew. The speech of Peter, indeed, is represented as going rather in the direction of Paul's views; but it was James' opinions, and not Peter's, which finally prevailed. There are, I think, some indications of this state of things in the Epistle. The Judaizers among the Galatians have been obliged to retreat from the claims put forward at Antioch. Circumcision is no longer insisted upon as necessary to salvation, but is a counsel of perfection (iii. 3). At Antioch itself this question has disappeared, and the only difficulty is about eating with the Gentiles (ii. 12). The messengers from James must have had something very decisive to appeal to, when they were able to withdraw even Barnabas from the freer position (ii. 13); but we can understand their success if they were able to appeal to a decision arrived at in Jerusalem, and if Paul and his party were already treating that decision as a dead letter. Most significant of all is Paul's clear conviction that Peter agreed with him entirely in principle, though he was timid in his practice. He plainly says that Peter ate with the Gentiles, and lived like a Gentile (ii. 12, 14), and that, when he ceased to do so, he was acting hypocritically.¹ Such language would be utterly unwarrantable unless Peter belonged, by conviction, to the liberal

¹ Our translators use the milder expression "dissembled," and "dissimulation"; but I give the Greek its usual rendering.

party; and to my mind nothing can be clearer than Paul's full persuasion that he did so. We, on whom the weight of the controversy no longer presses, may plead in palliation of Peter's conduct that, though he did not wish to put any ceremonial restrictions upon the Gentiles, nevertheless, when his freedom was challenged by men who came from James, he felt himself bound by the decision arrived at in Jerusalem. Paul, with his firmer grasp of principle, thought that this change of conduct was a virtual surrender of the whole position. Yet the same Paul, when there was no question of compulsion, could himself urge the free man to forego his freedom in food and drink rather than offend the scruples of a brother; and so he willingly yielded to love what he would not surrender to a demand (see *Rom.* xiv. 13 sqq.). Possibly the events at Antioch may have made him a little more tender towards scruples harmless in themselves.

The foregoing considerations may help to explain the difference between *Acts* and *Galatians*, and show that the former even throws some light upon the latter. One question, however, remains. Is it not plain that the visit in *Gal.* ii. is the *second* which Paul paid to Jerusalem after his conversion? It is often said that he passes over the second recorded in *Acts* because it was very short and had no doctrinal significance; and he saw none of the Apostles. This is possible, but as it would only have taken a line or two to refer to the visit and dismiss it, it seems hardly likely. If he passed over a visit, his enemies would have pounced on the omission, and charged him

with dishonest concealment, if with nothing worse. This being so, it seems likely that the writer of *Acts* made a mistake in saying that he went to Jerusalem at the time of the famine. The book was written long after the event, and a slip of this kind would not be surprising.

2. The meaning of this verse is a little doubtful. The word "**them**" in the clause "**I laid before them the Gospel,**" naturally refers to the Church at Jerusalem; and then the succeeding clause either limits this reference,—meaning "I did not, however, lay it publicly before everyone, but only privately, before the men of repute,"—or simply emphasises the fact of a private conference,—"**I laid it before the Church** but took care to have a private conference with the leaders, lest my efforts should be fruitless." The latter interpretation would be most agreeable to the marks of publicity, which have been already pointed out; the former is that which the words most readily suggest. Paul's language throughout this passage is so abrupt and condensed that we cannot be sure of his exact meaning.

Them who were of repute. The word so translated is in itself a term of honour. The additional words in verse 6 "*reputed to be somewhat,*" give it a slightly sarcastic turn, due to the exclusive claims which were made on behalf of the authorities in Jerusalem,—"*the very men of whom the Judaizers think so much taught me nothing.*" Who these men of repute were we are not informed. No doubt they included James, Peter, and John, who are named;

but there is no reason for limiting the word to them, or to the Apostles generally. Indeed, had Paul meant any fixed body of men, he would probably have given them their official title.

Lest by any means I should be running, or had run, in vain. This is a metaphor borrowed from the race-course. The words enable us to judge how serious was the crisis. Whatever Paul may have thought of the authorities at Jerusalem, and however determined he was not to surrender his judgment to theirs, it is clear that he dreaded an adverse decision. Had the forces of intolerance succeeded, the Gentile mission would probably have come to an untimely end, and even the faith and energy of Paul could not have prevailed against the resolute opposition of the mother-Church.

3-5. Paul's agitation, as he thought of the peril from which the gospel had been rescued, is reflected in the broken structure of his sentences. Verse 6 naturally joins on to verse 2, and continues the account of the private conference, which is interrupted by the allusion to Titus. We can only conjecture the connection of thought in the writer's mind. The most serious danger of his having run in vain arose in connection with Titus; so he dashes into a parenthesis to relate this episode, and wishing to be brief, so as not to interrupt too long the thread of his narrative, he becomes confused. We may, then, understand the connection thus:—but so far was I from running in vain that I carried my point even in the case of Titus, though he was with me, in the headquarters of the Judaizers.

But not even Titus . . . was compelled to be circumcised. These words have been understood in different ways:—An attempt at compulsion was made, but did not succeed; there was no attempt at compulsion; Titus was circumcised, but without compulsion. The first is the most obvious meaning, and is supported by the context, which implies that false brethren made an attack which Paul had some difficulty in resisting. Titus was a complete Gentile, and not half a Jew like Timothy; and had Paul consented to his circumcision, he would virtually have abandoned his whole case.

And that because of the false brethren. Our translators have tried to complete the sense by inserting “and that.” The Greek really begins a new sentence, which is never finished,—“but because of the false brethren.” How the sentence is to be finished it is impossible to say with certainty. Perhaps the simplest supposition is that “to whom” in the next verse was inserted through forgetfulness of the construction,—on account of the false brethren I would not yield for an hour. Lightfoot thinks Paul intended to add, “the leading Apostles urged me to yield.” He supposes that they would “regard tenderly the scruples of the Jewish converts,” but that Paul convinced them “that such a concession, at such a time, would be fatal.” The omission of such an important statement, however, seems hardly probable; and we have no other evidence that the leading Apostles felt any uncertainty about the main question. It is remarkable that Paul treats the Judaizers as “the false brethren privily brought in, who came

in privily to spy out our liberty." Unless they were a small intriguing faction even in the Church at Jerusalem, this language would be absurd.

We gave place. "We" must be the deputation from Antioch, chiefly Paul and Barnabas.

Might continue with you. This, if interpreted very strictly, might imply that the Galatians were already Christians at the time of the Council. "You," however, may mean "you Gentiles," and have no reference to the time of conversion,—I was contending for you Gentiles, of that and all subsequent time.

6. Again the construction is broken. Paul no doubt intended to say, "from those who were [or are] reputed to be somewhat I received nothing"; but having occasion to use a parenthesis, he resumes the same thought in a different form,—“For [so it stands in the Greek] they who are of repute imparted nothing to me.” It is allowable to translate by the present instead of the past tense, and then the sarcastic expression refers to the state of feeling among the Galatians,—“those whom you think so much of.” So Lightfoot understands it, and then his remark is perfectly just that the language “is depreciatory, not indeed of the twelve themselves, but of the extravagant and exclusive claims set up for them by the Judaizers.” I would only observe, as I said before, that we need not confine our attention to the twelve.

Whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me : God accepteth not man's person. The latter clause shows that Paul is referring to some external advantages, such as their position in the Church, or

their having seen Christ in the flesh. Such advantages were no guarantee of religious breadth and power, and he could not surrender a spiritual principle to a merely outward authority. However, no surrender was called for; for they imparted nothing to him, but completely approved of his teaching.

7-10. The distinction between the gospel of circumcision and of uncircumcision must refer to different fields of labour: the older Apostles were to preach to the Jews, Paul and Barnabas to the Gentiles. There would, however, be this difference, that the Jews would not be required to give up their Law if they chose to observe it; the Gentiles would be taught that it was of no obligation, and that for them to observe it would be to renounce their liberty. This rule followed from Paul's own conviction that external usages were matters of complete indifference (see especially *1 Cor.* vii. 17 sqq.). The Jew was attached to his Law from long habit, and might innocently conform to it; the Gentile, to whom it was strange, and in some respects repulsive, could not adopt it except through a misapprehension of the higher spirit of Christianity.

We learn from this passage some very important particulars. The Apostles who were pillars saw that Paul had been entrusted [by God] with his gospel. They perceived the grace that was given to him. They gave him right-hands of fellowship, thereby signifying their approval of his doctrine. On the other hand Paul places Peter and himself on the same level, as equally guided in their apostleship

by the Divine working. The account here given has been used to show that Paul and the older Apostles were violently opposed to one another, while the narrative in *Acts* softens down their antagonism. But in fact the agreement is represented as more complete in the Epistle than in *Acts*; for in the Epistle no conditions are imposed, beyond a wish that the poor should be remembered; but in *Acts* the Gentiles are required to accept some restrictions about their food, which, apparently, Paul did not consider it necessary to enforce. If we are to harmonise the two accounts, we must say that the Apostles themselves agreed absolutely with Paul, but that, in deference to a strong feeling among other members of the Church, they thought it prudent to exact some slight concessions from the Gentiles.

§ 8. *Paul's opposition to Peter at Antioch* (ii. 11—21).

11. We are told nothing about Peter's visit to Antioch in *Acts*. It must have taken place soon after the conference in Jerusalem, as Paul and Barnabas are still associated.

He stood condemned. This is an excellent correction of the Authorised Version, "He was to be blamed." The meaning is that he was condemned by his conduct.¹

¹ The reader of Greek may compare the words of Josephus in assigning a reason for the Essenic objection to oaths:—*ἤδη γὰρ κατεγνώσθαι φασι τὸ ἀπιστούμενον δίχα θεοῦ.* *Bell. Jud.* II. viii. 6.

12. **Certain came from James.** Whether these men were actually sent by James is not certain; but I think the phrase, and the subsequent events, imply this. It is not suggested that they exceeded their instructions, and we can hardly suppose that Peter and Barnabas would have acted as they did, unless they were aware that James' view was correctly represented. It is not improbable that James was troubled by hearing of the complete disregard of all Jewish scruples at Antioch, and sent a message of remonstrance. The fact that not only Peter, but Barnabas, and all other Jews, except Paul, yielded, proves either that James exercised extraordinary authority, or that they had been allowing the Gentiles greater liberty than had been decided on in Jerusalem. James, as we have seen, had accepted Paul's gospel; but as an administrator he may have thought that there would be a disruption of the Church if the principles of that gospel were pushed to their logical conclusion. At Antioch itself there was no danger of such disruption as long as outsiders did not interfere; but the messengers of James may have made it evident that there was serious danger of division in the Church at large. In such circumstances good men may well have hesitated how to act. Was it not better to require the Gentiles to respect Jewish scruples in regard to food, than to separate themselves from the large number of Jewish Christians who could not lay aside these scruples? Both expediency and charity might seem to demand this. But Paul saw at once that to act in this way

would be abandoning the whole gospel for which he had been contending. If Gentiles chose out of their own charity to avoid giving offence to a weak brother, that was one thing, and no more than Christian love required; but to *compel* the Gentiles to observe ceremonial rules about food would be quite another thing,—it would be imposing conditions which the gospel did not impose, and thus altering the very basis of salvation. Accordingly, even at the risk of schism, he determined to stand alone on the side of Gentile freedom. He attributes Peter's conduct entirely to fear; but as we have not Peter's side of the story, I have tried to find some more honourable considerations which may have occurred to him. Yet we cannot help recognising in this event the Peter who in dread of laughter and jeers denied his Master. It would be like the same warm-hearted man if he afterwards returned to his better mind, gave Paul once more the right-hand of fellowship, and stood with him boldly on the side of liberty. But alas! history is silent.

13. Even Barnabas. His defection must have given the greatest shock to Paul, because hitherto they had worked together in the Gentile mission. Whether this defection was temporary we are not told. Possibly he may have thought Paul too uncompromising. After this the two Apostles worked separately; but according to *Acts* (xv. 36 sqq.) the separation was owing to a difference of opinion about Mark. In *1 Corinthians* (ix. 6) Paul refers to Barnabas as though they two were to be naturally classed together, and perhaps we

may infer that the conflict of opinion about the Gentiles was of short duration.

14. Peter was specially addressed as being the leader of this backward movement; but what was said applied equally to all the Jewish Christians who followed his example. In relating the substance of what he said to Peter, Paul seems to slide insensibly into language intended more immediately for the Galatians, and so he drifts away from the history at a most interesting point, and says nothing about the result of his appeal.

Being a Jew. The word translated "being" refers emphatically to the original condition,—as Lightfoot has it, "born and bred a Jew."

Livest as do the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews; that is, if you live as though you had been born a Gentile, and pay no respect to the Jewish Law. This is a statement of the utmost importance in regard to Peter's position. No words could express more strongly Peter's abandonment, in practice as well as theory, of the requirements of the Law. But further, Peter at the moment when he was addressed was not living in the manner specified, for he had just withdrawn from the Gentiles, and yielded to Jewish claims. Hence the present tense, "livest," cannot refer to the precise time when Paul was speaking, but must be extended to Peter's general practice,—*"if it is your habit to live in this way."*

How compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews [to judaize]? The present here refers to Peter's conduct at the time. He was compelling the

Gentiles by refusing communion with them unless they conformed to Jewish regulations. The Christians were in the habit of eating together at their love-feasts, and their common meal was a sign of their fellowship with one another in Christ. Thus the refusal to eat with the Gentiles was virtually to excommunicate them.

15, 16. We. It is noticeable how completely, in these verses, Paul puts himself and Peter in the same class:—We, though born Jews, have abandoned all reliance on the Law; how inconsistent, then, to thrust it on the Gentiles.

Not sinners of the Gentiles. Paul is speaking from the common Jewish point of view, in order to strengthen his argument. To the Jew all Gentiles were sinners, and could be saved only by the adoption of Judaism. Paul, accepting for the moment this view, says in effect, we were not Gentile sinners, but had by birth all the advantages that Judaism can confer, and yet we found that Judaism could not justify us, and we sought refuge in a principle which has nothing to do with the distinction of Jew and Gentile.

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law, save [or, but only] through faith in [Greek, of] Jesus Christ. “Knowing” seems to imply the acceptance of this principle by the mere fact of being a Christian; for why become a Christian if the Law was sufficient? Paul saw what was logically involved in this fundamental principle of Christianity more clearly than some others.

A long essay might be written on the meaning of

“justify” and “justification”; but I must be content here with indicating very briefly, and without discussion, what I conceive to be the leading points of Paul’s doctrine. “Justify” is a word properly applicable in a court of justice. It is to consider or pronounce just or righteous. Paul uses it, in a theological sense, of the judgment of God upon men. A man is justified when God declares him to be righteous, or accepts him as righteous; and so, when Paul says that a man is not justified by the Law, he means that his observance of the Law cannot make him righteous in the sight of God. Now as “the judgment of God is according to truth” (*Rom. ii. 2*), this at once carries our mind up to ideal or Divine righteousness. What is righteousness in the mind of God, or, as Paul expresses it, what is “the righteousness of God?” According to Jewish principle, at least as Paul had learned it, it consisted of outward conduct, *doing* the works of the Law. If this principle was not true, then it was in vain to seek for justification in the Law. In fact men could not be justified by the Law for two reasons. Admitting the principle, still we could receive nothing but condemnation from the Law, as no one perfectly obeyed it. And further, real righteousness was inward, not outward; and the most perfect obedience to the Law could produce nothing but an external semblance of righteousness. What is needed is the indwelling of the Spirit of God. They, and they only, who are led by that Spirit are his sons. Therefore, it is that we are justified through faith; for it is faith that apprehends the Divine Spirit; it is faith

that pierces to the inner sanctuary of the soul, and meets there a Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God. Faith, as a trustful resting in God, and dependence upon him, places the soul in right relations towards him; and though it is not itself the righteousness which we seek, it places us on the side of the eternal righteousness, and gives promise of that holiness which is to be ours when our communion with God is perfected. It is counted for righteousness, because it is wholly inconsistent with wickedness, and its face is turned towards that righteousness which dwells for ever in the bosom of God. Hence sanctification is properly distinguished from justification. We are justified when, like the prodigal, we come in faith to our Father, renouncing the old life of self, and humbly seeking to be filled with the life of God, though many a fault of habit or of temper may long remain to keep us humble; we are sanctified through the slow lapse of years, while the Spirit of God cleanses the fountains of our life, and prepares us for that high communion which awaits the sons of God.

Save through faith. These words might imply that a man could be justified by works of the Law provided he had faith; but as this would be quite contrary to Paul's general teaching, we must limit the exception to the words "is not justified," so that the meaning is,—“A man is not justified by works of the Law; he is not justified save through faith.” This would be better expressed in English by the reading of the margin, “but only.”

Faith in Jesus Christ. The Greek is "faith *of* Jesus Christ." This might mean faith in him, in accordance with good Greek usage; but I think we ought to be guided by Paul's usage. There are eight passages in the Pauline Epistles (of which six are in *Gal.* and *Rom.*) which speak of the faith of Christ, and in all of them there is the same ambiguity as in the passage before us. But there are twenty-four passages (of which ten are in the greater Epistles) in which we find faith used with the genitive of some other person, and in these it invariably means the faith which the person possesses. This is true even of the one case where Paul speaks of the "faith of God," rendered by our translators "faithfulness of God" (*Rom.* iii. 3). This makes it probable that when he speaks of the "faith of Christ," he means the faith which Christ possessed.¹ Abraham by one great act of faith became the father of the faithful (see the following chap. and *Rom.* iv.); Christ lived the life of faith, and it is through that faith, re-appearing in the hearts of men, that they are justified. It is no objection to this interpretation that Paul immediately adds, "We believed on [or, had faith in] Christ Jesus"; for this is the condition without which we do not share his faith. If we do not believe on him, but think him a mere enthusiast or deceiver, we are thereby shut out

¹ This is too technical a question to discuss fully here; but I may venture to ask those who can read the Greek Testament to compare *Rom.* iii. 26, τὸν ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ, with *Rom.* iv. 16, τῷ ἐκ πίστεως Ἀβραάμ,—a most instructive parallel, which is destroyed by our translators.

from the central glory of his life, but when we believe on him, we begin through that very fact to share his victorious faith, and to find the secret power of his life revealing itself in the responsive beat of our own hearts. Thus to believe on him is not to give an intellectual assent to metaphysical doctrines about him, but to have a trustful and quickening assurance that his way of life is the true way, which leads to holiness and God.

