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AND

# **Its Writers**

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## PREFACE

My friend and fellow-editor has asked me to write a preface to his book. I think the book will speak for itself. I may say, however, that it is a very impartial outline of what is known as Introduction to the Books of New Testament Scripture. I think that in some instances the author has understated the case for the canonicity of a particular Book. It is characteristic of his fairness that he should anxiously avoid taking the place of a mere advocate.

It seems to me that the perfect lucidity of his style and the fulness of his information will make this a valuable text-book.

A. H. CHARTERIS.

## NOTE TO READER

FOR a full statement of the External Evidences for the authorship of the several books, see Prof. Charteris' *Canonicity*, or Bishop Westcott's *History of the New Testament Canon*.

*Canon* (from a Greek word meaning *a measuring-rod*) was a name applied to Scripture as the *rule* of faith.

In the chapters on the Gospels no attempt is made to deal with the question of alleged recensions of original documents, as being of too technical and at the same time too conjectural a nature to call for treatment in a work of this kind.

In Scripture References, when the name of the Book is not given, the citations refer to the Book under discussion.

When Scripture is quoted, the words of the Revised Version are given.

R. V. = Revised Version.

A. V. = Authorised Version.

MS. = Manuscript.

Cf. = Compare.

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# THE NEW TESTAMENT AND ITS WRITERS

## CHAPTER I

### THE NEW TESTAMENT

**ITS Name.**—The New Testament forms the second and concluding portion of the Revelation given to the world in the line of Jewish history. It derives its name from an expression used by the Lord Jesus Christ in the institution of the rite which was designed to commemorate His death—"This cup is the new testament in my blood"—more correctly, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" (R. V.), in contrast with the old covenant made with Moses (Luke xxii. 20; Matt. xxvi. 28; 1 Cor. xi. 25; cf. Exod. xxiv. 8). The use of the word "testament" in this sense was due to the Latin *testamentum*, which was early adopted as an equivalent for the Greek word meaning "covenant."

**Its Language.**—A period of about four hundred years had elapsed after the last of the Old Testament Scriptures was written before the New Testament was commenced. In the interval the Jewish people, spreading far and wide in the pursuit of arts and commerce, had become familiar with the Greek tongue, which was the intellectual bond of the civilised world, as the Roman empire was its bond in a social and political sense. Into this language the Scriptures of the Old Testament had been translated from the Hebrew, about 200 B. C., at Alexandria, the great meeting-place of Rabbinical learning and Hellenic culture. From the amalgamation of these and other elements there resulted a form of Greek known as the "common" or Hellenistic Greek. It was in this language

that the New Testament was written—a language marvellously fitted for the purpose, both because of the wide prevalence of Greek among the civilised nations of the time (resulting from the conquests of Alexander the Great), and on account of its unrivalled clearness, richness, and flexibility. Hence the New Testament has been aptly described as having “a Greek body, a Hebrew soul, and a Christian spirit that animates them both.”

**Its Contents.**—The New Testament Scriptures consist of twenty-seven different books, varying in their form and character—the first in order mainly historical, the next doctrinal, and the concluding portion relating to vision and prophecy. This is an order somewhat analogous to that found in the Old Testament, many of whose characteristics alike as regards thought and expression are reflected in the New Testament. The twenty-seven books are the work of nine different authors (assuming the Epistle to the Hebrews to have been written by some other person than St. Paul), each book having its special characteristics corresponding to the personality of its writer and the circumstances in which it was written, but all forming part of one divine whole centred in the Lord Jesus Christ and essentially related to an unseen world. They were written at various times, but all in the latter half of the first century—except perhaps the Epistle of James, which was probably written before 50 A.D.

**Its Manuscripts.**—The original MSS. have all perished. If written on papyrus for ordinary use they would not last, while the more durable would be in frequent danger of destruction at the hands of persecutors. Hence the vast majority of extant MSS. are of a comparatively modern date—anterior, however, to the invention of printing in 1450, when the copying of MSS. practically ceased. A few precious copies written on vellum or parchment have come down to us from a very early period, the most important of which are (1) the Vatican, styled Codex B, preserved in the Vatican Library at Rome, and dating from the fourth century ;<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A papyrus fragment of Matthew's Gospel, recently found at Oxyrhynchus, is assigned to the third century.

(2) the Sinaitic (Codex  $\aleph$ ), discovered by Tischendorf in St. Catherine's Convent at the foot of Mount Sinai in 1859, now deposited at St. Petersburg, likewise of the fourth century; (3) the Alexandrine (Codex A), preserved in the British Museum, and dating from the fifth century. These and other ancient MSS. to the number of about a hundred are called Uncials, because written with capital letters without any separation between the words,—the others of a more modern character being called Cursives, because written in a running hand. Of the latter there are about 2000—an immense array of witnesses compared with the few MSS. of classical works preserved to us, which can generally be counted on the ten fingers. Owing to the greater liability to error in copying with the hand than in the use of the printing press, about 200,000 Various Readings have been discovered in the extant MSS. of the New Testament. Happily the differences between the readings are for the most part so minute that they do not affect the substance of revealed truth. As it is the duty of the Church, however, to ascertain, as far as possible, the exact words of the sacred writers, a special department of study has been instituted commonly known as Biblical Criticism or Textual Criticism, which has for its aim to adjudicate on the rival claims of the various readings, with due regard to the age and special characteristics of the several manuscripts, as well as to the common risks of misapprehension and inadvertence to which all copyists were liable.

**Other Witnesses.**—In the performance of the difficult and delicate task just mentioned attention must be paid to two other valuable sources of information. (1) Those writings of Church Fathers—ranging from the end of the first century to the fourth or fifth century of the Christian era—which contain quotations from the New Testament. The value of the Fathers as a help in determining the exact text of Scripture is a good deal impaired by the fact that, not having the advantage of a Concordance, or of our divisions into chapters and verses (an invention of the sixteenth century), they frequently quote from memory and not with strict accuracy. This

is of less moment, however, when the object is not so much to ascertain the precise language of Scripture as to prove the existence and general reception of the books of the New Testament at an early period in the history of the Church. (2) Ancient Versions or Translations, some of which (for example the Syriac and Old Latin) were made within a century after the time of the apostles.<sup>1</sup>

**English Versions.**—The first English Version was completed by John Wycliff in 1383. It was, however, only the translation of a translation (the Latin Vulgate of St. Jerome). The first English translation from the Greek was finished by William Tyndale in 1525, and put in print the following year at Worms. This was followed by Miles Coverdale's translation of the whole Bible in 1535, the *Great Bible*, usually called *Cranmer's* (for use in Churches), in 1539, the *Geneva Bible* in 1557, the *Bishops' Bible* in 1568, and *King James's Bible* (the *Authorised Version*) in 1611. The most recent and reliable results of Biblical criticism are embodied in the Revised Version of 1881, which has in this respect, as in regard to accuracy of translation, an unquestionable superiority over the Authorised Version, the latter having been made at a time when the science was still in its infancy, and before any of the three great MSS. above referred to were available for reference. Possibly the next generation may see further improvements, as the result of a closer examination of MSS., Versions, and other ancient writings, as well as through an enhanced appreciation of the language of the New Testament, in the light of the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint) and other Hellenistic literature; but after all, any points in which our English Bible is capable of improvement are infinitesimal compared with the general trustworthiness of its contents. Of its imperfections as a translation it may be said, with scarcely less truth than of obscurities in the original, that "like the spots upon the surface of the sun, they neither mar the symmetry nor impair the glory of the great Source of our Life and Light which is imaged in them."

<sup>1</sup> For Notes on the Canon, MSS. and Versions, and Textual Criticism, see enlarged edition of this book, pp. 8-18.