Even we, that is, although we had all the advantages of born Jews, still we found the weakness of the Law, and turned to Christ.

By faith in Christ. The Greek is "from the faith of Christ," repeating the previous construction.

Because by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified. This seems to be an appeal to Scripture, or perhaps to an accepted Christian maxim. If the Scripture is referred to, the statement is at all events a Christian expansion of the sentence that most nearly resembles it in the Old Testament, *Ps.* cxliii. 2, "In thy sight shall no man living be justified." This, if interpreted strictly, would exclude justification by faith as well as by works; but Paul, if he is really referring to it, evidently understands it as addressed to those who are under the Law, and therefore adds "by the works of the Law" as a legitimate comment. This might very well have been an accepted saying even among those Jewish Christians who themselves observed the Law. They would point out to their fellow-countrymen the insufficiency of the Law, and invite them to another way of justification; and Paul

presses home this general Christian conviction to its logical conclusion.

17. The language in this and the following verses is so condensed that there is naturally some difference of opinion as to its meaning; but we must be content here to trace what seems the most probable order of thought, without pausing to discuss other interpretations. The words "while we sought to be justified" clearly refer back to the assertion that "we believed on Christ Jesus, that we might be justified, &c." In seeking to be justified in this way, Peter and Paul had abandoned the Law, and eaten with Gentile believers, thereby implying that the latter were by their faith taken out of the class of "sinners." But now Peter and the rest were implying by their conduct that, instead of the Gentile believers having risen out of that class, they themselves had sunk into it, and the Gentile Christians were in fact too unclean to hold communion with. Thus, then, instead of really justifying them, Christ had led them astray, and turned them into the sinners which they were not by nature; and so he was "a minister of sin," engaged in serving and promoting its cause. Was this a result which Peter was willing to accept? Of course not; that was a shocking supposition, and opposed to the very elements of Christian faith.

18. This verse apparently gives the reason why the previous supposition was to be rejected. The reference is obviously to Peter's conduct; but in order not to be too personal, Paul makes the statement a general one, and puts it in the first person.

Wrong there undoubtedly was in what had happened ; but it was not on the part of Christ ; it belonged to the man who was building up again what he had pulled down. “ Myself ” is emphatic, in opposition to “ Christ ” in the previous verse. We now have the word “ transgressor ” instead of “ sinner ” ; and transgression denotes the violation of a Law. The sense, then, seems to be :—Christ did not make you a sinner by bringing you into communion with Gentiles on the ground of a common faith ; but you, by your present conduct, insisting on legal observances which you had abandoned, are transgressing the deepest principle of the Law itself, which is that the Law is only a preparation for something higher, and by its works no one can be justified.

19. In the margin instead of “ the Law ” we read “ Law,” without the article. In order that the word should denote the Mosaic Law it is not necessary that the article should be expressed in Greek ; nevertheless its absence seems to fix the attention on the abstract meaning of the term, so that the Law of Moses, though referred to, is not to be thought of simply as another name for the Pentateuch or the Scriptures, but as something possessing the character of *law*. We must therefore interpret this verse, not by reference to some particular passage or expression in the Old Testament, but by seeking for something in the very nature of law which tended to bring about a dying to law. We find this in its inability to produce righteousness. Its characteristic effect was to deepen the consciousness of sin, by

making it quite clear that one thing was right, and another thing was wrong; but it added nothing to the moral forces of human nature, and could not confer the righteousness which it held up as the standard of divine and imperative obligation. It thus, to an aspiring and sensitive conscience, betrayed its transitory character, and pointed to a higher form of spiritual life, on which man was destined to enter when the Law had done its work. Paul, accordingly, found in the Law itself an instrument of his deliverance. It had produced nothing but moral struggles that seemed hopeless, visions of a perfectly ordered life that brought him no content, dreams of righteousness that were always vanishing in the sad realities of waking life, till at last the world presented itself to his eye only as the lurid scene of violated law. So when the higher life that had appeared in Christ was revealed in him, he died to the Law, parted from it as completely as if he had passed through the gates of death, in order that for the first time he might truly live, and make God the end and aim of his being.

20. The difference between the translation in the text and that in the margin depends upon the stops; and as there were no stops in the ancient manuscripts, it is a matter of judgment how these should be placed. The best modern editors put no stop at "live," partly because, if there were a stop there, we should require some such expression as "and yet," which our revisers have inserted, but which has nothing corresponding to it in the Greek.

I therefore prefer the translation, "and it is no longer I that live, but Christ that lives in me." "I" and "Christ" are emphatic. Farther on, "the Son of God" is in the genitive case, and there is no preposition, so that I think we ought to translate, "I live in faith,—that of the Son of God, &c."

This sentence further explains the dying and living of the previous verse. The believer shares, spiritually, the experiences of Christ. The selfish element in him, his "old man," as it is elsewhere called (*Rom.* vi. 6), is crucified with Christ; for the inner root of the crucifixion was self-sacrifice to the will of God, and all who are really Christ's, and enter into the deeper spirit of his life, participate in that self-sacrifice, and lose the life of mere self-will. But Christ's own death, according to Paul, was a death to sin once for all (*Rom.* vi. 10); that is, it was the final and absolute rejection of that life in which sin makes its power felt. So his follower, in proportion to his gift of the Spirit, has died to sin; and in dying to sin he has died to the Law, which is intended only for the sinful, for the lawless and disobedient. It is therefore no longer the old self that lives, with its unworthy and clamorous demands for its own interest and pleasure; it is Christ that lives in him, through his spirit of love and self-renunciation. This new life is a living to God (*Rom.* vi. 10).

The life which I now live in the flesh. This stands in opposition to his former life under the Law. "In the flesh" is apparently added simply to call attention

to the fact that now, as then, he was involved in that bodily and earthly life, which might seem so exposed to weakness and sin. In this life it is faith alone which brings us into the presence of things invisible and eternal, and shows us in the dim, and sometimes perplexing, reflections of a mirror what we hope at last to see face to face. "In faith" is opposed to "in the flesh." Faith is that higher sphere in which we may live and lose ourselves in heavenly contemplations, while we are still wrapt round with that flesh which so marvellously, and yet so imperfectly, expresses the informing spirit. This faith is, for the Christian, "the faith of the Son of God," the faith of him who with clearest consciousness of sonship lived in communion with the Father. If Christ lives in the disciple, then Christ's faith lives in him, and he too begins to hear the witness of the Spirit, and to call upon God as his Father.

Who loved me, and gave himself for me. Paul keeps the singular number, "me," as he is speaking out of the fulness of his personal gratitude. Love, proved by self-renunciation, was the power which drew men's hearts to Christ. It is referred to here, partly because the thought of it overflowed spontaneously in the utterance of deep feeling, partly as an appeal to the Judaizers, who were showing themselves little grateful to him who had done so much to redeem them from their bondage.

For me, that is "on behalf of me" "for my good," not "instead of," as is shown by the Greek preposition, which has not the ambiguity of the English one.

It is the preposition which is used when Peter says of Jesus, "I will lay down my life for thee" (*John* xiii. 37).

21. I do not make void the grace of God, as the Judaizers were practically doing. Their conduct was a return to the principle of doing certain outward things in order to obtain a reward, and a reward, so bestowed, was not a matter of grace, but of debt (*Rom.* iv. 4). They were, therefore, renouncing their sonship, in which the self was crucified and the love of God flowed freely over the heart, and were sinking back into the condition of hired servants, who received so much pay for so much work.

For if righteousness is through the Law, then Christ died for nought. "Law" has no article in the Greek; and, though the Mosaic Law is referred to, I think the meaning would be better brought out by omitting it in English. The defect in question attaches to law as such, and to the Jewish institutions only in their character of law. Thus it is sometimes said in our time that no one is made good by act of Parliament. The most that law can do in this direction is to provide conditions amid which the higher spiritual forces may work with less friction. The word translated "for nought" is that which is rendered "without a cause" in *John* xv. 25. The meaning is that Christ would have given up his life without reason if the Law had been the path-way to righteousness. To take an analogy from a smaller field, we might say that, if prison-discipline had been everything that was required to promote the physical and moral health of

prisoners, then Howard laboured and died for nought. So Christ would have made a terrible mistake in devoting his life to leading men into new paths, and showing the power of Divine love to heal the ravages of sin, if after all the Law was the bringer of health and peace. But may it not seem too severe to represent Peter's conduct as a virtual rejection of Christianity? Hardly; for the two principles which are brought into contrast are mutually exclusive. To seek for righteousness by doing certain external things for the sake of reward is one thing; to seek it by committing the heart in faith to the grace of God, that his Spirit may cleanse the hidden fountains of the life, is another thing; and the two will not blend. The latter was Christ's method; and there could be no going back, even partially, without implying that he had spent his strength and given up his life for nought. Was Peter content to accept this conclusion, and to persist in compelling the Gentiles to judaize? For my part I cannot believe it. He was capable of sudden timidity and serious lapse; but surely he loved and trusted his Master so well that he, of all men, would admit that the grace of God in Christ was sufficient for the deepest wants of the heart, and that nothing must be done which could obscure its lustre or weaken its power.

§ 9 *Appeal to the Galatians, introductory to the doctrinal argument (iii. 1).*

We now enter on a new section of the Epistle, in which the Apostle rapidly unfolds the argument by which his doctrine was supported. The line of thought has been traced, and the several arguments analyzed in our Introduction, and to this the reader may be referred for a general view of this and the following chapter; we have now to attend more carefully to the details. We have seen how Paul was led, through his historical defence of his apostolic authority, into a statement and advocacy of his doctrine of freedom from the Law; and he has just wound up with the declaration that if righteousness came through Law, then Christ died for nought. It is obvious that this statement suggests the appeal in the present verse. His own mind is so filled with the thought of Christ's death on the cross and all that it implied, that it appears to him to be sheer fatuity to turn away from this, and go back into the old slavery to the Law. Accordingly he addresses the Galatians in no flattering terms. The reader will observe that the Revised Version omits the words "that ye should not obey the truth." These are not supported by the best authorities, and seem to be borrowed, in order to complete the sense, from v. 7, where they really occur. The words "among you," also, are omitted. They are not found in the leading authorities; but they may possibly have been omitted in copying, because their meaning is not very clear. If we retain them, it may

be better to connect them with "set forth" than with "crucified," as the Greek order allows this. The word "crucified" comes, with either reading, emphatically at the end of the sentence.

Bewitched. The reference is probably to the superstition of the evil eye, which was supposed to exercise a malign influence upon those who were attracted by its gaze. Paul, we may presume, uses the term metaphorically; such a falling away from the truth seemed like the result of sorcery, and not of any legitimate influence.

Openly set forth. The sense of the Greek word is a little uncertain. It is elsewhere used by Paul with the meaning of "written before-hand" (*Rom.* xv. 4; *Eph.* iii. 3); but as this does not seem very appropriate in the present passage it is better to resort to the other sense of the word, "written in public," or "placarded." The metaphor then is, that the account of the crucifixion was placed before them like a public notice, which ought to have kept their eyes from wandering off to the evil gaze of the man who was bewitching them (see Lightfoot).

Crucified. The connection of the crucifixion with the non-observance of the Law will be explained in commenting on verse 13. Meanwhile we may emphasize the fact that Paul does not say "slain" or "sacrificed," but "crucified;" and we shall see that death by crucifixion, which in itself has nothing to do with sacrifice, is essential to his argument. The vivid representation to the Churches was not that of a victim offered up upon the altar, but that of one who was hanged, like a criminal, upon a cross.

§ 10. *Appeal to the spiritual experience of the Galatians (iii. 2-5).*

2. **This only.** Many other questions might have been asked, but this, by itself, was sufficient, for it went to the root of the matter. If the highest gifts of the religious life had not come to them through works of Law, what folly it was to be now placing their reliance upon useless observances.

Received ye the Spirit? Christianity involved the reception of a new principle of life, raising man into communion with God, and making him conscious that he was a child of God. This principle sanctified the inner springs of his activity, and imparted a holy exaltation to the natural gifts, turning them from means of selfish gratification into instruments of the Divine purpose. Accordingly what were called spiritual gifts were as various as men's natural endowments, fitting their possessors for the fulfilment of different duties within the common life of the Church (see especially *1 Cor.* xii.). In quiet times, when men grow up in Christian homes, the reception of the Spirit is not usually marked by any striking manifestations; and even if some self-willed youth becomes suddenly detached from his old motives, and aware for the first time that he may live in God and God in him, the change is known, not by excitement and rapture, but by the heavenly look stealing over his face, by the serenity of his thought, and by his dutiful love. But when Christianity was young, and men passed suddenly from the dead formality of the Law,

or from a sensual heathenism, into a consciousness of their spiritual relations with God, the new experience was so overwhelming that the exaltation of the converts showed itself in strange ways, in speaking with tongues, and in mighty deeds (miracles) in which the mind asserted a control over the body far exceeding its normal power. Some such reception of the Spirit is taken for granted as marking the conversion to Christianity. Of the metaphysical nature of the Holy Spirit Paul lays down no distinct doctrine. The important thing is that it is not the same as the human spirit, however consecrated, nor is it merely the quality of holiness, such as the human spirit may possess, for it is characteristically spoken of as "the Spirit of God." Still it is a spirit which seems to become blended with our personality; for it, as well as the opposite "spirit of bondage," may dwell in us and lead us (see especially *Rom.* viii. 9, 11, 14-16). May we not say that it denotes the direct action of God upon the human soul, and is that in God of which we may become immediately conscious as the healing and sanctifying power of our lives, striving with our sin, bearing witness of our higher relationship, and seeking to lead us upwards towards the divine end of our being? The Apostle was content to leave in vagueness the intellectual aspects of these great questions; and it is for us to remember that the only way in which we can really give glory to the Holy Spirit of God is by never wilfully offending against that Divine holiness which pleads in our hearts.

By the works of the Law. The Greek preposition

means "out of," denoting the source from which a thing comes. Again we ought to omit the articles, which are not expressed in the Greek, for, as has been already pointed out, although the Levitical Law is referred to, the imperfection in question belongs, not only to this particular law, but to law as such.

By the hearing of faith. The exact meaning of this expression is doubtful, for the word translated "hearing" may mean "report" or "preaching." In the former sense, the clause may mean "the hearing which belongs to or comes from faith," or "from hearing faith proclaimed by another." I am inclined to adopt the last meaning; for the spiritual order does not seem to be, first, faith; then, hearing; and lastly, the reception of the Spirit. Rather does the listening come first; then faith is kindled by the soul-searching appeal of one whose own soul is fired with faith; and then faith is succeeded by the reception of the Spirit. However this may be, the general sense is clear. The Galatians knew in their hearts that they had not received the Spirit through any mechanical obedience to the requirements of a law, but through the principle of faith which was proclaimed by the Christian missionaries.

3. Are ye so foolish? The chapter began by addressing the readers as "foolish"; now Paul appeals to them,—are ye so foolish as an affirmative answer to the following question would imply?

Having begun in the Spirit are ye now perfected in the flesh? The word "Spirit" points back to the question, "Received ye the Spirit?" Nevertheless from the contrast with "flesh" it seems most natural

to understand it of man's own spirit. The two ideas are, however, inseparably allied in Paul. The spirit in man was the principle in him which brought him into communion with the Spirit of God, and was dormant and inoperative until it was filled with energy by the higher Spirit; so that, though the Spirit of God and the spirit of man are distinct, yet the two ideas often seem to blend, and it is difficult to mark the exact boundary where you pass from one to the other. So I think it is in the present passage. The Galatians had begun their new religious life with the Spirit, with that which was highest in them, and was under the immediate influence of the Spirit of God. Were they now being made perfect by the flesh? The verb in the Greek is in the present tense, the full force of which is hardly brought out by the revised translation. The "flesh" is nearly equivalent to what we sometimes describe as the lower nature. It was to this that a legal and ceremonial religion appealed. It imparted no new power of inward life. Circumcision, the offering of sacrifices, the observance of special days, the abstinence from particular kinds of food, had nothing to do with the deeper reality of man's spiritual life, and were enforced only by those who were still under the bondage of the senses. To suppose that the life of the Spirit could be made perfect by such things was so complete a reversal of the true order as to be a proof of the greatest folly. The question is framed with such a fine irony that it becomes a powerful argument. We should observe that "spirit" and "flesh" are without the article in the Greek, and

thus their contrasted qualities, as two opposing principles, are more clearly brought out.

This verse is, I think, opposed to the notion that the Galatians had passed through the gates of Judaism into Christianity. It clearly implies that they had begun with the spiritual Christianity preached by Paul, and were now tacking on to it certain Judaic observances, under the impression that such things, if not necessary, would at least render them more perfect.

4. **Did ye suffer so many things in vain?** The meaning of this verse is rather obscure, owing partly to the way in which it is expressed, partly to our ignorance of the history. As it stands in the translation, it must mean, did you suffer so many persecutions from the Jews to so little purpose that you are now giving way, and submitting to Jewish customs? But there is no other evidence in the Epistle that the Galatians had been persecuted by Jews; and in any case there is no inconsistency between resistance to Jews who denied that Jesus was the Christ and yielding to Jews who confessed it. But we may translate the verse without a question, "You suffered so much in vain!" The meaning will then be, you suffered so much from the imposition of Jewish rites, and yet even this did not open your eyes to see the folly of the whole proceeding.

An ambiguity rests also on the second clause, "if it be indeed in vain." With this translation the words express Paul's hope that the case is not really so bad as it seems. But the Greek is rather, "if it be even in vain"; that is, if the case be no worse,

if you have not suffered permanent injury from your compliance, and lost your Christian faith altogether.

5. The word **therefore** takes up again the question of verse 2, and repeats it in another form. Paul passes from the experience of the Galatians who received the Spirit to the working of Him from whom it comes, that is God. This question too had to be answered from their own experience, but it is put now in such a form as to appeal also to their judgment. Not only had they actually received the Spirit in the way alleged, but it was a worthier thought of God that he supplied the Spirit through the living action of believing men, and not through dead ceremonies or superficial compliance with a law.

The word translated "miracles" is literally "powers." The term which is rendered "worketh" makes it probable that inward powers are intended (see *1 Cor.* xii. 6; also *Gal.* ii. 8), and in that case we must translate, not "among you," but "in you." The appeal is then made, not to outward manifestations, but to some exaltation of power of which the converts were conscious within themselves. On the subject generally see the notes on verse 2.