## CHAPTER II

## THE GOSPELS

**THEIR Name and Nature.**—At the head of the New Testament stand the four Gospels. This position has been fitly assigned to them, because, although by no means the earliest written of the New Testament Books, they contain a record of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ which forms the corner-stone of the whole fabric—Christianity being essentially a historical religion, basing its doctrines not on fancy but on fact. The name gospel, which is the Saxon equivalent for a word in the original meaning “good tidings,” was originally applied to Christ’s preaching (Matt. iv. 23; Mark i. 15), and that of the apostles (1 Cor. ix. 16). In course of time it came to be applied also to the books containing a record of the great facts and truths which formed the substance of that preaching. One of the earliest writers to use the word in this sense is Justin Martyr, who wrote about the middle of the second century.<sup>1</sup> He frequently refers to *Memoirs* composed by the apostles and their companions, to which he applies the name of “Gospels”; and he informs us that they were read along with the writings of the prophets at the meetings for Christian worship each Lord’s Day.

<sup>1</sup> Basilides (125 A.D.), quoted by Hippolytus, cites John i. 9 as “said in *the Gospels*,” but some think, without much reason, that the words are to be referred to one of Basilides’ school merely. Another instance has been found in the newly-discovered *Apology of Aristides* (125-40 A.D.) which mentions “the sacred writing which among them (the Christians) is called Gospel” (literally ‘evangelic’).

**Their Authenticity.**—That the *Memoirs* to which Justin refers are the same as the Gospels which we now possess may be inferred from the circumstance that almost all the facts concerning Christ's life which he mentions in about 200 scattered passages of his writings are found in one or other of the four Gospels, while in all the express quotations—seven in number—which he makes from the *Memoirs* the words quoted are also to be found in our Gospels. This conclusion is strengthened by the fact that about twenty years later (170 A.D.) a disciple of Justin named Tatian, a well-informed and far-travelled man, drew up in the Syriac language a sort of harmony of the four Gospels (called *Diatessaron*), which had a very large circulation in the East. An Arabic translation of this work and a Syriac commentary on it have recently been discovered, from which it is evident that the four Gospels on which Tatian's work was founded were identical with ours. In the *Muratorian Fragment*, also, there is a list of New Testament books, which most critics assign to about 170 A.D., where the Gospels of Luke and John are mentioned as third and fourth, the other two being apparently mentioned in a part of the MS. now lost. If further corroboration be needed, we have it in the universally-admitted fact that fifteen years later (185 A.D.) the four Gospels which we possess were circulated in all parts of Christendom—in Europe, Asia, and Africa—in thousands of copies for the use of the innumerable Christians who heard them read at their weekly meetings for worship.

For these reasons it seems to admit of no doubt that Justin Martyr's Gospels were the same as ours; and it is easy to trace them back through a series of still earlier writers to the testimony of the apostles. We know that Marcion the Gnostic<sup>1</sup> (140 A.D.) built his system

<sup>1</sup> The *Gnostics* (who derived their name from a Greek word meaning *knowledge*) claimed a deeper insight into the mysteries of religion than was possessed by the ordinary believer. But they always professed to be indebted for this knowledge to their fuller comprehension of the meaning of Scripture. Hence the frequency of their appeals to the New Testament writings.

largely on the Gospel of Luke, of which he published a mutilated edition known as Marcion's Luke. In contrast with Marcion, Tertullian places Valentinus, another Gnostic (140-160 A.D.), as one who used the canon in its entirety. A prominent witness is Papias (Bishop of Hierapolis), who wrote an *Exposition of the Oracles of Our Lord* about 135 A.D., when he was an old man. Among other things which he had gathered from personal intercourse with friends of the apostles and with two disciples of the Lord (one "the Elder John"), he tells the circumstances under which Matthew wrote his *Oracles* and Mark his *Oracles of the Lord*. Still earlier, we find many quotations more or less exact from our Gospels in the lately-discovered "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles" (dating from the end of the first or the early part of the second century) in the language of Basilides (125 A.D.), who wrote twenty-four books on "the Gospel," and in the short extant writings of Polycarp (a disciple of the Apostle John, martyred 155 A.D.), of Hermas and "Barnabas" (early in the second century), and of Clement of Rome (close of first century).<sup>2</sup> They are also found in all MSS. of the Syriac and Old Latin Versions—both of which are known to have existed in the second century. To this we may add that in the undisputed epistles of Paul, written within a generation after our Lord's death, there are numberless allusions to Christ's history, teaching, and example, which harmonise with the facts recorded in the four Gospels.