§ 11. *Argument founded on the case of Abraham*
(iii. 6-18).

6. This verse introduces an argument from the Old Testament by appealing to the case of Abraham as a strictly parallel instance, and one peculiarly impressive because he was venerated as the founder of

the Hebrew race. Genuine children must share the qualities of their father; and if we wish to know who are the real descendants of Abraham, we must ascertain on what distinguishing feature of his character the approval of God rested. The Scripture tells us; it was faith.

The phrase **even as** connects this verse with what goes before. The implied answer to the question of the last verse is that the Spirit was received through the hearing of faith; and so it was even in the time of Abraham. The statement is quoted from *Genesis* xv. 6, where it is related that God promised Abraham that his seed should be as the number of the stars. In spite of all appearances to the contrary "Abraham believed [put faith in] God." "Believe" is, in the Greek, the verb of which "faith" is the noun. In the translation we lose the connection between the words, and thereby the logical force of the argument is impaired. The patriarch's faith that God would accomplish what he had promised was "reckoned to him for righteousness." It is often supposed that this expression means that God imputed to Abraham a righteousness which he did not possess, and that Paul's doctrine of salvation is that God does not judge men according to truth, but, through his grace, misjudges them. The word "reckon," however, does not imply any judgment which is contrary to the facts, though it may, no doubt, be used of such a judgment. There are two passages which illustrate the possible meanings of the phrase before us. One is in *Romans* ii. 26, "If therefore the uncircumcision keep the ordinances

of the Law, shall not his uncircumcision be reckoned for circumcision?" Here something is reckoned as being that which it is not. Still, there is no error of judgment; for what is stated is in effect this, that, according to a just and true judgment, uncircumcision would, in the case supposed, be quite as good as circumcision. The other instance is in *Romans* ix. 8, "The children of the promise are reckoned for a seed." The children of the promise were, in the given example, the literal seed, and the effect of the statement is that they shall be reckoned for a seed, not on the ground of their real descent, but because they are at the same time the children of the promise. From both these instances we may infer that no incorrectness of judgment is implied in the verse before us. And surely it was something good to believe God, and it was right and just to reckon it for righteousness. Nevertheless faith is rather the root and promise of righteousness than identical with it; and to this extent there is imputation of that which is not yet, when, in the consciousness of sin and with self-despair, we turn in faith to God, and he receives us as his children. But even then his judgment is according to truth, for we too would act thus whenever we are swayed only by justice and love. See the note on ii. 16.

7. **Know.** The verb in Greek may be either indicative or imperative (see the translation in the margin). The imperative perhaps suits best the general style of the Epistle.

They which be of faith. The Greek "of" or "out

of" points to the source from which a thing is derived; and so the sense here is, "men who draw their life from faith, and make it the active principle of their being," in opposition to those who "are of works of Law" (verse 10), who make legal righteousness the principle of their lives.

Sons of Abraham. Even in our language sonship often suggests likeness, as when we say that so and so is a true son of his father. This usage was still more common among the Hebrews, and gives its force to Paul's argument. Compare *John* viii. 39, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham."

This verse states the proposition which has to be proved, that the men whose principle is faith are the true children of Abraham. This is established, with all its consequences, in what follows; and then the proposition is repeated as a conclusion in verse 29, the form being varied in order to bring it home to the Galatians themselves,—“If ye are Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise.”

8. **The Scripture** is here personified in a way which has no other example in the New Testament.

By faith. The preposition is the same as in the preceding and the following verses, "of" or "from" or "out of," denoting the source of the justification. The verbal connection is thus lost in a translation, and to that extent the argument is obscured: the sons of Abraham are the men who live from faith, and it is from faith that God justifies the Gentiles.

Preached the gospel beforehand. The gospel in-

tended is the blessing of the Gentiles, as is shown by what follows, the words quoted from the Old Testament serving to define it. The quotation is taken from the Greek translation, and corresponds with *Gen.* xviii. 18, except that there we have "in him" (that is, Abraham) instead of "in thee." In *Gen.* xii. 3 the words are spoken to Abraham, and we have "in thee," but instead of "all the nations" (or Gentiles) we read "all the tribes." Paul may probably have confused the two passages in his memory; but the sense is correctly given.

In thee, as the founder of the race of men with faith. He and his spiritual sons form one group, so that a blessing on him is a blessing on all.

Nations. This is the word which has just been translated "Gentiles." A change of this kind conceals the force of the argument. The Greek word undoubtedly means "nations"; but it is technically used by Paul to denote those who were not Jews, and is therefore correctly rendered "Gentiles." Of course Paul does not wish to exclude Jews. But their case is not in question, and what he desires to prove is that Gentiles, though they were not, like the Jews, literally descended from Abraham, might nevertheless, through faith, become his spiritual heirs, and that in the things of the Spirit the spiritual connection is alone important.

9. This adds a thought to the statement of verse 7. The men whose vital principle is faith are not only sons of Abraham, but they share his blessing. This idea of "blessing" is of the utmost importance

in the argument, for it stands in opposition to the curse of the Law. We need not seek to define this blessing too narrowly, as Paul has left it undefined. We may say generally that it implies acceptance with God, with all that sense of blessedness and peace which attends the consciousness of communion with him.

10. We have seen that faith brings a blessing; we have now to see that law can do nothing of the kind. The new turn in the argument is introduced by "for," because it helps to establish what has just been said: the men of faith, and they only, are blessed; *for* those who depend on works of law are under a curse. This position is established by a quotation from *Deuteronomy* xxvii. 26. Paul quotes from the Greek translation, except that he alters "the words of this law" into "things that are written in the book of the law." This change may be deliberately made in order that the verse may be intelligible without its context. The word "all" is not in the Hebrew; but it is implied by the sense of the passage, and it is expressed in xxviii. 15, where the subject of the curses is resumed. It is important in the present connection, because Paul implies that under the Law there is no escape from the curse, since no one succeeds in keeping *all* its requirements without offence.

We shall not appreciate the force of this argument unless we try to picture to ourselves the state of mind of one to whom this curse was a solemn and fearful reality. Everyone who failed to fulfil all the commandments and statutes was to be cursed in the

city, and cursed in the field, cursed in his basket and kneading trough, cursed when he came in, and cursed when he went out. The Lord would send upon him cursing, discomfiture, and rebuke in all that he put his hand to. The Lord would make pestilence cleave unto him, and smite him with consumption, and with fever, and with inflammation, and with fiery heat, and with sword, and with blasting, and with mildew. The heaven that was over his head should be brass, and the earth under him should be iron; and the Lord would make the rain of the land powder and dust. The Lord would smite him with madness, and with blindness, and with astonishment of heart; and he should grope at noon-day, as the blind gropeth in darkness, and should not prosper in his ways, but be only oppressed and spoiled away, and there should be none to save him. We need not continue further the dreadful catalogue; all these curses were to come upon him, and pursue him, and overtake him, till he was destroyed, because he hearkened not unto the voice of the Lord his God, to keep his commandments and his statutes. It is an appalling picture of a doomed and blasted life, a soul shuddering in abject and lonely misery before the thought of the righteous and avenging God, and haunted by the furies of his own conscious sin. To most men these things were probably a dead letter, and they heard of them with the same indifference and hardness of heart with which most Christians hear about the hell in which they profess to believe. But we may imagine what

the effect would be on a sensitive boy who was deeply in earnest about his religion, whose conscience re-echoed the terrible threatenings of the Divine Law, and who felt that with all his striving he still came short of the glory of God, and the curse was slowly gathering round him, turning his heaven into brass, and filling his heart with bitter despair. No wonder that he looked back with fond regret to the innocence of childhood, when he had felt alive amid the pleasant sights and sounds of nature; for when the Law came, sin sprang to life, and he died (see *Rom.* vii.), and no zeal for the Law which cursed him was ever able to bring back his peace of mind. We see, then, that the curse of the Law was a reality which had eaten, like a corroding poison, into the soul of Paul, and he must have felt by contrast the gentleness and beauty of the blessing pronounced on Abraham, and perhaps have sometimes wondered, before his conversion, how it was that the Gentiles were to be blessed, while he, an Israelite, was unable to shake off the curse that clung to him. We must bear all this in mind, if we would understand what follows.

11. This verse introduces a fresh argument against the notion that men could be justified through the Law. Not only did no one perfectly obey the Law, but the very principle of law stood in contrast with that which the Old Testament itself represented as the source of life for the righteous.

By the Law, literally "in law"; that is, within the realm of law. If a man reaches no higher

principle, he is not justified in the sight of God; because, however complete may be his obedience, that obedience is purely external, and before that highest court of judgment, where the secrets of men's hearts are tried, the question is not whether he has succeeded in doing certain things, but what were the hidden motives which prompted his actions. The words "in the sight of God" are deliberately added, because in a human court no more can be required than obedience to the law; and if a man can show that he has not broken it, he must be acquitted or "justified." But Paul is seeking for the living roots of righteousness, and therefore he refers everything to the judgment of God, which reads the most secret thoughts and feelings, and cannot err.

The proof of the assertion is furnished by a quotation from the Prophet Habakkuk ii. 4. The literal translation would be "the just man shall live in his faithfulness [or steadfastness]." The Greek translators, however, use the word which Paul always employs to denote "faith"; and though the application of this saying was originally limited to the time of the Chaldean invasion, we may easily imagine that a sentence to which so full and deep a meaning could be attached would dwell in the Apostle's mind as a blessed promise of life, in opposition to the doom which alone was discernible under the Law. Faith, righteousness, life, are here associated within the very pages of the Old Testament, and point to something beyond and above the Law.

12. This completes the argument: the principle of the Law is quite alien to that which we have just recognised as the source of life. The connection is once more obscured by translating the same preposition in two different ways. Literally the passage reads, "The righteous shall live out of faith; but the Law is not 'out of faith.'" The expression seems to be rather elliptical; for the meaning clearly is, not that the Law itself has not its source in faith, but that the man who is under the Law has not faith as the ground of his life. This is proved by a quotation from *Leviticus* xviii. 5, "he that doeth them [that is, "my statutes and my judgments"] shall live in them." The whole principle of the Law is summed up in this brief sentence. Its essence is *doing*, not *being*. God commands; man must obey, and if he does all that is ordered, he has fulfilled his side of the relation, and shall live. But it is not said that he will be righteous. There is no doubt a "righteousness of the Law," which is described in this very quotation, for to obey the Law, from whatever motive, is righteousness of a kind; but it is not the "righteousness of God," which is a spirit of life within the heart (see *Rom.* x. 3 sqq).

13. Having shown that under the Law there is no escape from its curse, Paul proceeds without any connecting particle, to present the opposite state of things under the Gospel:—"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law." Unfortunately Paul does not fully explain his thought, which he may have unfolded at greater length by word of mouth to the Galatians;

and we are therefore obliged to grope our way into his doctrine through a sympathetic understanding of his whole position. It is said, for instance by Meyer, that Christ was really cursed by God ; but as he himself was innocent, the curse must have been for the sins of others, and therefore he was their substitute, and redeemed them from the curse by bearing it for them. I believe that Paul would have rejected this interpretation with a "God forbid." No reason is apparent why God's cursing the innocent (if any Christian man can really entertain such a thought) should abrogate the threats against the guilty ; and such a doctrine betrays the artificiality of the theological school rather than the vivid play of an original personal experience. Can we, then, from the present words trace a probable course of thought which may have led Paul from the haunting consciousness of sin and condemnation into the triumphant gladness of his later life ? We must endeavour to answer this question through a careful consideration of the words themselves, and of the circumstances of Paul's life.

Redeemed is a word properly applied to buying one out of slavery. It is therefore used here figuratively ; but the figure is a very natural one. Being under the curse of the Law is compared to a state of slavery ; and Christ is said to have redeemed us, or bought us out of it, because his suffering was, as it were, the price which was paid for the benefit received. These two things are enough to explain the figure, and it is always dangerous to press figurative language farther than is necessary. Accordingly we need not ask to

whom the price was paid, for probably this element of the comparison was not in Paul's mind at all. So we might say, as Englishmen, that our civil and religious liberty was purchased with blood, meaning that men had to shed their blood in order to obtain it, but not thinking of anyone to whom the blood was paid. Further, we should take notice that the figure here has nothing to do with sacrifice, and consequently it is out of place to speak of a "victim" in connection with the present passage.

Us is emphatic in the Greek, and probably means "us Jews," for it is contrasted with "the Gentiles" in the next verse, and the Gentiles were not under the Mosaic Law, and presumably were not affected by its curse.

The curse of the law. Observe, not the curse of God. Now in what way was the redemption effected? By Christ's **having become a curse for us**. The noun "curse" is probably used instead of the adjective in order to strengthen the idea, the curse, as it were, passing into, and becoming identified with the accursed person. Or it may perhaps have been suggested by the Hebrew of the passage which Paul proceeds to quote, "A curse of God is he that is hanged." "For us," that is "for our good," as is shown by the Greek preposition. Paul could quite as easily have used another preposition, meaning "instead of," if he had intended to introduce here a doctrine of arbitrary substitution. In what way Christ became a curse is shown by a quotation from *Deut. xxi. 23*, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." This statement

occurs in connection with a commandment that if a man had committed a sin worthy of death, and were hanged on a tree, his body should not remain all night upon the tree, that the land might not be defiled, "for he that is hanged is accursed of God [Hebrew, the curse of God]." The Greek translators give "cursed by God." Paul omits the words "by God." He might, no doubt, do so accidentally, and in the quotation itself the omission of them has little significance, because they are necessarily implied. But he may omit them in the quotation because he chose to drop them from his own previous statement, "having become a curse for us." At all events the words are not there, and there is nothing in the passage to prove that Paul admitted the notion that Christ was cursed by God. It may be worth while observing that Justin Martyr (who wrote about the middle of the second century), though admitting that the words in *Deuteronomy* applied to Christ, expressly denies that God cursed "this crucified one," and finds the fulfilment of the saying in the fact that Christ drew on himself the curse of all men, and Christians were cursed in the synagogues of the Jews.¹ Theodoret (in the fifth century), in his commentary on *Galatians*, says that Christ "himself accepted the death which according to the Law was cursed." His commentary is too brief to explain the passage; but these words seem to reject the idea that Christ was cursed by God. I mention these opinions to show that we are not led by the history

¹ *Dialogue with Trypho*, 95, 96.

of Christian interpretation to force this thought upon the Apostle.

Now let us try, so far as our lower experience will allow us, to place ourselves in the position of the Apostle. We have seen how the curse of the Law lay like a night-mare upon his mind, a mind which loved righteousness and could never be satisfied with pitiful evasions, or with anything less than the profession of his religion required of him. But the more he strove, the more was he confronted with demands which he failed to satisfy; and it seemed as though he were chained to sin, and, with sin, to the curse that followed it. May not this have been one reason for his mad persecution of the Christians? If he could not fulfil the Law as he desired, he would at least prove his zeal for it by waging war against men who set at nought the curse of the Law, and preached a crucified Christ. Christ crucified was to the Jews a stumbling-block (*1 Cor. i. 23*) owing to the very text which is here quoted. Trypho, who conducts the Jewish argument in the "Dialogue" of Justin Martyr, presses this point. He allows that the Scriptures preach a suffering Christ; but one who is crucified is said in the Law to be cursed, and how were Christians going to get over this?¹ So Paul may have thought that he had a triumphant argument, which proved beyond all possibility of doubt that the Christians were in the wrong. But, as we have seen in the first chapter, the change came. Jesus was not a convicted impostor, but the Son of God; slain, not for

¹ Chap. 89.

his disobedience, but for his obedience to the Divine Will. Was the Christ, then, after all, was the Son, the Beloved, cursed by the Being whom he taught men to call their Father? And did Paul give an affirmative answer to the question of the Psalmist, "Shall the throne of wickedness have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by statute? They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood?" For my part I believe that he would have repelled such a suggestion with horror. But even if he had accepted it, it would only have proved that Christ was cursed as well as everyone else, and that even a perfect obedience could bring no salvation from the universal fate; and indeed as Christians were spiritually identified with their master, they would be necessarily regarded as sharing the curse which rested upon him. What, then, was the effect of the text? Simply this, that the curse of the Law, valid till then, lost its power by touching one to whom it could have no just application. By the Law he was cursed; by the very nature of righteousness and of God he was blessed; and therefore the Law was dead. And so the old horror rolled away from the mind of Paul. The Beloved had been born under the Law, and borne its curse, that he might thereby break its power for ever; and now that Law had completed its work, and could no more disturb the peace of him who was Christ's, and lived by his faith. This explanation does not impair the truth that the self-sacrifice of the noblest is the appointed way of the world's redemption, and that the tragedy of the cross

was needed to break the bands of Pharisaism, and extend the blessings of a spiritual faith to the heathen world.

14. **That upon the Gentiles might come the blessing of Abraham in Christ Jesus.** The promise to Abraham was that the Gentiles should be blessed in him. Now this blessing could not come to them so long as the Jews, the representatives of Abraham, were shut up under the curse of the Law; for men in that condition had no blessing to impart. It was needful, therefore, for the sake of the Gentiles that the curse of the Law should be destroyed, in order that the blessing of Abraham might reach them. It reached them in Christ, the seed of Abraham, and thus the promise made so long ago to the Patriarch was in course of fulfilment. In its bearing on the whole argument the point of the statement is this, that the promised blessing came to them, not only apart from all obligations of the Law, but involving as its necessary condition the previous abrogation of the Law.

That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. This clause is (most probably) co-ordinate with the previous one, and expresses the larger purpose of the redemption from the Law, a purpose embracing Christians generally, whether Jews or Gentiles. "To receive the promise" means, in Greek, to receive the fulfilment of the promise. The words of this promise are not quoted, and Paul may refer to the general sense of prophetic anticipation, or may possibly have thought of the passage in Joel which is quoted in *Acts* ii. 17 sqq. He would

think it less necessary to quote passages, as the indwelling of the Spirit is bound up with Christianity, and is the highest expression of the new life in Christ. "Through faith": Greek, "the faith"; that is, "the faith of which I have so often spoken, our Christian faith." The life of faith, dwelling amid divine things, and animated by the Spirit of God, acting freely out of the promptings of love, holy and humble in thought and feeling,—this was the life to which the Galatians had been called, and not subservience to a Law which either withered men with a hopeless sense of sin, or puffed them up with the pride of self-righteous obedience.

15. This and the three following verses answer a possible objection, that the Law may have superseded the promise to Abraham, and imposed new conditions. The reply is that a covenant, when once it has been ratified, cannot be set aside or added to.

Brethren. Having relieved his feelings by the previous argument, Paul now addresses his readers with greater tenderness.

I speak after the manner of men. That is, I base my argument on ordinary human practice. If men keep a covenant so faithfully, much more will God.

16. Having stated his general principle he now proceeds to apply it. The promises were made to Abraham, *and to his seed*. If the intended seed did not come till long after the giving of the Law, then evidently the promises were not meant to hold good only till the Law should be promulgated.

Promises, because the promise was repeated on

different occasions. **And to his seed** is shown by what follows to be a quotation, and accordingly the reference seems to be to *Genesis* xiii. 15, and xvii. 8, though there the promise relates to the possession of the land of Canaan. Paul was trained in the rabbinical schools, and not in the modern system of interpretation, and he would have no difficulty (and probably his first readers had no difficulty) in giving a spiritual explanation to such passages, and connecting them with the promise already quoted. The comment which is added further illustrates the rabbinical mode of interpretation, which it is impossible for us any longer to regard as sound. The singular "seed," in Hebrew and Greek, as well as in English, is usually a collective noun, meaning posterity and the plural would not be employed (if used at all in this figurative sense) to denote a number of individuals in opposition to a single person. * There is, however, no doubt that Paul was familiar with the collective sense of the word seed, and he uses it himself in the last verse of this very chapter. Some would therefore understand the meaning to be that the singular points to a single line of descent, and that this line is summed up in and represented by Christ, who again includes within himself all who are his. This may to some extent relieve the difficulty; but in any case this piece of rabbinical reasoning can make no great impression upon our modern thought. On the other hand the Galatians would find it easy to believe, as the Rabbis themselves admitted (see Lightfoot), that the Christ was the true seed of Abraham; and whether we approve

of the grammatical argument or not, there is a spiritual sense in which this is true, for he renewed in a higher form that life of faith which was Abraham's characteristic.

17. **Now this I say**; perhaps better, "Now what I mean is this." The drift of the argument was already apparent; but it is now stated with greater precision. The sense of the verse is perfectly clear, and the only thing calling for remark is the number of years said to have elapsed between the promise to Abraham and the giving of the Law. It is stated in *Exodus* xii. 40, that the "sojourning of the children of Israel who dwelt in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years," and this statement is roughly confirmed by *Genesis* xv. 13, where the period is referred to in round numbers as four hundred years. To this must be added about two hundred and fifteen years from Abraham's migration to the removal of Jacob into Egypt. This would give a total of six hundred and forty-five years. Paul, however, follows here the Greek translation of *Exodus* xii. 40, where the period is made to include the residence of the Israelites "in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan." We need not discuss the accuracy of these different authorities, for Paul's argument remains the same whatever the number of years may have been; the Law was given a long time after the promise, and therefore was quite unconnected with it, and could not supersede it.

18. **For**, introducing a statement which defends the use of the words "disannul," and "make of

none effect." An obligation to observe the Law as a condition of the fulfilment of the promise, would not merely add a condition to the original covenant, but would destroy it altogether, for Law and Promise exclude one another.

The inheritance ; that is, the promised blessing which the seed of Abraham was to inherit. To understand the contrast between "Law" and "Promise," we must remember that the promise was made to Abraham unconditionally : as Paul says, the inheritance was "granted as a free gift,"—for this is the proper meaning of the Greek word, for which our translators' "granted" is hardly adequate. Under law there is no free and unconditional bestowal of favours, but everything must be earned by obedience to its precepts ; and therefore to make the inheritance depend on law would be to revoke the promise. The inheritance, then, to which the Israelites looked forward as the realization of their highest hopes, was freely promised long before the Law was enacted, and could be at last conferred only when the Law was abrogated. This portion of the subject fitly closes with the emphatic statement which really embraces four distinct propositions : the inheritance was offered to Abraham, and therefore independently of the Law ; it was conferred through a promise, and therefore not encumbered with impossible conditions ; it was a gift of grace, and therefore not a reward for hired service ; it was bestowed by God, and therefore had at least as high a sanction as the divinest law could claim.

Before leaving this subject we may observe that

these four verses strongly confirm the explanation which has been given of verse 13. According to the usual interpretation the absolute fulfilment of the Law was an indispensable condition of the granting of the promised blessing. The Law became exactly what Paul says it could not become, an addition to the original covenant, an addition too, which, according to the Apostle, simply destroyed the promise; and this gracious and unconditional promise was so utterly revoked that the inheritance would never have been bestowed unless an innocent victim had come forward and offered to take on himself the conditions which were no part of the agreement, but had been thrust into it after the lapse of centuries. I do not believe that Paul's reasoning was so incoherent, or his notion of Divine Grace so ill-defined and inconsistent.

§ 12. *Purpose of the Law and Spiritual Growth of Man* (iii. 19–iv. 7).

19. The preceding discussion seemed to set the Law aside altogether. It came between the Promise and its fulfilment, and yet it made no change in the conditions of the Covenant. What was it, then? What did it mean? What place did it occupy in the history of human progress? The general tenor of Paul's answer is sufficiently clear, but some of the details are so obscure that commentators have given the most discordant explanations of them. The thoughts are

dashed off in hot haste ; and, were it not that we have a fuller and more careful statement of them in the Epistle to the Romans, our remoteness from the controversy and from personal contact with the writer would make it impossible for us to follow them satisfactorily. In a brief commentary like this I cannot attempt to criticise the various interpretations which have been offered, and must be content to notice, in passing, one or two of the more important.

What then is the Law? This tersely proposes the question to be discussed : what is the purpose of the Law in the Divine order of the world? **It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise had been made.** Two things are clear in this statement. The Law was an addition to what had gone before : it was something tacked on to more permanent arrangements. As this addition could not interfere with the promise previously made, it was temporary, and was intended to last only till the time came for the fulfilment of the promise. The reason assigned for the addition must be explained from the Epistle to the Romans. Paul there lays down the maxim that "Where there is no law, neither is there transgression" (iv. 15). The reason of this is plain. Transgression is the breaking of a commandment ; and therefore, although a thing may be in itself morally bad, still there is no transgression in doing it till it is forbidden by some law, either of the conscience or of the statute-book. Now Paul looked upon mankind before the giving of the Law as

in a condition at once of subjection to sin and of childish innocence; that is to say, they were governed by the lower elements of their nature, but were not yet aware that there was anything wrong in their gratification. As no law had yet been imposed upon them, sin was not imputed to them (*Rom. v. 13*). To take a modern illustration; among savages who are cannibals the eating of human flesh is not a transgression, and cannibalism cannot be imputed to these men as sin, though among us it would be murder, and involve sin of the most revolting kind. Now this state of wild innocence was not to last. In the storms and sunshine of childhood there is a certain beauty; but if carried over into manhood, they lose their charm. Similarly in tales of the world's childhood we can delight in the adventures and the prowess of wayward heroes, whom, if we met them now, we should describe as coarse and vulgar ruffians. So it was needful that the light of law should be shed upon men's ungoverned lives. But this was only a transition stage; for the law did not alter the instincts and passions of our nature. At the best it could only produce an external order; but it did not pretend to go down to the roots of men's activity, and quicken them with a living righteousness. It could only prepare the way for something higher than itself; and this it did by causing the trespass to abound (*Rom. v. 20*). The effect which it caused must have been that which was intended; and accordingly Paul says it was added for the sake of the transgressions, that is, in order to produce the transgressions which would not have existed apart from its own

commandments. Men had to pass through this bitter experience, of recognising the right and pursuing the wrong, in order that they might come to feel the need of a new principle of life, and be prepared to receive, in humility and faith, that Spirit which would bring them at last into the perfect communion that belongs to sons of God. Thus the Law fulfilled a Divine purpose in the education of the human race; and still it was marked by its whole character as something transient.

And it was ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator. That the Law was given through the instrumentality of angels had become a common Jewish belief (see, in the New Testament, *Acts* vii. 35, 38, 53; *Heb.* ii. 2). The mediator is Moses. We should observe that these words simply state the accepted facts, and do not in themselves imply that Paul wished to depreciate or to glorify the Law. He seems undoubtedly to be pointing out some distinction between the Law and the Promise; but his object is not to exalt one above the other, but to show that the Law, although it had come from God and fulfilled a Divine purpose, could not alter the conditions on which the Promise had been given. It is also important to observe carefully that the comparison is not between the Law and the *Gospel*, but between the Law and the *Promise*, and therefore it is quite out of place to say that the Gospel also was given through a mediator, Jesus Christ. It has even been argued that, owing to the fact of mediation in both cases, the Godhead of Jesus Christ is implied, because otherwise

he would be just such a mediator as Moses, and the distinction would vanish. But the reference is not to the giving of the Gospel *through* Christ as the mediator between God and man, but to the giving of the Promise *to* Christ as the seed of Abraham. It is the promise to Abraham "and to his seed" that the passage is dealing with all through; and it was this, and not the proclamation of the Gospel to mankind, that came without mediation.

20. Now a mediator is not of one; but God is one. It has been said that there are 430 different interpretations of this verse. The difficulty lies, not in the words themselves, which are perfectly clear, but in their bearing on the argument. Paul evidently had something in his mind which is not expressed, and we can complete his reasoning only by conjecture. I know of no explanation which at once strikes the mind as the correct one, and I must be content with mentioning one or two which appear most plausible.

One which seems at first sight as if it might solve the riddle is the following. These two verses are intended to depreciate the Law in comparison with the Promise. This is done by maintaining that the Promise was given directly by God himself, whereas the Law was given through angels. That the latter was really so given is apparent from the fact that it was in the hand of a mediator; for a mediator is not of one; that is to say, he always represents a plurality of those who have commissioned him, because a single person would not require a mediator in addressing himself to another party. God, then,

being one, did not require a mediator, and therefore the presence of the mediator proves that the Law came not immediately from God himself, but only from angels. This explanation has the great advantage of assigning an intelligible place and meaning to each statement; but there are formidable objections against it. First, it implies that the Law had ultimately a lower origin than the Promise; but the very words "*through angels*" point to God as the source of the Law, and Paul himself elsewhere speaks of it as "the law of God" (*Rom.* vii. 22). The question, therefore, would immediately arise,—if the unity of God prevented him from requiring a mediator in one case, why did he require the mediation of angels in the other? Secondly, the principle that a mediator implies a plurality on either one side or another is contrary to common sense and experience; for there may be a mediator between two individuals, and the plurality involved is that there must be two sides. Thirdly, verse 20 does not give a reason for the previous statement; for it is not introduced by "for," but by "now," or "but" (an adversative particle in Greek, for which our "but" is sometimes too strong. It is translated "but" in the middle of the verse). Lastly, the ordaining of the Law through angels was an accepted tradition, and did not need a futile argument to support it.

Another explanation is this, that the very idea of a mediator implies alienation, and absence of direct blessing; but God is one and unalterable, and will not forget the promise, which was made uncondi-

tionally and not as a mediated agreement between two parties. Two objections readily present themselves. First, there is nothing in the verse itself suggestive of alienation in the one case, and of the absence of conditions in the other. Secondly, this statement does not prepare the way for the following question,—“Is the Law then against the promises of God?” Indeed it makes it superfluous and unmeaning.

Perhaps the general course of thought is somewhat as follows. Paul has shown that Law and Promise are so contrasted that the inheritance cannot be dependent upon both. But the Law could not supersede the Promise, and therefore the expected blessing was not dependent upon the Law. This seemed to leave the Law without any place in the Divine administration of the world, and so it became necessary to speak a word on its behalf. It had its appropriate part to play in the moral experience of mankind, and was ushered in with all the pomp of angelic ministration and the formal services of a mediator. But it must be admitted that a mediator implies the presence of two contracting parties, who may make their own conditions. But God is one who gave both Promise and Law (for a parallel to this use of “God is one” compare *Rom.* iii. 30). It might be, therefore, that the giver of the Promise did really propose fresh conditions, which became valid when they were accepted by the other party through their mediating agent. This would at once suggest the unwelcome inference that the Law might, after all,

be against the Promise; and the answer is, not that the Law was less Divine, and only ordained by angels, but that the Law and the Promise dealt with different things, and that the Law could not be made a condition of the promised blessing, because it was contrary to the very nature of Law to communicate a living righteousness.

21. Is the Law then against the promises of God? God forbid. Whatever may be the correct explanation of the previous verse, it is obvious that something has been said which at least suggested that the Law stood in opposition to the promises. This thought Paul repels as quite inadmissible. Hence we may infer once more that he did not wish to depreciate the Law, and ascribe to it an origin less than Divine. If this had been his notion, he would not have been shocked at the possibility that the Law was opposed to the Promise; for he might have replied, "So much the worse for the Law, since the Promise came straight from God, and must stand against all antagonists." But when he admitted that both were alike Divine, he could not allow that the later institution opposed the earlier without abandoning his whole Gospel.

For if there had been a law given which could make alive, verily righteousness would have been of the law (or better, I think, "righteousness would really be from law," that is, have its source in law). The difficulty is here answered, not by showing that the Law did something which was not contemplated in the Promise, but that it did not do what would really

have brought it into rivalry with the Promise. It was not able to give life. Paul does not define what he means by life; but I think we may safely say that he does not mean mere existence in a Messianic kingdom, of which he says nothing throughout his argument, but that spiritual life which allies man to God, and in its highest form becomes "eternal life" (see vi. 8). If there were a Law which could confer this, then righteousness would really (as is supposed by Judaizers) spring out of Law; and the Promise would be confronted with a rival.

22. Howbeit; better "but," a strong adversative:—righteousness would be from Law; *but*, instead of this being the case, men universally were under the power of sin.

The Scripture hath shut up all things under sin. The neuter, "all things," instead of "all men," seems to be used to make the statement as universal as possible;—the world generally was given over to sin. Whether a particular passage or the general tenor of Scripture is referred to, the sense is the same: the Scripture testifies that men were not righteous, but sinful (see *Rom.* iii. 10 sqq. for the sort of passages that Paul relied on). It is evident, however, from what follows that more is intended than the mere testimony of Scripture, and two statements are in effect embraced by what appears as one: the Scripture declares that men were subject to sin; and all men were thus shut up under sin in order that the Promise might be fulfilled.

That the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. "The promise" means

the fulfilment of the promise, or the promised blessing. "By faith in Jesus Christ" is literally "out of faith of Jesus Christ"; that is, arising from, or depending on, the faith of Christ, meaning, as I believe, Christ's own faith (see the note on ii. 16). Christ was the seed to whom, as well as to Abraham, the Promise was made, and in whose person it was to be fulfilled. Abraham's seed was, in accordance with the whole argument, one who revived the faith of Abraham; and it was by the possession of faith as the principle of his life that Jesus was marked out as the seed towards whom the Promise should be realized. Till this life of faith appeared in the world, the Promise had to remain without its fulfilment. Abraham's faith was only a flash of light amid the ancient darkness, bearing witness to a possible communion between man and God, but not making it a permanent possession of the race. But the faith of Christ dwelt among men as the light of the world, and became the consecration of a new race of sons of God who live by faith. Thus man had been confronted with a law which he could not perfectly obey, and placed under the dominion of sin, that by learning his own weakness and dependence, he might be prepared for a higher blessing. Had he been able to keep the law he would have earned his reward, and been filled with the pride of self-righteousness, which in itself would have been sin, though without the consciousness of sin; but through the experience of failure he was prepared for that faith through which the life of God flows into the heart, bringing not pride, but humility.

It will be seen that in the above explanation there is no tautology in the words "to them that believe." In the usual interpretation the apparent tautology is explained by saying that it was admitted on both sides that the promised blessing was to be given only to believers, and the question was whether in their case it was dependent on their faith in Christ as alone sufficient, or required also obedience to the Law. But in this view the order of words is, to say the least, very awkward, and the expression "to them that believe" is superfluous; for the sense would then be, "that the blessing promised to believers might be given to them in consequence of their faith in Christ." In the interpretation which we have given every word is required, and is found in its proper place: "that the Promise (or, promised blessing) depending on Christ's faith may be given to those who have faith."

23. Before faith came. This is clearly a very solemn expression, denoting the advent of something higher than the Law. It receives its full force when we understand it of Christ's faith, that vital principle which was the soul of his being, and which he came to impart to the world. Thus it had a definite coming, the majestic advent of a new power of life among men. This is lost if we understand the words only of the belief in Christ entertained by scattered believers. It was Christ's faith, and not Paul's or Peter's, that destroyed the law of sin and death.

We were kept in ward under the Law. In verse 22 the expression was, "shut up under sin." Sin was the prison-house from which, while the Law acted as

the warder, there was no escape. But this served only a temporary purpose. We were shut up with a view to the future faith, "that was to be revealed." How revealed? Surely in the Founder rather than in the recipients of our religion; in the promised seed, the Man of Faith on whom the Law tried its curse in vain.

24. The figure is now changed. The Law becomes a tutor, leading on to the idea of our being sons of God. The "tutor," in the old times, was a trustworthy slave, who had the care of the children. It was not his office to give formal instruction; but one of his duties was to take the young folk to school, and hence some have thought that Christ is here compared to the schoolmaster, who gave the lessons which the tutor was unable to impart. But the words in the Greek do not favour this interpretation, and the context, which contains no reference to Christ's teaching, does not suggest it. The words "to bring us" are not in the Greek, and perhaps "with a view to" would give the sense better. The Law was our tutor, a slave to whom in our childhood we were put in subjection, with a view to our attaining our full manhood in Christ.

That we might be justified by faith. "Faith" is emphatic: "in order that from faith we may be justified." This is the necessary result of attaining to Christ, if the explanation we have hitherto given be correct. To be in Christ involves living the life of faith; for that is his life. In the ordinary interpretation we should certainly expect "by faith in *him*," for otherwise there is no apparent connection between Christ and faith.

25. Again the advent of faith is referred to, indicating a great historical event. Surely this is not the same as if Paul had only said, "now that we believe." Faith came in Christ, marking the manhood of our race, and liberating it from the tutor who directed the years of its minority.