In these circumstances we may challenge those who throw doubt on the credibility of the Gospels to show at what period it was even *possible* for forgery or falsification to be perpetrated, and perpetrated so successfully as to impose upon all branches of the Church, leaving its

<sup>1</sup> Cf. p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> The extant Christian writings of the first century (other than the New Testament) are extremely meagre, while the writings of the second century till near its close are mainly defences of Christianity (*Apologies*) addressed to unbelievers, with fewer quotations from the New Testament than if they had been intended for members of the Church. But the substance, and even the language, of our Gospels is woven into the earliest Christian writings that have come down to us.

members and teachers utterly unconscious of the deception that had been practised on them—and this, in matters affecting the most vital interests of the Church's faith, regarding which the apostles had been testifying ever since the day of Pentecost on which they began to preach in the name of their Risen Master.

Of the estimation in which the Gospels were held we may judge from the words of Irenæus, a disciple of Polycarp, who, towards the close of the second century, speaks of the written Gospel as "the foundation and pillar of our faith"; and says regarding the Scriptures—which he defines to be the writings both of prophet and evangelist—"the Scriptures, being spoken by the Word and Spirit of God, are perfect."<sup>1</sup>

**Their Origin.**—For many years, probably for more than a generation, after the death of Christ, there does not appear to have been any authorised record of His life and teaching in the Church. The charge which the apostles had received from their Master was to *preach* the Gospel, and the promise of the Spirit had been expressly connected with the bearing of *oral* testimony (Matt. x. 19, 20). As they had received nothing in writing from their Master's hands, it was not likely they would see any necessity for a written Word so long as they were able to fulfil their commission to preach the Gospel, especially as they were looking for a speedy return of their Lord, and had no idea that so many centuries were to elapse before the great event should take place. The preaching of the Gospel was enough to tax their energies to the utmost; and the task of committing to writing was not more alien to the customs of their nation than it would be uncongenial to their own habits as uneducated Galilæans. Hence we can readily understand how it was that the Old Testament Scriptures, to which the apostles constantly appealed for proof that Jesus was the Messiah, continued to be for many years

<sup>1</sup> The genuineness of the fourth Gospel is specially dealt with in chap. vi., where additional evidence will be found specially applicable to that Gospel.

the only inspired writings acknowledged by the Christian Church. A New Testament in our sense of the term was something which the apostles never dreamt of; and it is not to the design of man, but to the inscrutable influence of the divine Spirit and the overruling working of divine Providence, that we owe the composition of our Gospels before the apostles and other eyewitnesses of the Saviour's ministry had passed away. Drawn up without concert and without the formal sanction of the Church, they contain in a simple form, suitable for all ages and for all classes, several independent records of Christ's life and teaching, of which it may be said with truth that they are better authenticated and more nearly contemporaneous with the events than almost any other record we possess in connection with any period of ancient history. Their dignity and truthfulness are only rendered the more conspicuous by the worthlessness and folly of the apocryphal gospels invented at a later period, which were designed not so much to meet the spiritual wants of the Church as to gratify an idle curiosity.

It is a remarkable fact that two of our Gospels do not claim to have been written by apostles, but only by companions of apostles; and that of the other two only one bears the name of an apostle of eminence. This is, so far, a confirmation of their genuineness; for if they had been forgeries claiming an authority to which they were not entitled, they would have been pretty sure to claim it in the highest form. The same circumstance also shows that the apostles generally did not regard it as a duty to record their testimony in writing.