26-27. **Faith** might be immediately connected with **in Christ Jesus**, as it is in the Authorised Version. But with this connection, the Greek preposition shows, if I mistake not, that Christ is referred to, not as the object of faith, but as the person within whom the faith exists, so that the meaning would be, "you are the sons of God through the faith that is in Christ," implying of course that it was also in themselves. It seems better, however, with the Revised Version, to separate the words, and refer "in Christ Jesus" to the whole clause,—*"In Christ Jesus ye are all sons of God through faith."* This seems proved by the following verse, which gives the reason for this unlimited assertion: you were all baptised into Christ; you thus put on Christ; consequently you are in him; and, being in him, you share his life, and are sons of God through faith.

All is emphatic, including Jew and Gentile alike. **Sons of God**, the highest term that can be applied to men. There is here no qualification: not, "you are looked upon as sons," but "you *are* sons," by virtue of being in Christ, the Son. **Put on Christ** as a garment, an expressive figure used by both Greek and Jewish writers.

28. In the exalted life of sonship all outward

distinctions vanish. The peculiarities that separate Jew and Greek cease to be of any moment. The slave and the free man stand in the same relation to God. Nay, even the natural distinction of man and woman has no place in the spiritual realm. Paul brings this home to the Galatians by an emphatic “ye”;—“*ye* are *all* one,” and the divisions which the Judaizers are setting up among you are only degrading you from your Christian rank. They possessed this unity by virtue of their being in Christ Jesus. To be in him was to share the life of the Son of God, and beside this, all else sank into insignificance. It was a new idea that different nations, different sects, different ranks, were bound together in one holy communion. Philosophers looked on, and scoffed; but the Christian spirit, while it was still uncorrupted by the world, marched triumphantly from land to land, creating a society such as had not been seen before, turning the beggar in the slums and the slave in the workshop into kings and priests of God, and making the powerful, the wealthy, and the learned into humble and loving brothers of the sons of toil through participation of the same divine humanity. And when faith revisits Christendom, the Spirit of Christ will heal our miserable estrangements, and, fusing together the discordant elements of society, bring in the Kingdom of God.

29. **If ye are Christ's.** “Ye” is emphatic,—you, just as much as any who were born Jews, and observe the Law. “Are Christ's,” belong spiritually to him, or, perhaps better, are included in him, since you put

him on as a baptismal robe. **Then are ye Abraham's seed**, because Christ is the seed, and all who are his are included with himself. **Heirs according to promise**; that is, inheritors of the blessing promised to Abraham and his seed. Thus the proposition of verse 7, with which the discussion started, is repeated in another form as an established conclusion: You, though you have no national claim, are yet, by your Christian faith, drawn within the circle of Abraham's spiritual descendants, and the Law has no more existence for you than it had for him.

iv. 1. In this and the following verses, Paul unfolds more clearly some thoughts which were rather implied than expressed in the previous paragraph. It is a little uncertain what law of inheritance Paul had in his mind, and some have supposed that he referred particularly to a custom prevalent in Galatia. Of this there is no sufficient evidence; and it is likely that he intended his statement to be in agreement with Roman law. He writes, however, as a layman, and not as a lawyer; and if the law is in any respect faulty, the meaning of the illustration is not affected.

A child, that is, a minor, for it is evident that the whole period of early life, up to the full exercise of legal rights is included. During his minority the heir, although by right of his birth and anticipated inheritance he is the lord or owner of the whole property, is nevertheless under the direction of others just as much as a slave.

2. He is subject to guardians who have the control of his person, and stewards who manage his

property, until the time which has been fixed by his father for him to assume the position of an independent man.

3. **We also**, that is, we Christians, whether Jewish or Gentile. "We" is no doubt emphatic; but it is so, not in contrast with *you* Gentiles, but, with the heir just spoken of. That the reference is universal is shown by the whole drift of the passage, by the changes of person in verses 5 and 6, and by the allusion in verse 9. Jew and Gentile were alike in having to pass through a period of childhood.

Were held in bondage under the rudiments of the world. The meaning of this expression has been much disputed. In the margin "elements" is given as a substitute for "rudiments." The Greek word is frequently used of the physical elements, and has been so understood here, the reference being to heathen worship. This, however, would exclude Jews, and so be opposed to the general sense of the passage. The term came to be used, especially in Alexandria, of the heavenly bodies; and this was a favourite interpretation in early times. The heavenly bodies determined the seasons for religious observances, and as both Jews and Gentiles attached great importance to special times, they might be said to be in bondage to the heavenly bodies. This view is supported by verses 9 and 10; but it fails to explain why the celestial bodies are called elements of the *world*, instead of heavenly elements, for Paul does not use the term "world" in its Greek sense of the ordered universe. We are therefore thrown back upon the other meaning

of the word, that which is elementary in teaching or knowledge. This suits the idea of childhood, and also the view which has been given of the Law as something preparatory and transient. There is a difficulty in the fact that the Law is not only placed on a par with heathen religions as an elementary institution, but it is classed among the rudiments of the *world*, and the world (with Paul) denotes the human race in its lower and grosser character, with its selfish aims and alienation from God (see, in this Epistle, vi. 14). But this is not stronger language than is used of its ceremonies in verse 9, "weak and beggarly rudiments"; and Paul may have thought that much of the ceremonial law had been given on account of men's hardness of heart, and thus belonged to the "world," and he may also have had in mind the rigid interpretations and traditions of the Pharisaic school. Moreover we must not attach an evil sense to "elements of the world," because it is evident that Paul regards them as occupying a necessary place in the Divine education of mankind; but he speaks of them with some contempt, because it is contemptible for a man to return to the ways and thoughts of a child, and he is anxious to impress this upon the minds of the Galatians.

4. **But when the fulness of the time came.** This is parallel to "the term appointed of the father," in verse 2. It suggests the idea of a fixed period which had to be completed before the human race entered on its manhood. It might be made a matter of interesting thought to consider how this period was determined;

but on this point Paul is silent. He is content with intimating that in the race as in the individual there are successive stages of development, and that the higher spiritual gifts cannot come except in their appropriate order. We may compare *1 Cor.* xv. 46, "That is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural: then that which is spiritual." (See also *Rom.* viii. 20 sqq., and Christ's parable in *Mark* iv. 26-29.)

God sent forth his Son. The commentators assert that this proves the pre-existence of the Son. It is perfectly true that, logically, all sending implies the previous existence of the thing that is sent; but in ordinary speech this is disregarded, and I doubt whether in any subject but theology arguments of this kind would be thought worthy of serious attention. We may say that a man sent forth loud lamentations, though the lamentations came into being only through the act of sending them forth. The sun sends forth rays, which have no existence till they are emitted. It would be no abuse of language to speak of the Creator as sending forth from himself whatever he created. So Paul might say that God sent forth his Son, meaning that Jesus Christ, "the firstborn among many brethren," was a Divine gift to men, and having no thought of pre-existence in his mind. Elsewhere the expression "sent from God" is used to denote a Divine commission, in contrast with merely human or self-willed proceedings. Thus John the Baptist is spoken of as "sent from God" (*John* i. 6). The word "forth" is not used here; but neither is it used of Christ by the writer of the Gospel, and it makes no

difference in the argument for pre-existence. In modern times, Mr. Shorthouse says that F. D. Maurice "was sent into the world to proclaim" the living God of Platonism and of the Christian Church;¹ and Maurice himself repeatedly speaks of his having been sent into the world. One example will suffice,—“The discovery how little I have really done or even cared for that cause which I have been sent into the world to live and die for.”² Are we to infer that Maurice believed in his own pre-existence, and that the reviewer accepted his belief? I must conclude, then, that whether Paul believed in the pre-existence of Christ or not, it is an outrage on the common use of language to infer this belief from the present passage.

We must not, however, overlook the real force of Paul's words. They certainly imply that Jesus Christ, the first of the new race of spiritual men, was not the mere accident of an historical evolution, but appeared in fulfilment of a Divine purpose, and, I think we may safely add, that he was the Son of God "according to the spirit of holiness" (*Rom.* i. 4), not by acquisition, but by nature, and that he therefore had the original and creative force, the rich indwelling of the Divine Spirit, which made him not only the example, but the quickener of his brethren, not only the founder, but the inspirer of his Church.

For the fulfilment of Christ's mission, as Paul conceived it, it was necessary that he should be a man among men, a Jew among Jews; a man that he might

¹ *The Nineteenth Century*, May, 1884, p. 851.

² See the *Life of F. D. Maurice*, 1884, Vol. II., p. 502.

communicate his sonship to men, a Jew that he might break the power of the Law.

Born of a woman. "Born" is a translation conveniently adapted to the notion of pre-existence, but it is not what Paul says. The Greek word has no suitable equivalent in English. It literally means "having become," and it suggests that the Son of God sprung from a woman and only then did his career begin. Precisely the same idea occurs in *Rom.* i. 1, where it is said, not that Jesus, but that the Son of God, was sprung from the seed of David. There too the word has the misleading translation "born." In the same passage in *Romans* he is spoken of as "appointed" Son of God, the Greek word being mistranslated in order to make Paul's theology correspond with the dogma of a later time. Nevertheless it is dangerous to insist on the precise force of words, as though Paul had been writing in a theological school; and if he believed in Christ's pre-existence, he might still say "sprung from a woman," meaning, "so far as his earthly existence was concerned." The expression itself denotes simply that the Son of God was a man. Some have thought that it refers to the birth from a virgin; but if this had been intended, Paul could just as easily have written "virgin" as "woman." The Greek word, though it may be applied to unmarried women, is commonly used to denote a wife. For the use of a similar phrase see *Matt.* xi. 11, "Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist;" and *Job* xiv. 1, "Man that is born of a

woman is of few days, and full of trouble." The statement is probably added because it might be supposed, as was actually supposed by some at a later time, that the Son of God could not be found in the lowly son of a woman, but must be some visitor from a higher realm, who at most assumed the semblance of a human form, or dwelt for a time as a separate person in the man Jesus. The identity of the man with the Son of God is essential to Paul's argument; for otherwise believers would not be sons of God, but would belong to a wholly different class from him whom they followed.

The above interpretation does not make the divine element in Christ, which constituted his sonship, any less divine; it only refuses to make Paul more explicit than he is, and is content to leave intellectually vague a truth which is above our definitions, but yet may be spiritually discerned.

5. That he might redeem them which were under the Law. This was the object of his being placed under the Law. For the full purport of the clause see the notes on the preceding chapter.

That we might receive the adoption of sons. This was the purpose of his being a man, that he might bring mankind into their true relation with God. The Greek word which is translated "adoption of sons" requires a few remarks upon its signification. There is, I think, no doubt that it cannot denote "sonship." Nevertheless, I venture to suggest that "adoption" does not do full justice to the Apostle's meaning. Adoption, with us, implies that the person adopted is

not really the child of the person adopting him. This sense of the word seems quite opposed to the tenor of Paul's teaching about the sons of God. The opening of this chapter assumes that we are really sons, though, like the sons of earthly fathers, we had to pass through a period of subjection. In the following verse this is plainly asserted,—“because ye are sons,”—so that the adoption is grounded on the fact, not that we were not sons of God, but that we really were so in spite of appearances to the contrary. In the same way Paul says (in *Rom.* viii. 14), “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God,” not “are considered to be so, or adopted as such.” I am inclined, therefore, to think that Paul refers, not to the adoption of those who were not sons, but to the full recognition of the rights and privileges of sonship in those who really were sons, though they had hitherto seemed to be only slaves. The word “sonship” would not have expressed this; for the sonship, being inherent, was not a thing to be received, but only required formal recognition when the fulness of the time had come. “Conferring of sonship” would fairly represent the literal sense of the Greek, and this might be applied either to adoption in the strict sense or to the bestowal of the full honours of a son on one who had ended his minority. There is no classical usage to decide the question; and even if usage was adverse, I think that Paul might allow himself this modification in the meaning of a word to express an idea peculiar to himself. At all events I may throw this out as a suggestion which relieves the

apparent contradiction in the passage without doing violence to its language.

6. The heir had been in the condition of a slave ; yet because he really was a son, the time came when his pupilage had to cease, and the full spirit of the son to be breathed into his heart. This is the "conferring of sonship," the "receiving of the Spirit" that was spoken of in chap. iii. 2. The Spirit was sent forth by God. It was an inpouring of life from him, and lifted men into a communion in which the despairing struggle with sin was left behind. It was the Spirit of the Son, and therefore raised the glad, imploring cry, "Abba, Father," as though that dear name alone summed up in itself all prayer.

Abba is the Aramaic word for Father, and is followed by its translation into Greek ; and thus this cry denotes the welding together of Jew and Greek through the fervour of the same spiritual faith.

7. The second person singular in this verse brings home to each individual the truth which was first expressed in its most universal form in verse 5, and then applied to the readers collectively in verse 6. This individual application throws the Christian doctrine into strong relief. It is so easy to apply grand terms to men in the abstract, while we fail to realize in ourselves that we, one by one, are children of God, and therefore free through that holy and loving dependence which sonship implies.

And if a son, then an heir through God. The Authorized Version reads "an heir of God through Christ." There is little doubt that the other is the

correct reading, and that that in the Authorized Version was adopted as a correction of the unusual expression. The meaning probably is that thou art an heir, not through thine own exertions in obeying a law, but through God, to whom thou owest the gift of the Spirit, and from whom alone the life of his sons can come. We have here a reassertion of the same conclusion as we reached in the last verse of the preceding chapter; but it rests on a different ground. There it was, If ye are Christ's, ye are Abraham's seed, and consequently heirs; here, If ye are Christ's, then are ye sons of God, and therefore heirs. And thus the great argument is brought to a close.

In the foregoing passage we should observe how the terms "Father" and "Son" glow with spiritual meaning, and never suffer them to degenerate in our minds into mere proper names, the empty counters of a philosophical theology. We can understand them only by retreating into the deepest life of the soul, and meeting there face to face the realities which they express. It is because their meaning has to so large an extent faded out of the heart of Christendom that it is in bondage to forms of thought and ceremonial usage, and that sin is rampant in countries that by calling themselves Christian only profane the name of Christ.

§ 13. *Appeal to the better feeling of the Galatians*
(iv. 8-20).

8. Having finished his argument, Paul now expostulates and pleads with the Galatians. The opening sentences arise immediately out of what he has just said. They are no longer slaves, but sons, and ought to act as such. Before their conversion there was excuse for them, for they did not know God, and accordingly worshipped false gods. If we are to judge from *1 Cor.* x. 20, Paul believed that the beings worshipped by the heathen were demons, and this was the common opinion among the early Christians. It was a very natural one at a time when the belief in demons was generally accepted; and there was enough that was bad and degrading in heathen worship to furnish a strong argument in favour of that view. Even such inspiration as Paul's does not raise men entirely above the errors of their time, and that which is permanent in their thought must be looked for in what is original and spiritual, and not in things which simply reflect the current notions of their age. Living ideas, charged with creative force, are the offspring of inspiration; but many an error is left by the providence of God to drop quietly away through the progress of knowledge and enlightenment. With a slight extension of what Paul himself says, we may affirm that the heavenly treasure is always contained in earthen vessels (*2 Cor.* iv. 7); but only a fool will despise the costly gem on account of the cheapness of its casket.

9. **Now**, in your present Christian state, in opposition to "at that time," before you heard of Christ. **Ye have come to know God**, is corrected into an expression which makes their defection still more astonishing. It is not as if they had found out God for themselves by their own goodness and power of thought; it was rather that God had recognised them, and drawn them to himself in mutual knowledge, so that they were doubly bound to him. For this use of the word "know" compare *Matthew* vii. 23, where Christ says to the workers of iniquity, "I never knew you."

How turn ye back? The more forcible present, "how are ye turning back?" would, I think, give the sense better. The process was going on, but was not yet completed.

To the weak and beggarly rudiments, whereunto ye desire to be in bondage over again. We have seen that Jew and Gentile alike had been in bondage under the rudiments of the world, so that for Gentile Christians to place themselves under the obligations of the Jewish Law, although it was not a return to the old religion, was a relapse into the old state of bondage. "Weak and beggarly rudiments" are not merely words of contempt, but express the deficiencies of a religion of ritual. It is weak because it confers no strength of spiritual character. It is beggarly because it has no wealth of spiritual gifts. It is rudimentary because it belongs to a more childish period than the free and generous manhood of those who have learned that they are sons of God. When they are pliant to the religious

needs of men, and serve, like the finest creations of art, to express in visible form that of which the soul is full, ceremonies have their proper place in religion; but the moment they assume authority over men, and are pushed into the first place as meritorious and necessary, they simply mark, in Paul's view, a turning away from God to the feeble and impoverished forms of a childish system.

10. Days, sabbaths and fast-days. **Months**, generally explained of new moons, but more likely months that were considered particularly holy, especially the seventh. **Seasons**, the annual festivals. **Years**, sabbatical years, recurring every seventh year.

This verse evidently indicates the point which the Galatian movement had already reached, though we may infer from the opening of the fifth chapter that some were already going to a greater extreme. The statement is very remarkable, for it shows how entire was Paul's repudiation of formalism in religion. So far from thinking the observance of the Sabbath obligatory, he thought the observance of it as obligatory was tantamount to giving up Christianity. For him all time was equally holy, and the goodness which was required on one day was required every day. It is only through the Spirit of the Son that men rise above these legal or ritualistic obligations; for thus only do they attain the reality which such things are intended to symbolise. But are we to conclude that all observance of days is opposed to Paul's principles? Hardly; for that would be itself laying down a "law," and the non-observance

of a day may be just as unspiritual as its observance. All depends on the spirit of our action. To observe a day as though the act were in itself meritorious, and to judge harshly those who do not observe it, as though they were breaking one of the commandments of God, is to reject Paul's gospel; but if we retain the free exercise of our own judgment in the observance, if we set apart a day because it is good to reserve a time for special thought and prayer, and if we are ready, for any adequate reason, to observe it differently, or not to observe it at all, then I think we do not violate the principles here laid down. The moment we make such things *ends* in themselves, we are turning our backs on Christianity, and falling into superstition; but while we use them as *means*, which are subject to the control of our spiritual judgment, we do not violate our Christian liberty.

II. This is a very strong expression of Paul's feeling; for it implies that he thought the Galatians might just as well have remained in their heathenism as have tacked on Jewish ritualism to their Christianity. We may explain this by his assertion elsewhere that "the letter killeth" (2 Cor. iii. 6). This kind of subjection to the externals of religion is not merely foolish; it is destructive of the spiritual life, for it fixes the attention on the wrong things, and denies in effect the freedom of communion between the soul and God. Hence it appeared that the Galatians were gradually returning to a state of mind which, though occupied with fresh names and objects, was spiritually on a level with their old heathenism.

12. Paul now begins a tender appeal to his readers, reminding them of the kindness and affection which they once showed him. This verse has received various explanations, owing to the brevity with which it is expressed. The reader will observe that "am" and "are" are printed in italics, indicating that they are not in the Greek. It is therefore a matter of judgment what precise words we must supply to complete the sense. Now "be" is in the Greek "become," and it is most grammatical for us to supply in the second clause the verb which is expressed in the first. Accordingly we may translate "Become as I (*am*), because I also became as you"; that is, become free from the Law, like me; for I became like you when I renounced my Judaism, and put myself on a level with Gentiles. This explanation suits both subject and grammar, and is probably the best. Other explanations are "Become as I now am, for I was once like you, a zealous adherent of Judaism;" and, "Seek not to differ from me, for I am one in heart with you" (Jowett).

You did me no wrong. The connection is abrupt, owing to the excitement of feeling. From what follows we may suppose that the allusion is to the time when Paul first preached among them. Then he was a stranger, and ill; yet they did him no wrong, but treated him with the greatest kindness. Much more ought they to be true to him now.

13-14. So far from doing him any injury, they received him with the utmost possible kindness, although there were circumstances which might have

made them keep aloof. His first preaching among them was due to an illness, which detained him in the country. There have been many conjectures as to the nature of this infirmity in the flesh. It is evident that it was a very severe trial to Paul himself (2 *Cor.* xii. 7); and we may safely infer from the present passage that it was of a kind which was repulsive to other people, and calculated to excite their contempt. Some have thought that it was violent head-ache; others, epilepsy; others, weak eyes. It is best to admit our ignorance.

That which was a temptation to you: that which might have tempted you to very different conduct. "Rejected" is hardly strong enough for the Greek word: "loathed" would express it better.

I extract the following from Lightfoot. "The life of the greatest and best of English kings presents so close a parallel to the Apostle's thorn in the flesh, that I cannot forbear quoting the passage at length, though the illustration is not my own.¹

'It was in the midst of these rejoicings (on the occasion of his marriage) that Alfred was *suddenly attacked* by an illness, the sight of which struck dumb the loud joy of the guests, and for which neither they nor all the physicans of the day could account Others thought it was the unexpected return of a painful malady to which he had been subject at an early age.

'We are informed what the malady really was in

¹ The passage is quoted in Jowett I. p. 368. (2nd ed.)

an account which is not quite clear On passing from childhood to youth he begged for some protection against his passions, for some corporal suffering which might arm him against temptation, so that his spirit might be enabled to raise him above the weakness of the flesh. On this, we are told, heaven sent him his illness, which Asser describes as a kind of eruption. For many years it caused him the most horrible torture, which was so intense that *he himself began to despair of his life*. One day . . . the royal youth . . . prostrated himself in silent devotion and prayed to God for pity. The fear of being rendered by his bodily infirmities, or perhaps by leprosy or blindness, incapable of exercising the royal power or *despicable in the sight of the world*, had long obtained possession of his soul and induced him *to pray for his deliverance* from such a plague. Every other lighter trial he was willing to undergo, provided it only spared him for what he was accustomed to look on as his destined office. Not long after . . . in consequence of his fervent prayers, we are informed that all signs of his malady disappeared.

‘And now in the very moment that he had taken to himself a wife, in the very moment that the marriage-guests were drinking and carousing noisily in the festive halls, the evil against which . . . he had prayed overtook him. He was *suddenly seized with fear and trembling*; and to the very hour that Asser wrote, to a good old age, *he was never sure of not being attacked by it*. There were instants when this visitation seemed to *render him incapable of any exertion*, either in-

tellectual or bodily : but the repose of a day, a night, or even an hour, would always raise his courage again. Under the weight of this bodily infirmity, which was probably of an epileptic nature, he learned, by the force of his unyielding will, to overcome the heaviest cares that ever weighed upon any ruler engaged in a contest with a most terrible foe, and under the weight of corporeal weakness and the cares of the outer world, to prosecute unceasingly his great purpose.' Pauli's *Life of Alfred*, pp. 122—125 (Engl. Trans.)."¹

15. How is it that you are so changed? What has become of your felicitation of yourselves at having heard my gospel? I declare, at that time you would have given me your eyes, the most precious thing you possessed, to show your affection towards me.

16. This must refer to something that took place on Paul's second visit. On the first visit the Galatians were full of enthusiastic devotion to him. But it would appear from the present verse that information had reached him which showed that their feelings towards him had changed, and they complained that he was not so friendly towards them as formerly. If this change arose from his telling them the truth, his frank speech must have been on occasion of the second visit. Whether he then found an inclination to Judaism or other evils which called for his reproof we are not told; but whatever may have been the occasion, the Judaizers seem to have taken advantage of it to persuade the vain and fickle Galatians that a man

¹ Lightfoot's *Epistle to the Galatians*, pp. 173-4.

who spoke so freely to them could not be their friend. Paul's reply is that he only spoke the truth, and to speak the truth is no evidence of hostility.

17. I should prefer translating, "They zealously seek you,—not in a good way, but they desire to shut you out, that ye may zealously seek them." This is more literal, and gives the connection of thought more clearly, than the Revised Version. "They" must be the Judaizing teachers. While they represented Paul as an enemy, they were trying to ingratiate themselves with the Galatians. The way in which they were doing so was not to be commended, but was an attempt to form a clique exclusively attached to themselves. This seems the most probable sense of "shut you out"; they would shut you out from other teachers, that you may court them alone.

18. The readers might object to the last statement that Paul was just as exclusive as the Judaizers, and wished to keep his converts all to himself. Anticipating this, he says that he has no objection to their being zealously sought by others, provided it be in a good cause. His objection was not to the activity of other men when he was absent, but to the destruction of the Christian principle of the Churches. Other explanations of the verse have been suggested; but this suits the context, and seems to give the most appropriate meaning to the words themselves.

19. This is the only passage where Paul addresses his readers as "little children." Here it not only expresses the fact that they were his own converts, but marks the tenderness of his love towards them, and at

the same time his sense of their immaturity. He compares himself to their mother, who suffers once more the pains of birth on their account. There may be an allusion here to the illness from which he was suffering when he first preached to them. Then he had acute bodily pains ; and now he had equal mental distress because they had strayed so far from Christ. This would continue until Christ was formed in them ; that is to say, till he became the inward principle of their being, dwelling in their hearts by faith.

20. To be present with you now, refers back to verse 18,—though the good cause might go on in my absence, yet I should like to be with you now, when you are straying so far from the true way.

To change my voice. There is probably an allusion here to the second visit, when he spoke in such a tone that they thought he had become their enemy. Nothing could be farther from his real feeling, and he could wish to be present among them again, that he might lay aside that asperity of voice, and speak to them tenderly and lovingly. For he was perplexed about them, and at a loss how to deal with them. The letter itself bears signs of this perplexity ; for at one time it is harsh and vehement in rebuke, again most gentle and affectionate, and yet again bitterly ironical. But if the Apostle's indignation sometimes carried him too far, it was not for himself that he was troubled ; but, like his Master, he was grieved at the hardness of men's hearts, and at the substitution of a carnal and unprofitable ritualism for the Gospel of the Spirit.

§ 14. *Argument from Sarah and Hagar* (iv. 21-31).

In this passage Paul avowedly uses allegorical interpretation,¹ and puts it forward as an argument which ought to satisfy his opponents. In doing so he only follows the practice of his time, and there is no occasion to defend him by saying that he meant to fight his enemies with their own weapons, or that he thought anything would be good enough for the "foolish Galatians." Paul's mind was too earnest and sincere for this kind of trifling, and we have no reason to suppose that he had entirely shaken off the current mode of interpretation. Indeed the marvel is the extent to which he has freed himself from it, and struck out a line of his own. What can be more unlike than a treatise of the Talmud and an Epistle of Paul's? And how great is the contrast between Paul's distinction of the spirit and the letter, and Philo's habit of volatilizing the persons of history into the ideas of philosophy; and how rare and cautious is his use of allegory, compared with Philo's constant employment of it as the only key by which the meaning of scripture can be unlocked! The passage before us is by far the most elaborate example of allegorical interpretation which we meet in the Epistles; and if we consider its general drift, we shall see that it contains rather an argumentative illustration than an allegory in the sense of the Greek philosophers and of Philo. Paul, we may presume from his characterising the

¹ See Introduction, pp. 25 sq.

events as an allegory, believed that they occurred, or at least that the writer narrated them, with a view to conveying such a lesson as he himself draws from them ; and his Christian experience may have seemed to light up the ancient story with a fresh illumination, and reveal for the first time its real meaning. It is in this opinion that we are unable to follow him, but we may at the same time admit that the circumstances were legitimately suited to the purpose which he had in hand. The arguments of the Jewish party among the Galatians are not specified ; but we may presume that they were an expression of the national feeling that the Jews were the genuine descendants of Abraham ; that they were the chosen people, and the inheritors of a law of eternal obligation ; that the new covenant through Christ was only a completion and confirmation of the old, and could not supersede it ; and that therefore the only entrance into favour with God must be through the portals of Judaism. Now it would be a fair mode of argument, in answer to this state of thought and feeling among the Jewish Christians, to show that their own early history intimated a very different conception of Divine Providence, and, with a simple change of names and circumstances, met the spiritual requirements of the present time. From the instance of Abraham himself, then, it appeared that the Divine selection did not proceed according to the laws of mere natural descent. For he had two sons, just as now he had two classes of descendants, one in the natural way by a slave, the other the child of promise by the freewoman. Taking

these two women to represent the two covenants, the very name of Hagar reminds us of the Law; and her state of subjection, of the present earthly Jerusalem. On the other hand, the Gentile Christians were, like Isaac, the children of promise. Thus it was evident that God was not bound by the laws of natural descent, and it would be quite in accordance with his ancient dealings if he gave the preference to a spiritual offspring of Abraham. But the parallel went further. The spirit of persecution exhibited by the son of the bondwoman was now shown by those in slavery to the Law. But which was accepted in the olden time? So far was the son of the bondwoman from being allowed to limit the rights of the son of the freewoman, that he was not even permitted to share in the inheritance.

Although very differently constructed, the argument is similar to one which might be drawn now by the friends of liberty and progress against the spirit of a self-satisfied and intolerant orthodoxy from the early fortunes of Christianity. In the time of Christ, admitted by both parties to have been in the right, it was he who stood up for liberty of thought and practice, while the sticklers for dogma and ordinance were clearly rejected in the Divine judgment. And the argument might be strengthened by showing that there is now the same servile adherence to the letter, the same imperturbable self-confidence, and the same disposition to persecute. In truth, the same controversies re-appear, under different names, from age to age. Pharisaic Judaism was conquered in the letter, but its spirit gradually conquered the Church; and

only by slow degrees is Christendom casting it off, and coming to understand the glorious gospel preached by the Apostle of the Gentiles.

21. Under the law : Greek, "under law," denoting the kind of subjection that they desired. **Do ye not hear ?** Some understand by this question, "Are you not in the habit of hearing the Law read ?" But the more probable meaning is, "Do you not give heed to the Law ?" "The Law ;" that is, the Scriptures containing the Law.

22. It is written ; that is, in the Book of the Law, or the Scriptures. Paul gives the general sense, but does not quote a particular statement.

23. The hand-maid, Hagar, the mother of Ishmael, from whom, according to tradition, the Arabians were descended. **The free woman,** Sarah, the mother of Isaac, from whom sprang the Israelites.

24. An allegory. The Greek word is a participle, and may mean either, related as an allegory, or, interpreted allegorically. With us an allegory implies that the literal sense is not true. In the Pilgrim's Progress, for instance, the characters are all fictitious, and under the appearance of a pilgrimage spiritual truths and experiences are described. But those who gave an allegorical interpretation to the scriptures did not necessarily reject the literal sense. Philo, no doubt, believed in the historical reality of Abraham and Moses, and other persons in the Old Testament, whom nevertheless he treated as the equivalent of philosophical ideas. Accordingly we cannot infer from Paul's treatment of the history of Abraham that he regarded it as fictitious.

One from Mount Sinai. This ought to be followed by an explanation of "the other." But Paul is led away by the mention of Hagar, and so the construction is changed, and the meaning of the other woman is given only by implication in verse 26.

25. Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia. The Greek text here is very uncertain; but where the revisers have obtained their reading "*this* Hagar," I do not know, for "this Hagar" can mean only "this woman of whom I have been speaking," and is not warranted by any Greek text. With the reading which I suppose they must have intended to adopt, the translation ought to be "the word [or, the expression] Hagar." This reading is given by Westcott and Hort, in their great edition of the Greek Testament, as the most probable. If it be correct, the meaning may be presented thus:—"Hagar represents the covenant from Mount Sinai. Now I am justified in saying this, for the name Hagar itself denotes Mount Sinai in Arabia." In support of this it has been said that there is a very similar, though not identical, word in Arabic which means a stone or rock, and there is some slight evidence that Mount Sinai was so called. The evidence, however, is very scanty and unsatisfactory; but it is not impossible that Paul, during his retreat in Arabia, may have heard the mountain spoken of locally as "the rock," and the similarity of the words would be sufficient to suggest the use which he here makes of them. The sentence might be explained more simply thus:—"The expression Hagar in the allegory stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia, where the descendants of

Hagar live.” A strong objection to this is that Hagar has already been declared to be the covenant from Mount Sinai, and it would therefore be quite unmeaning to say that the expression represented the mountain where the covenant was given. If we retain this reading, we must, I think, accept the former interpretation. The reading, however, is far from certain; and some excellent critics, including Tischendorf, omit Hagar, and read, “For Sinai is a mountain in Arabia.” With this reading we must suppose that the statement is inserted in order to inform or remind the Galatians where Sinai was, and the connection may be given as follows:—“Hagar, the mother of the Arabians, represents the covenant from Mount Sinai; for Sinai is in Arabia.” This would give a clear and good sense, but unfortunately there is no allusion to Hagar’s being the mother of the Arabians, and without this the argument is very obscure. I am afraid we must be content to leave the reading and the meaning in some uncertainty.

Answereth to the Jerusalem that now is. Jerusalem, the centre of the Jewish race, represented the old covenant of the Law. She and her children were in bondage, and were therefore fitly symbolized by the bondwoman. The bondage was that spiritual slavery to the Law which has been already described; but perhaps Paul may have thought also of the political condition of the Jews; for though they were not the slaves, they were the subjects of a foreign power.

26. The heavenly or spiritual Jerusalem, symbolized by Sarah, is the mother of us Christians. In an

apocryphal work Zion is spoken of as "the mother of us all," that is, of all Jews.¹ But, notwithstanding its claims on their affection, the old Jerusalem was, according to Jewish belief, to be superseded by a fairer city, built up from great foundations, and distinguished by "the brightness of its glory, and the beauty of its adornment." In another apocryphal work we are told that after the second destruction of Jerusalem the city "must be renewed in glory, and shall be crowned for ever." This city had existed with God from the creation of the world, and had been shown to Adam, to Abraham, and to Moses.² Accordingly in *Revelation* (xxi. 10) the new Jerusalem descends out of heaven from God. Paul refers to this rabbinical notion; but he gives it a spiritual meaning, for only spiritually could the heavenly Jerusalem be the mother of the Christians. The city of God, which had no temple, and needed no light but the Divine glory, was the Christian Church, which had already come down from heaven, and established itself among the nations; and it must have seemed to Paul the earthly realization of the heavenly ideal. The thought of a Jerusalem above, which had been with God from the beginning, falls in with the whole course of the argument; for it suggests that the gospel is not only new, but old, more ancient in the providence of God than the Law which was threatening to obstruct it.

27. This quotation is taken from *Isaiah* liv. 1, a

¹ *4th Ezra* x. 7.

² *Apocalypse of Baruch*, iv. and xxxii.

passage referring to the revival of the Israelites after the period of their desolation beneath a foreign yoke. Paul applies it to the heavenly Jerusalem, which, like Sarah, had long been barren, while she that had the husband, the earthly Jerusalem, had been fruitful. But as Sarah became the mother of the promised seed, so was it now; the Christian Church was spreading on all sides, and seemed likely soon to outnumber the Jews, while already the number of Gentile converts must have far exceeded the number of Jewish proselytes.

28. It is doubtful whether the correct text here is "we" or "ye," both readings being well supported. With the former, the reference is to Christians generally; with the latter, the truth is applied emphatically to the Galatians, with a probable reference to their Gentile origin.

29. The reference must be to *Genesis* xxi. 9, where it is related that Abraham gave a feast on the day that Isaac was weaned, and Sarah saw Ishmael mocking. It is questioned whether the Hebrew word can bear such a strong meaning; but, at all events, it is evident, from Sarah's indignation, that the writer used it in an unfavourable sense. But even mocking hardly amounts to persecution, and Paul may have had in mind, in addition to the scriptural passage, some rabbinical story of Ishmael's conduct. The persecutions referred to by Paul as still going on must be those inflicted by Jews upon Christians, and not merely the troubles arising from the Judaizers. He wishes to show that the Jews have no prerogative

which ought to tempt the Gentiles to place themselves under the yoke of Judaism.

The principle which is here exemplified is of universal application. The disposition to persecute is an evidence that we are born after the flesh, and not after the spirit, and are to that extent excluded from the community of Christ. It is on the ground of something external,—dogma, or ritual, or church, or national descent,—that persecutions have arisen. It is not because men are less spiritual, less holy, less loving, that we persecute them; it is because they prefer the liberty and the reproach of Christ to some outward and dubious thing on which we pride ourselves, or which, from our own want of spirituality, we have come to regard as essential. The spirit of Christ is the only measure by which we can ascertain a man's Christian stature; and if we ever find ourselves harbouring unjust or unkind thoughts towards any man because in all good conscience he differs from us, we are becoming carnal, and cutting ourselves off from Christ. When Christendom becomes Christian, it will know what "the communion of the Holy Spirit" means, and not allow anything lower to usurp its place. Then persecutions will be over.