In the discharge of their commission as preachers of the Gospel, they doubtless followed the practice which was common in the East of trusting to memory rather than to written documents; and as the Church extended, and they were no longer able to minister personally to the wants of their converts or of those who required to have the Gospel preached to them, it would become their duty to train evangelists and

catechists to assist them in the work. In preaching to the heathen, it would only be the leading facts of Christ's life that would require to be proclaimed, but in the instruction of those who had already accepted the message of salvation it would be necessary to go more into detail, and set Christ before them as a guide and pattern in their daily life. This instruction was doubtless given in an oral form, the scholars repeating the lesson again and again after their teachers—which is the meaning of the word "instructed"<sup>1</sup> in Luke i. 4. We have another trace of such systematic instruction in the expression used in Acts ii. 42: "They" (the converts) "continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching."

The history of Christ's life and teaching was thus originally set forth not in the form of a chronological narrative but rather as *a series of lessons* imparted by the apostles and their fellow-labourers as occasion required, or "to meet the needs of their hearers," as one of the early Church Fathers (Papias) says, referring to Peter's style of preaching. During the twelve years or more that elapsed before the dispersion of the apostles from Jerusalem, a recognised course of instruction had doubtless gained currency in the Church, corresponding to St. Peter's definition of the period in the life of Christ which was the proper subject for apostolic testimony—"Beginning from the baptism of John unto the day that he (Jesus) was received up from us" (Acts i. 22). With this agree the specimens of apostolic preaching contained in the Book of Acts (iv. 19, 20; x. 36-43; xiii. 23-31), as well as the allusions which the apostles make in their epistles to the Gospel preached by them and the knowledge of Christ's life acquired by their converts. A close examination of such passages makes it evident that, while Christ Jesus was the constant theme of the apostles' preaching, they dwelt chiefly on the great facts that formed the consummation of His ministry—His sufferings, death, and resurrection; and we may regard it

<sup>1</sup> Taught by word of mouth by dint of repetition.

as an evidence of the faithfulness with which our Gospels reflect the earliest preaching and teaching of the apostles, that they give such prominence to the closing scenes of our Lord's history. We have another token of their authenticity in the fact that they narrate events not in the light shed upon them by the subsequent teaching of the Spirit, but as they were actually regarded by the disciples at the time of their occurrence, long before the publication of the Gospels.

It would seem that before our Gospels were composed, attempts had been made by private persons to draw up a connected history of the Saviour's life, or at least of His ministry. Such attempts are referred to by St. Luke in the preface to his Gospel (i. 1-4). It is evident that he is alluding to other documents than the Gospels we possess, both because he speaks of them as "many," in a tone scarcely consistent with the respect due to apostolic records, and because a comparison of the four Gospels leads to the conclusion that he could not have had any of the three others before him when he drew up his narrative. Whatever part the previously-existing documents referred to by Luke may have had in determining the shape in which the oral Gospel was finally to be recorded, all of them were ultimately superseded by our present Gospels, in whose preservation and triumph we may see an illustration, in the highest sense, of "the survival of the fittest."

**Their Diversity.**—On a comparison of the several Gospels, a marked difference is at once apparent between the fourth and the three preceding ones. The latter are called *Synoptical*, because they give in one common view the same general outline of the ministry of Christ—an outline that is almost entirely confined to His ministry in Galilee and includes only one visit to Jerusalem; whereas the fourth Gospel gives an account of no less than five visits to the capital, and lays the scene of the ministry chiefly in Judæa. A still more important distinction between them, with regard to the nature of their contents, has been briefly expressed by

designating the synoptical Gospels as the *bodily* Gospels, and St. John's as the *spiritual* Gospel—by which it is meant that the former relate chiefly to outward events connected with the Saviour's visible presence, reported for the most part without note or comment, while the latter is designed to represent the ideal and heavenly side of His personality and work. Akin to this distinction is the fact that the first three Gospels report Christ's addresses to *the multitude*, consisting largely of *parables*, while the fourth Gospel contains discourses of a more sublime character, frequently expressed in the language of *allegory* and generally addressed to *the inner circle* of His followers.