30. The words after **scripture** should have been printed as a quotation, though it is not verbally exact. It is taken from *Genesis* xxi. 10, where, however, the Greek translation, agreeably to the Hebrew, has "with my son Isaac," instead of "with the son of the freewoman." The sense is the same, and the change seems evidently made, not from a failure of

memory, but to render the signification clear, apart from its context. The ancients were by no means so particular as we have learned to be about giving the precise words of a quotation. Passages were not easily found in ancient manuscripts, so that the memory was largely relied upon, and the memory was not always quite correct. But in addition to this source of error, writers deliberately altered quotations, when the exact words were not important; and in cases where we should introduce a note or parenthesis, they adapted the language to their immediate purpose, or even introduced an entire clause by way of comment. Such things are matters of literary usage; but our modern practice, though sometimes a little pedantic, is on the whole safest,—to repeat the exact words of the author to whom you refer.

The scriptural command here appealed to is said to have been spoken by Sarah; but it is confirmed by the Divine direction to Abraham in verse 12.

31. Wherefore : as the result of this allegory. The words at least point back only to the allegory; but the sense serves as a conclusion to the whole argument.

We are not children of a handmaid. Handmaids might be many, but the freewoman, the legitimate wife, was only one. The sense is, we are not in a state of bondage, either to Judaism, or to any other system. We are sons of the freewoman, the promised seed, the heirs who have stepped into the full rights of their inheritance.

§ 15. *Exhortation to stand fast in liberty.* (v.1-12.)

We enter now on the hortatory portion of the Epistle. The conclusion has been established that we have been made free through the spirit of sonship; it remains that we stand fast in our liberty, and use it worthily. The course of the exhortation is governed, as we shall see, by the central thought of the Epistle.

1. The reading in this verse varies in the manuscripts, and hence the difference between the Authorised and the Revised Versions. Many authorities of high value have become known to us since the time of King James, and the revisers have followed the most approved text. Accepting this as correct, we may regard the first clause as forming a transition to the following section. It sums up in a brief and vigorous statement the truth which has been enforced in the previous part of the letter, and prepares the way for the coming exhortation. Observe how Paul dwells on the idea of freedom. With him, religious liberty was the very breath of the Gospel, and those who would enslave men to dogmas and ordinances have, in his view, renounced Christ, and stand outside the pale of genuine Christianity. This verse may be our reply to all who would entangle us in a yoke of bondage. But the maintenance of our liberty depends on our own fidelity. We must stand fast, or we may be unwittingly ensnared by principles which end in slavery. Hence the need of exhortation. Christ has set us free, but he does not force freedom upon us against our will, and we must

do our part. The “yoke of bondage” in question, is of course the Jewish Law. The Galatians had been enslaved to heathenism; they now seemed willing to be enslaved to Judaism. They had changed their opinions, but not their principles. The inward spirit of Divine life would free them from every form of slavery; and it stands in opposition to every kind of religion that would coerce the intellect and conscience of men by the weight of an outward authority.

2. **I, Paul.** This emphatic reference to himself may be intended either as an appeal to his apostolic authority or as a refutation of the charge that he was still preaching circumcision (verse 11). He had been accused of pleasing men (i. 10), and was thereby induced to employ very strong language in maintaining his position. So here the effect of his words may be this,—I, Paul, who have been accused of preaching circumcision, and may have sometimes said that it was in itself a matter of indifference, do not admit that it is so in all cases; on the contrary, I believe that if a Gentile receives circumcision, he thereby renounces Christ.

Observe the change of translation. The Authorised Version, **If ye be circumcised**, is ambiguous; for it might apply to men who were already in that condition, and thereby the statement would exclude all Jews from the benefits of the Gospel. It is obvious that this cannot be intended; and the Revised Version, **If ye receive circumcision**, gives the meaning of the Greek more correctly. Circumcision was in itself a matter of indifference (verse 6); but a Gentile had no reason

for receiving it unless he believed that it was conducive to his salvation. Accordingly, the rite was not a matter of indifference to him. In accepting it he accepted the principle of the Jewish Law, and bound himself to its requirements, and thus practically asserted that the faith of Christ was not sufficient. Christ would profit him nothing because he deliberately placed himself under the curse, and abandoned the inward life of love for subjection to an outward rule. Paul's words are applicable in effect to all who turn Christ's own teaching into a mere law, and think they will be saved by conformity to certain regulations, whether of thought or practice, while they know nothing of the inward power of his spirit.

3-4. The same thought is repeated with protestation on account of its importance, and the reason for it is added. Circumcision was a sign and pledge of the complete adoption of the Law, and a Gentile could not take this obligation on himself without embracing principles which were in complete antagonism to the Gospel. He was seeking his justification (for this is the force of the Greek present tense) by the Law, or more exactly "in Law," that is, through perfect obedience to a code of commandments and prohibitions. In so doing he had fallen away from grace, or, more literally, "from *the* grace," that is, the grace proclaimed by the Gospel, the fatherly mercy which accepts the faith and devotion of the heart, and asks only for the free service of love.

5. **For** : justifying the previous statement by a brief explanation of the Christian principle. **We** is emphatic

in the Greek, we Christians, in opposition to those who seek justification in Law. **Through the Spirit.** There is no article in the Greek, and I think it is out of place to ask whether Paul refers to the human or the Divine spirit. These are intimately allied. The spirit is that in us which turns towards God, and holds communion with him ; and God's Spirit is that in him which turns towards man, and works in the secret places of the soul, so that it is often impossible to draw a sharp line between the two. Paul, therefore, by the present word, may have meant the whole realm of spirit. It was in that higher region, and not in the domain of the flesh or of the Law that Christians sought for righteousness. **By faith :** literally "out of faith." As this phrase is not expressly connected with "the Spirit," it seems to qualify the whole clause. Faith is the source of the spiritual expectation of the Christian. **Wait for the hope of righteousness.** "Hope" is here used for the object, or rather, perhaps, for the fulfilment of hope. As true righteousness is a perfect inward conformity to the Spirit of God, we do not receive it all at once in its fulness. We are obliged to hope for it, and wait patiently till our hope be realised. Thus the Christian has none of the boastfulness or sense of merit which arises from having obeyed a law and discharged his obligations, but is kept humble by a vision of righteousness which is yet to be.

6. **For :** once more introducing a reason. We depend on the Spirit and on faith, because in Christ the things of the flesh have no force. **In Christ Jesus :** as we might say "under Christianity;" but Paul's

expression is far more suggestive, implying a spiritual dwelling in Christ, and sharing his life. The distinctions on which men have expended so much bitter controversy are of no avail, but only that elevated character which lives in the apprehension of divine things, and shows its energy through love. Faith and love go inevitably together. We cannot rest trustfully in communion with the God of love, and continually feel his undeserved compassion resting upon us, and still be without love to our fellowmen. We find it so in experience. When faith is freshest and keenest, a new fellowship with man blends itself indissolubly with our fellowship with God, for whom he loves we must love. Nor is the love limited to man, but is the universal spirit of our activity. Faith we may conceive of as "rapt into *still* communion," transported beyond this world so as to lose all but the motionless and mute expression of bowed head, and closed eyes, and clasped hands. But love is its practical power, the still and silent spirit breaking into deed and word.

We must notice here the importance attached to faith, hope, and love. The student will find it interesting to look for other passages in the Epistles where these fundamental Christian principles are referred to, whether separately or in combination.

7. Having made clear to the Galatians his view of the inevitable results of their conduct, Paul now makes a more personal appeal. **Ye were running well:** a figure derived from the racecourse. **Who did hinder you?** Whether Paul knew who the false teachers were we cannot say. The question here is not asked for the

sake of information, but implies that no one could have prevented them from continuing in their course, had they chosen to be faithful. **Obey.** There is a play upon the words **obey**, **persuasion**, and **I have confidence**, which is lost in English. We might, perhaps, represent it by translating, "who did hinder you from being persuaded to the truth? The persuasion is not from him who calls you . . . I am persuaded in regard to you."

8. **Persuasion**, like the Greek word, is ambiguous, and may mean either the persuasion exercised by the false teachers, or the persuasion experienced by you. The sense, however, remains substantially the same in either case. **Of him that calleth you**, that is God. Observe the present tense, referring not to the past act of calling the Galatians, but to the permanent character of God. It belongs to him to call men to truth and goodness, and he renews his call whenever we turn aside to what is wrong.

9. These words are a proverb, which is quoted also in *1 Cor. v. 6*. The sense seems to be that, though the Judaizing party might be small, yet unless the disciples were on their guard, they would gradually infect the whole body with their false principles. It is generally evil things that are compared to leaven; but the parable of the leaven furnishes an exception.

10. **I** is emphatic: in spite of the danger, *I* have still confidence in you. **In the Lord** is not to be connected with **I have confidence**, as though the Lord were the object of confidence. It rather denotes that the confidence had its foundation in the Lord: it was by virtue of being in him that Paul felt the confidence.

That ye will be none otherwise minded. These words naturally refer to what has immediately preceded,—that you will not think differently from what I have just laid down. But this failure on the part of him who troubles you, whoever he may be, will not exempt him from judgment. I see no reason to suppose that Paul had any particular individual in his mind. We see from verse 12 that in this very passage he is thinking of a party rather than a single person. Hence we must take the present expression in a general sense: the troubler, whatever may be his position, and however small his success, must still be condemned for his conduct. The judgment is spoken of as a burden which he will have to carry.

11. In order to connect this verse with the preceding we must suppose that the disturbers had alleged that Paul himself preached circumcision, and this absurd charge was suggested to the Apostle's mind by the thought of his opponents. Were it not for the case of Timothy, mentioned in *Acts* xvi. 1-3, it would be difficult to imagine on what such a charge could be based. **Still.** If this word implies that Paul ever preached circumcision, it must have been before his conversion, for the early part of the Epistle teaches us that he embraced at once the leading principles of his Gospel. **Why am I still persecuted?** The fact that he was persecuted by the Jews was a sufficient answer to the charge; for it was not his proclamation of Jesus as the Messiah, but his attack on the perpetuity of the Law that irritated them. The stumbling-block of the Cross was its

connection with the abrogation of the Law; and if Paul had been content to preach a theory with no far-reaching practical results, the Jews would have let him alone. We have seen in the third chapter one way in which the Cross abolished the Law. Another is intimated in vi. 14, "Through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world." To have the spirit of the Crucified was greater than all outward distinctions, and a redemption from all spiritual bondage. To be able to say, "Lo! I come to do thy will, O God," was more than circumcision or sacrifices. That was the stumbling-block to souls imprisoned in the transient forms of a faith which had ceased to be faith, and could therefore recognise only the destroyer in the Redeemer.

12. The meaning of this verse is disputed; but most commentators agree that it contains a piece of bitter sarcasm, into the details of which we need not enter, meaning that, if the disturbers are so very fond of ceremonial, they may as well go farther, and become devotees of Cybelê who was worshipped in the Galatian town of Pessinus. Paul thereby implies that, at all events in their ritual, Judaism and heathenism were identical in principle, and that the Galatians might just as well go back to the religion they had left as place themselves under the Jewish Law. In this verse he was certainly not seeking to please men; and nothing can give us a more vivid impression of his aversion to all attempts to impose a ritual. These, he thought, were fundamentally anti-christian and heathen. Men, however, who

stop at particular facts, and fail to rise to the apprehension of principle, are unable to see this; and accordingly the successors of the disturbers in Galatia have, on the whole, had a happy time of it in the Christian Church.

§ 16. *Liberty is not to be abused, but subordinated to the service of Love* (v. 13-26).

It would almost seem as though Paul, having given free vent to his indignation, began to reflect that, after all, the disturbers had something to say for themselves. There is a false liberty which repudiates moral restraints. There is a spurious spirituality which thinks itself so independent of the body that the body may indulge unchecked its natural inclinations without hurting the soul. To Paul this state of mind must have been even more abhorrent than subservience to the Law; for this was to escape from law by sinking into lawlessness, and not by rising into communion with the living Source of law. He may have known, or at least feared, that the Galatians had given some ground for the interference of the Judaizers by their sensuality and violence; and accordingly he proceeds to warn them against such a perversion of Christian teaching.

13. **Ye** is emphatic, as we see from the Greek. The precise reference in **for** is not very obvious. It may be quite general,—I urge all this upon you, for, whatever may be the case with others, *you* at all events were called for freedom. **Were called**, at the time

of their conversion. **Only** introduces a limitation: you are free, but freedom has its dangers; be careful how you use it. "*Use*" is in italics as it is not expressed in the Greek. In English we are obliged to complete the sense in some such way; in the original the language is more lively without the verb. **For an occasion to the flesh:** as a starting point and excuse for all the evil passions of the lower nature. **Through love be servants one to another.** The Christian spirit is love, and it is the character of love to render service. Thus Christianity has its bondage as well as the Law. But it is not a bondage which enslaves the mind, and crushes it with superstitious fears; it is the free self-sacrifice of goodness, which finds its highest and fullest life in surrendering life to the good of others.

14. I do not think that this is said merely by way of concession to the Galatians: if you are so anxious to keep the Law, you may do so by keeping the Law of Love. In Paul's view the Law was holy, and the commandment holy, and righteous, and good (*Rom.* vii. 12), and the very object of Christ's mission was "that the ordinance of the Law might be fulfilled in us" (*Rom.* viii. 4). The Law, then, was the expression of Divine righteousness, and it was necessary that it should be fulfilled. But it was possible to regard it in two ways. It might be accepted as a purely outward authority, as law, in which all the precepts stood upon the same level, and were of everlasting obligation. Or it might be accepted in the spirit, and not in the letter; and then it would

be possible to consider wherein its spirit culminated, and to regard its highest expression as alone constituting its permanent meaning and binding authority. As soon as this spirit was received into the heart as the principle of life, the Law as an outward authority would drop away, and all that did not flow spontaneously from the inner spirit would come to be regarded as temporary in its purpose, and adapted only to a particular stage of human development. Those who accepted it as an institution by the letter of which they were bound, were debtors to do, without discrimination, all the things that were written in it; those, who, like Paul, received it in the spirit, and found its abiding principle in love, felt that those who loved, and they alone, by fulfilling it spiritually, completely satisfied its obligations.

15. This warning shows that party feeling was becoming violently excited. The result of this would be mutual destruction. Genuine Christianity would be banished from the field, so that no Christian Church would be left, and the forces which ought to be united for the conversion of the world would be paralyzed in presence of the enemy. This is one of the many verses in the New Testament which the Christian Church has sedulously neglected; but we trust that a better time is coming.

16. **But I say :** perhaps better, "Now I mean." He takes up and develops the thought which has been thrown out in verses 13 and 14. True freedom cannot be used as an occasion to the flesh; for freedom is spiritual, and the spiritual and the fleshly

are completely antagonistic. **Walk** is employed as a figure to denote the outward mode of life: regulate your conduct by the Spirit. **Spirit**: see the note on verse 5. I do not suppose that Paul means either God's Spirit alone or man's spirit alone; for though he undoubtedly distinguishes these (see *Rom.* viii. 16), he looks upon the human spirit as the organ of the Divine, and does not contemplate the possibility of following one's own spirit without any sense of the presence and power of God. To say that our own spirit "in itself and unaided does not stand in direct antagonism to the flesh" (Lightfoot), would not convey any meaning to the Apostle, for, in his view, our spirit is practically non-existent till it is quickened and filled with the Spirit of God.¹ It is better, therefore, not to define the language here more sharply than the text itself suggests. The meaning is, Govern your lives by that higher power within you, where alone man has fellowship with God. **Ye shall not fulfil the lust [or desire] of the flesh**: there will be no abuse of your liberty, there will be no falling away into excesses such as the Law condemns, for the very principle of your new life is utterly opposed to these things.

17. For: justifying the previous statement. Flesh and spirit are mutually opposed, so that, if you follow

¹ I think the only exception is *2 Cor.* vii. 1, "Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit," where "spirit" seems to be used in a more extended sense than is customary with Paul, and denotes simply the mental as distinguished from the bodily constitution.

one, you necessarily subdue the other. **For these are contrary the one to the other, that ye may not do the things that ye would.** These words contain a thought which is not necessary, but is nevertheless suggested by the argument. These antagonistic principles are placed in us as the inevitable condition of moral life. Man is not meant, like the brutes, to follow spontaneously his first inclinations, and do whatever he likes. It is only through conflict that the moral consciousness is developed, and preparation made for the higher spiritual life. Accordingly, when we wish to follow the flesh, and make that our rule, the spirit protests that there is a more excellent way. When we are disposed to follow the spirit, the flesh complains of the irksome self-denial. Perhaps a further thought is implied, though it is not here clearly expressed. The will is inadequate to decide the conflict, and hence man learns that he can conquer only by the slow and silent deepening of the spiritual forces in him, and this again can be effected only by living in communion with God, or, in Paul's language, by faith. Thus the sense of feebleness and sin prepares us to receive of the life of God.

18. There are no articles in the Greek, and I think the meaning would come out with more force by omitting them in English. You are not under law, because it is the object of law to check the evil actions that are suggested by our lower nature; but if you are led by the Spirit of God in communion with your spirit, these actions cannot be performed,

and law will have nothing in your conduct to forbid or to punish. Hence for you it will have practically ceased to exist.

19-21. In these and the following verses Paul exhibits more clearly the two kinds of life which spring from the two contrasted principles, and shows that it is impossible to escape from the Law except through the power of the Spirit. The moment we sink into the lower life, we thereby place ourselves once more under the Law and its condemnation; for the sins which it denounces are forever opposed to the will of God, and by their very nature exclude from his kingdom.

We need not go in detail through the list of sensual, superstitious, and angry passions and practices, which are described as **works of the flesh**. They all spring out of the animal and self-regarding nature. We may be surprised to find **divisions** and **heresies** included in so black a list. "Heresies," however, might be better translated "sects," for the reference is not to a false opinion, but to the formation of permanently hostile parties. These separations have been due to want of love, and to an exaltation of what is secondary into the place of what is primary through an irritable attachment to our own particular point of view. It might seem as though divisions were inevitable; but if Christians had never done anything to violate God's Holy Spirit of Love, I am not sure that Christendom would not still be united.