When we enter into a closer examination of the three synoptic Gospels and compare them with one another, we find an amount of similarity in detail, extending even to minute expressions and the connection of individual incidents, combined with a diversity of diction, arrangement, and contents, which it has hitherto baffled the ingenuity of critics to explain fully. A general idea of their mutual relations may be gathered from the following comparison. If the contents of each Gospel be reckoned 100, the relative proportion of those things in which a Gospel agrees with one or other of its fellows to those things in which it stands alone would be as follows:—

	Peculiarities.	Coincidences.
St. Matthew	42	58
St. Mark	7	93
St. Luke	59	41

It is found that the coincidences in *language* are much fewer than they are in *substance*—which is only what might have been expected, if the several accounts are derived from independent witnesses. Reckoning the material coincidences in St. Matthew to be 58 as above, the verbal coincidences would only amount to 16 or 17; in St. Mark the former would be 93 as compared with 17 of the latter; in St. Luke 41 as compared with 10. It further appears that by far the greater number of

these verbal coincidences are met with *in the report of our Lord's discourses and other sayings*, a circumstance which confirms us in the belief that the Gospel was handed down for a number of years in an oral form, as the preachers and teachers would feel bound to adhere strictly to the very words in cases of reported speech, whereas they would be under no such obligation in the narration of events. As regards the latter, a considerable modification of the oral Gospel would naturally take place during the long period that elapsed before it was committed to writing. The modification would vary in different parts of the Church; and it is in this way, as well as by taking into account the possibilities of fresh lessons being added from time to time by those who had been "eyewitnesses and ministers of the word" (Luke i. 2), that we can best account for differences, both in expression and in substance, which would otherwise seem unaccountable. If the apostles' teaching was originally given in Aramaic—the form of Hebrew then spoken in Palestine—and had to be translated into Greek by the catechists, this would help still further to account for the diversity we meet with in the Gospels.

**Their Harmony.**—It is possible that further study and investigation may shed more light on the historical and literary relations of the four Gospels, but meantime it is clear that *the true way to discern their harmony* is not to attempt to piece them together in the vain hope of forming a complete chronological history, but to study each from its own point of view and learn from it what it has to teach concerning the many-sided life and character of Jesus Christ. No one Gospel could possibly do justice to the infinite significance of the great theme; and instead of causing perplexity, the existence of four different Gospels should rather be matter of thankfulness, as setting Christ before us in *so many different aspects* of His divinely human personality, much in the same way as various portions of the Old Testament set Him forth prophetically under the several aspects of prophet, priest, lawgiver, and king.

From the nature of the case, the Gospels are necessarily *fragmentary*, as indicated by St. John when he says "there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written" (xxi. 25). The same writer gives us a key to the interpretation of his Gospel when he says, "These are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, ye may have life in his name" (xx. 31). In like manner each of the other Gospels, while historical in its character, is animated by a special purpose of its own with its *appropriate grouping and selection of events*. Owing to the frequent change of scene and audience in Christ's ministry, the historical sequence could not be strictly adhered to by any one desirous to trace, from any point of view, the progress of His teaching. At the same time, there was a gradual development in Christ's ministry, culminating in His death, resurrection, and ascension; and this gradual advance we find reflected in each of the four Gospels.

*Unity amid diversity*,—this is what we have to look for in the Gospels, as in the Scriptures generally; and of this we have a token in the time-honoured fancy of the Church, by which the four Gospels are likened to the four-visaged cherubim, having the faces of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle. This comparison has been variously applied, but the interpretation followed in modern works of art, after St. Jerome, identifies the four faces with the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John respectively, as setting forth the human, the conquering, the sacrificial, and the heaven-regarding aspects of Christ's being. We shall probably be nearer the truth, however, if we say that while the first Gospel sets forth Christ's life and teaching with reference to the *past*, as the fulfilment of the Old Testament, the Gospel of Mark exhibits that life in the *present* as a manifestation of the activity and power so congenial to the Roman mind; St. Luke, as a Greek, depicts it in its catholic and comprehensive character, as destined in the *future*

to embrace within its saving influence all the kindreds of the Gentiles ; while the fourth Gospel represents it in its absolute perfection as it is related to the Father in *eternity*.

While there is no such thing as uniformity in Scripture any more than in Nature or the Church, there is an essential and deep-lying unity which cannot be broken without serious injury to the truth. The right way to use the Gospels is to combine their various testimony, allowing each to tell its story in its own way and to contribute its allotted part to a full and adequate conception of the Lord's personality and work. While each possesses a distinct individuality of its own, they may and ought to be united in order to form a complete and grander whole. In this sense they have been likened to the four parts of music, which may be sung apart, but blend together to form a perfect harmony. A striking parallel has been drawn by Bishop Westcott between the work of the first three evangelists and the threefold portrait of Charles I. (taken from three different points of view) which Vandyke prepared for the sculptor ; while Archdeacon Farrar furnishes a beautiful illustration when he says that "the first three evangelists give us diverse aspects of one glorious landscape ; St. John pours over that landscape a flood of heavenly sunshine which seems to transform its very character, though every feature of the landscape remains the same."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> With regard to the harmony of the four Gospels in matters of historical detail, while it is true that we meet with apparent discrepancies which it would require more complete information than we possess to explain fully, yet on the other hand there are many cases of undesigned harmony which afford positive evidence of their historical accuracy and truthfulness. (See Blunt's *Scriptural Coincidences*.)

*Logic see BW vol 24 pp. 261-277*

### CHAPTER III

#### “THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW”

**I****T****S** **A****u****t****h****o****r**.—St. Matthew's Gospel has been described by one who can scarcely be accused of partiality (M. Renan) as “the most important book of Christendom—the most important book that has ever been written.” Its importance is derived, not from the genius of the writer, but from the grandeur of the subject. According to the unanimous tradition of the ancient Church, as preserved in the title which this Gospel has borne ever since the second century and confirmed by the testimony of the early Church Fathers beginning with Papias in the first half of the second century, the writer of the book was Matthew, one of the twelve apostles. But for his authorship of this book, Matthew would have been one of the least-known of the apostles, as neither Scripture nor tradition gives us much information regarding him. Not a single word or act of his after he became a disciple of our Lord is recorded in the Gospels; and in the Book of Acts his name is never mentioned after the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. He is evidently to be identified with Levi the publican (Mark ii. 14, 15; Luke v. 27-29; cf. Matt. ix. 9, 10), although it is only in his own Gospel (x. 3) that the despised term “publican” is associated with his apostolic name of Matthew (“the gift of God”), which was probably given to him when he was called to the apostleship, as Simon's name was changed to Peter. He seems to have been a man of

worldly means and of a generous disposition, judging from the fact that on the occasion of his apostolic call, when "he forsook all, and rose up and followed" Jesus, he made "a great feast" to which he invited a number of his old associates. It is noteworthy that he leaves it to the other evangelists to mention him as the giver of this feast and to record his sacrifice of property in following Christ; while we have a further token of his modesty in the fact that he puts the name of Thomas before his own in the list of apostles, reversing the order followed in the other Gospels. Traces of the writer's profession as a tax-gatherer have been found in his use of the term "tribute money" (xxii. 19), where the other evangelists employ the more common word "penny" (Mark xii. 15; Luke xx. 24); and in his repeated use of the word "publicans" (v. 46, 47), where Luke employs the word "sinners" (Luke vi. 32, 33). But perhaps the latter instance is an indication rather of his nationality.