22. The fruit of the Spirit. He does not say "The works of the Spirit," for he mentions nothing

but dispositions. These show themselves in good works; but the works are not of a definite kind, so as to be enjoined by express commands, but are infinitely diversified, adapting themselves to ever-changing circumstances. We should observe the prominent place assigned to "joy." The Christian spirit does not engender melancholy, but is full of joy, because it brings with it the consciousness that we are continually under our Father's love. It is a test which men seldom apply to their religious character, but it is a searching one. "Faithfulness" is the word which is generally translated "faith." No doubt the reason for the change in the translation is due to the fact that faith is usually represented by Paul as the primary condition of the whole Christian character, and therefore it seems inconsistent to represent it here as only one of the many fruits of the Spirit. I doubt, however, whether Paul was such a rigid system-builder. It may be quite true that we receive the Spirit through the "hearing of faith," and yet it may be also true that we should not have faith unless the Spirit first touched our hearts. At all events it is surely true that one of the fruits of the Spirit is an increase of that very faith by which we apprehend the Spirit.

23. Against such there is no law. No law condemns these fruits of the Spirit; and therefore, when we are led by the Spirit, we have passed from under law, and have entered on our true freedom.

24. He now suddenly applies the principles which he has just laid down. The very meaning of men's

Christian profession was that they would receive Christ's Spirit of Life into their hearts; and as he had been crucified, so they, when they accepted him as their leader, crucified the flesh (see ii. 20) that they might live by the Spirit. Without his Spirit they could not be his (*Rom.* viii. 9); with it they escaped from the dominion of sin, and therefore of the Law.

With the passions and the lusts (or desires) **thereof.** These words, though in themselves not necessarily denoting evil, are generally used in a bad sense, because it is they that, when not brought under proper control, lead men into sin. Paul hardly means that they are exterminated from our nature, for of course he did not think that the flesh was literally crucified, but that they have to submit to self-denial, and not assert themselves against the higher life of the spirit. Compare Christ's strong language about cutting off the right hand, and plucking out the right eye. All that we can properly call animalism is wholly inconsistent with our Christian profession.

25. If we are Christians at all, the inward principle of our lives is spiritual. To have received the Spirit was the proof of conversion from the old life of sin. But the Spirit did not supersede the necessity for moral effort, for it is only by degrees that the lower nature submits without a struggle to its control. Hence the need of exhortation. Let the outward life answer to the inward; let us exhibit nothing in our conduct which is inconsistent with the Divine Spirit acknowledged within.

26. **Let us not be:** more correctly, "Let us not

become," suggesting the danger rather than the actual presence of sin. The vainglory of party leaders, producing provocation and envy, was an evil to which the Galatians would be inclined by their natural temperament, and would result from an abuse of the liberty which every man claimed for himself. This was to be cured, not by setting up the Law, or some new authority in place of the Law, but by the supremacy of the Spirit, resulting in the mutual service of love.

Thus we see from the whole passage, that Christian liberty does not mean, every man for himself, but every man for his neighbour, and that it is attained only through the power of the Spirit which lifts us above the dominion of sin, and brings us into the heavenly land of holiness and love.

§ 17. *Be gentle and helpful in regard to the faults of others* (vi. 1-5.)

Though for convenience these verses may be placed in a separate section, there is really no break in the sense. What follows recommends the true line of conduct, forbearance and humility, in contrast with the biting and devouring, provoking and envying one another, rebuked in the previous chapter.

1. **Brethren** : a solemn and affectionate appeal to their better feelings. **Even if a man be overtaken in any trespass.** He is now putting a case to them. Supposing a man is not really on a level with ourselves, supposing he has been hurried into some actual fault, how ought we to deal with him? Is that a reason

for exalting ourselves above him, and boasting of our superiority? It is a common way of treating a neighbour's fault; but it is not a spiritual way. **Ye which are spiritual.** He seems to address particularly those who laid claim to spirituality, but not as distinct from those who wished to observe the Law. The latter too had received the Spirit (iii. 2), and no doubt professed to be as spiritual as their neighbours. Moreover they seem to be referred to in the next verse. The appeal, therefore, is quite general:—All among you, of whatever party, who are really spiritual, show your spirituality by your conduct. **Restore such a one in the spirit of meekness.** Those who are guided by the Spirit of God can take no pleasure in the sins or failings of another. Instead of reproaching, they will seek to restore; instead of rousing him to self-defence by their asperity, and thereby hardening him in his sin, they will win him to candour and repentance by their gentleness and fairness. **Looking to thyself lest thou also be tempted.** He changes from the plural to the singular, so as to bring the appeal home to the heart of each. We are all liable to temptation, and prone to fall. This should make us humble; and humility will make us gentle to the failings of others.

2. There is apparently an allusion to the Judaizing tendency of the Galatians:—If you want to be burdened, bear one another's burdens; if you want to be under the Law, fulfil the law of Christ. If we explain **burdens** by the context, the reference must be to the burdens of conscience, which are laid on us by a sense of sin. These we can help to bear by the sympathy

which makes the pain lighter through the comfort of fellow-feeling, and by bringing the hope which renders every woe more tolerable. But this conduct not only relieves another: it lays a burden on ourselves. For the spiritual man bears the sins of others, not only grieving for them with true heaviness of heart, but feeling ashamed for the sin which debases our common nature, even as a brave soldier might feel ashamed when the men in his company turn cowards. This is the Law of Christ, a law enforced both by precept and example, that we should live in the spirit of love, which identifies itself with the community, and makes itself one with the sinful that they may become one with it, and sharers of its life.

3. For the opposite line of conduct has its source in pure self-deception. It is because we think we are something, and do not perceive our real insignificance, that we are puffed up against others, and treat them with so little love.

4. But instead of inflating himself with a false estimate of his superiority, let each man prove his own work. "Work" is emphatic, and denotes the man's collective activity. Our work is something that admits of being really tested, and we are less likely to be deceived in forming a judgment upon it, than when we think vaguely of our own gifts and desires. What have we *done* that really merits approval? Does our work come up even to our own idea of excellence? We must notice the stress which Paul here lays upon work, for his doctrine is often spoken of as though he cared nothing about what men did, but only

about their belief. It is true that he did not care about works which were only acts of blind submission to authority, and performed by way of securing the favour of God; but works were nevertheless the test of what a man's inward life really was. Hence God would "render to every man according to his works" (*Rom.* ii. 6), and a man could form the truest estimate of himself by testing his work. If a man will do this, and judge his work by his own standard of excellence, then whatever glorying he may have will be in relation to himself, and not through comparison with a neighbour, who may happen to be inferior, or may have had smaller gifts and fewer opportunities.

5. **Burden.** The marginal reading, "load," is better, for the word in the Greek is not the same as in verse 2. There the word denotes something heavy and oppressive; here it is simply what a man has to carry, whether it be light or heavy. This may help to relieve the apparent contradiction between the two verses. Every man may have a load of his own from which there is no escape; and yet its oppressiveness may be indefinitely lightened by the kindness and sympathy of others. But in any case the contradiction is in the form rather than in the substance of the two verses; for the present statement is given as a reason for acting on the previous exhortation:—Bear one another's burdens; and be gentle and charitable in your judgments, so as to help the over-burdened conscience, remembering that you too have a load of your own, and with what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged. So it is in fact. He who remembers his own

spiritual need is most ready to help others; and so strange is the efficacy of love, that nothing lightens our own load so much as adding to it the burden of others.

§ 18. *Do good, and remember that as we sow we shall reap* (vi. 6-10).

6. This verse has been very generally understood as a direction to be liberal in the payment of teachers, **good things** referring to material wealth, as, for instance, in *Luke* xii. 18. It is certainly a strong objection to this interpretation that the connection is so abrupt, and the following admonition seems far too comprehensive and solemn for the occasion. Moreover the Greek word does not mean "to communicate to," but "to communicate with," "to go shares with," or "have in common"; so that the sense would be "do you and your teachers have your possessions in common," which certainly cannot be what is intended. We may perhaps add that stinginess towards their teachers was not likely to be the fault of the men who were willing to give their very eyes to St. Paul. The warm-hearted and passionate are more likely to be too free than too close with their possessions, and I do not know that this is inconsistent with the love of plunder and greed for wealth, to which Lightfoot appeals. These difficulties vanish if we understand "all good things" in a moral sense. Paul has just thrown every man back upon his own responsibility. He must prove his own work and bear his own load. But in all things

morally good there may be a common life. In this the taught should be partner with the teacher. To learn and profess what is good, and not to practise it, is a mockery of God, and God cannot be mocked.

Taught in the word. The term translated “taught” is that from which our “catechism” is derived, and denotes oral instruction. It apparently refers to systematic teaching which was regularly carried on in the Church. We have no precise information as to the substance of this instruction; but it probably included the life and teaching of Christ, for not only would this naturally form a part of it, but the same word is used in *Luke* i. 4 in reference to the substance of the Gospel which the author was about to write. Theophilus had been orally instructed in the things which the Evangelist was going to fix in a more permanent and authentic form; and we may suppose that the Galatians received similar lessons. We know so little of the constitution and working of the first Christian communities that these slight hints are of special interest and value.

7. This very solemn and impressive warning is immediately suggested by what has just preceded, but has reference to the whole teaching of the Epistle. The law of moral retribution is inflexible. Be not deceived by those who tell you that you may be saved by circumcision, or the observance of days, or the profession of doctrines, while you do not follow the good example of your teachers. These external things, call them what you will, if they are used as substitutes for inward faith and devotion, are only attempts to

mock the impartial Judge of all. What a man sows he shall reap ; and neither priest nor rabbi can alter this eternal fact.

8. This enforces the lesson of the previous verse by stating it with greater particularity. **Unto :** better "into" or simply "in," the flesh and the spirit being regarded as two kinds of soil in which the seed is deposited. **His own flesh** instead of the "flesh," to bring out the idea of selfishness. Not only is his aim low, but it is directed to mere personal gratification. **Corruption.** This word may very well be suggested by the corruption of the body after death, because, in the case of the bad man, this is the end of all his schemes, the whole harvest which he reaps. But no doubt the idea of moral corruption is included : the soul rots away through a life of selfish animalism. **The Spirit.** The old question recurs whether the Divine or the human spirit is meant, and again I think we must answer, neither without the other. Paul does not say, "his own spirit," and the thought is carried to something more universal than any private possession of our own. **Eternal life,** the opposite of corruption, that life which alone deserves the name, because it bears in it no seeds of death, but shares the immortality of God from whom it comes.

9. **And let us not be weary in well-doing.** Perhaps a closer adherence to the Greek order would give the passage more force:—"But in doing the beautiful thing [the thing intrinsically right and noble] let us not be weary." As the metaphor of reaping is continued, this doing of what is right seems to be, if not identical

with sowing to the Spirit, at all events one of the principal means by which that is accomplished. If so, Paul does not regard the Spirit as exercising compulsion over men's actions. Whether we follow or neglect the higher prompting is left more or less in our own power; and in doing what is right we are casting seeds into that soil of the Spirit from which, in its proper season, we shall reap eternal life. This does not introduce the legal idea of works, keeping certain commandments as an act of obedience to authority, for which we may claim a reward. "Eternal life" is the "gift of God" (*Rom.* vi. 23) as much as the wheat-harvest which follows on the labours of the husbandman. Nevertheless walking in the Spirit conduces to the life of the Spirit within us; and assuredly we may quench the Spirit by our unfaithfulness.

10. Opportunity. This should be translated "season," for it is the same word as in the previous verse and the connection is lost by altering the translation. There is a season for the harvest, which will surely come; now is the season for sowing, and, as we have it, let us act accordingly. We must work what is good in relation to all men, those who are outside as well as those who are inside the Christian fold. Yet a preference is to be given to those who belong, like ourselves, to the faith, for they are bound to us by the closest ties, and to vent our evil passions in our intercourse with them is a violation of the plainest duty. **The faith** can hardly be used here of the inward principle of faith, but refers rather to the form in which it was made manifest to the world, the Christian faith or religion.

We must not leave this exhortation without noticing once more the stress which Paul lays upon *doing* and *working*. Effort cannot be dispensed with. We must see to it that the outward life answers to the spiritual life within; and while we judge of our work by this standard, we shall be humble in the estimate of ourselves, and tender and sympathetic, not towards the deliberate wickedness, but towards the failings and slips of others.

§ 19. *Final admonition in his own hand: beware of Judaizers and remember the Cross* (vi. 11-16).

11. **See with how large letters I have written unto you with my own hand.** Observe the change from the Authorised Version, "Ye see how large a letter I have written." The latter translation has been defended, but I think there is no reasonable doubt that the former is more correct. The position of "you," however, in the Greek gives it another connection: "In what large letters for you I have written." The reference is in all probability only to the conclusion of the letter; for, though the Greek verb is in the past tense, this is due to the practice of adapting the tense to the time when the letter was to be read, instead of the time when it was being written. This is not an invariable custom; but there are sufficient examples of it to justify our understanding the word in this sense in the verse before us. Paul, if we are to judge from the Epistle to the Romans (xvi. 22), was in the habit either of

dictating his letters or of having a fair copy made from his own smaller and less legible writing, just as books were copied out for publication by men experienced in the trade. The Apostle, however, added something of his own to authenticate the letter, as we learn from *1 Cor.* xvi. 21, *Col.* iv. 18, *2 Thes.* iii. 17. This addition may very likely have been in the quick hand of his ordinary signature, and smaller than the large and beautiful letters which were used in booksellers' manuscripts. But here he departs from his usual custom. He adds a much longer section than was necessary to guarantee the Epistle; and both for this reason, and in order to impress the Galatians with the importance of what he says, he uses large characters, probably even larger than those in which the body of the Epistle was written. Some commentators think that the whole Epistle is referred to as written throughout by Paul's own hand; but then it is difficult to understand why he should mention the size of the letters.

12. Paul here charges his opponents with acting from worldly motives; with what justice we can only form an opinion from his own character for fairness and discernment. They were acting with regard to appearances, and wished to stand well with men in that lower realm which is so hostile to the Spirit. So Christ warns his disciples against religious practices which attract the notice of men (*Matt.* vi. 1, sqq.). These are apt to be engaged in for the sake of being seen of men; and then, in Paul's language, they are "in the flesh," and they bring down no

spiritual blessing from Him who sees the secret heart. This is the danger of ritualism according to Christ and his great Apostle, who often receive more adulation than belief. Adopted in sincerity as a moral help, it easily lends itself to lower motives, and passing into a mixed stage of worldliness and superstition, becomes a substitute for spiritual life. The Galatian disturbers, Paul thought, were afraid of being persecuted for the cross. The Jews were the chief instigators of persecution throughout this early period, and the rejection of the Law was what principally excited their animosity. If only the converts could show that they accepted circumcision, and enforced it on Gentiles, the offence of the cross would cease (see note on v. 11).

13. **They who receive circumcision.** We learn from the margin that "some ancient authorities read *have been circumcised*." The weight of recent critical judgment is in favour of the former reading, but it is by no means certain. If we adopt it, the reference, I think (in spite of the opinion of Lightfoot), must be to Gentiles who were submitting to the rite; but the objection to this is that the disturbers here are evidently a party from the outside, as distinguished from "you," and men who went about trying to enforce circumcision must have been of Jewish birth. This furnishes a strong argument in favour of the marginal reading. If we accept this the men referred to are Jewish Christians; and their insincerity is shown by the fact that not even they maintain rigidly the principle of law. They make a

sort of compromise between Christianity and Judaism, not requiring you to keep the whole Law (see v. 3), and not keeping it themselves, but able to boast to their unbelieving countrymen that they have induced you to receive the sign of the old covenant. Thus they hope to escape persecution, and to make a fair show, which is insincere because it is founded on no principle.

14. The false teachers may glory in a fleshly ordinance, and shrink from persecution for the cross; the Apostle's prayer for himself is that he may glory in nothing but the cross, which has been the instrument of his redemption, and severed him once for all from everything worldly. All this ceremonialism is of the earth, earthy, and can never make clean the heart and conscience; the true life is the self-sacrifice of love, and he who is in communion with Christ has broken his communion with the world. "The world" is used, as elsewhere in the New Testament, for the evil side of the present constitution of things, including that which is merely transient and deceptive.

15. The Jewish and Gentile divisions of the world, circumcision and uncircumcision, are nothing. These distinctions make a man neither better nor worse. To boast of your freedom would be just as unspiritual as to boast of your bondage. The only reality is the new creation, the new life of sonship to God growing up in the heart, and bringing forth fruits of holiness and love.

16. Rule, properly a line which marks out the direction, and therefore appropriate to the figure of

walking. On all who follow the line just laid down by his previous words Paul pronounces his blessing. It mattered not whether they were Jew or Gentile, for in the life of the Spirit all become one. **And upon the Israel of God**: perhaps better, "yea" or "even," the "and" here not making an addition, but explaining the "them." Those who are in Christ are the Israel of God, Israel being a sacred name, which stood for an idea rather than for a nation.

§ 20. *The Apostle is Christ's; no one else can have rights over him* (vi. 17).

17. **From henceforth.** He has now fully delivered his soul, and made his meaning quite clear. No one from this time can mistake him; and let no one interfere with him, or inflict trouble upon him, as though he belonged to them. For he was the slave of Christ and of none other. "I" is emphatic. Whatever may be said of the disturbers, there can be no doubt that *I* belong to Christ, for the marks which prove me to be his are branded on my body. The figure is derived from the practice of branding slaves; and the marks to which Paul refers were those left upon his body by the ill-treatment which he had experienced at different times for his devotion to the Gospel.

§ 21. *Benediction* (vi. 18).

18. Paul concludes his letters in several ways, but he invariably wishes **grace** to his readers. Here he

uses the full expression **The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ**, and it is evident from our whole exposition how appropriate this is; for the Galatians were in danger of falling away from that grace, and going back to a religion of outward observances, and a Law under which all must be judged without mercy. **With your spirit** is suitable to Paul's wish that there should be greater inwardness in their religion; but this must not be pressed, as the same formula occurs at the end of *Philippians* (according to the best authorities) and *Philemon*, and a somewhat similar one at the end of *2 Timothy*. His last word to them is **brethren**. This evidently expresses an unusual emotion, for no other Epistle has this ending. He began with severity, though not without the familiar blessing; he closes with more than his ordinary tenderness and love.

Here the curtain falls on a striking and impressive scene in the history of primitive Christianity. How the letter was received, and what effect it produced, we know not. But it has come down to us as a treasure of spiritual thought, setting forth eternal principles while dealing with a controversy which has long since passed away, and appealing to that which is deepest in us while using arguments adapted only to modes of thought which have ceased to govern us. Let us follow Paul's own rule, and receive it in the spirit, not in the letter, and then we shall understand where its real inspiration lies, and on us too its parting benediction will rest.

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