According to an ancient tradition derived from Papias, Matthew wrote his Gospel in Hebrew,—to which Irenæus adds that he published it among the Jews "while Peter and Paul were preaching in Rome and founding the Church there." Eusebius in the beginning of the fourth century tells us that Matthew wrote it when he was about to leave the Jews and preach also to other nations, in order to "fill up the void about to be made in his absence." If this tradition be correct, the Hebrew original must have been very soon superseded by the Greek Gospel which we now possess. This was only to be expected, considering the growing disuse of Hebrew, and the gradual lapse of the Jewish Christians into a heresy which alienated them from the rest of the Church.<sup>1</sup> Whether the Gospel was written over again by Matthew in Greek, or translated, perhaps under his supervision, by some other writer, is a question which we cannot well answer

<sup>1</sup> The *Ebionite* heresy, so named from a Hebrew word meaning *poor*, the early Jewish Christians being noted for their poverty. Their heresy consisted for the most part in holding the continued obligation of the Jewish Law, and denying the Divinity of the Saviour while admitting His Messiahship.

The former supposition seems the more probable, as there are some things in the Gospel in its Greek form which we should not expect to find in a translation. That Matthew may have written the Gospel in both languages is in itself not unlikely, as we know that Josephus wrote his history both in Hebrew and in Greek—these two languages being both current in Palestine at that time, as English and Gaelic are now in the Highlands of Scotland.

**Its Date.**—From evidence afforded by a study of the book itself (taken in connection with the tradition above mentioned) *e.g.* from the use of the expressions “holy city,” “the holy place,” “the city of the great King” (iv. 5 ; v. 35 ; xxiv. 15 ; xxvii. 53), and from the nature of the language used by our Saviour in his predictions of the city’s coming doom—in particular from the caution given by the writer in xxiv. 15 (“whoso readeth, let him understand”), which would have had no force or meaning after the predicted calamity had occurred, it has been reasonably inferred that the Gospel in its present form probably appeared before 66 A.D., when the war which was to issue in the destruction of the Jewish capital was on the eve of breaking out.

**Its Character and Contents.**—The leading characteristic of St. Matthew’s Gospel, as might be expected in a work intended for the Hebrews, consists in the representation of Jesus as *the Messiah*, in whom was fulfilled the Law and the Prophets. In this respect it is fitly placed immediately after the Old Testament, as the uniting link between the old and the new covenants.

The first verse strikes the keynote, “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham”—son of David as *the heir of the promised kingdom*, son of Abraham as the child of promise *in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed*. The whole book may be regarded as depicting the gradual realisation of these claims in a spiritual sense ; the culminating point being reached in the glorious declaration by the risen Lord, “All authority hath been

given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations . . . and lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 18-20). In the course of the Gospel there are no less than sixty citations of Old Testament prophecy as fulfilled in Jesus. Equally significant is the frequency of the expression "kingdom of heaven" (literally "kingdom of the heavens," reflecting the Hebrew idiom), which occurs thirty-two times, and the designation "son of David," which occurs seven times as applied to Jesus.

The whole plan of the book is in harmony with its Messianic character. First we have the nativity of Him who was "born King of the Jews" and was at the same time to "save his people from their sins" (chaps. i., ii.),—with the strange mingling of light and shadow, of glory and suffering, which was to be typical of the whole life. Then comes the Prelude to the Ministry (iii.-iv. 11), when the approach of the kingdom of heaven is announced by the predicted Forerunner; and the Baptism of Jesus, as the fulfilment of all righteousness and the consecration to His public ministry, becomes the signal for a manifestation of the divine favour in the voice from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,"—followed by the Temptation, in which the decisive choice is made between the "kingdoms of this world" and the unseen kingdom of the Spirit. The way is thus cleared for successive representations of the Saviour as Lawgiver, Prophet, and King. In the Sermon on the Mount (v.-vii.), He proclaims the Law as from a second Sinai with new meaning and power,—a little later He charges the twelve apostles whom He commissions to preach the Gospel in His name (x.),—at another time He delivers the long series of parables in which the origin, progress, and final destiny of the kingdom are shown forth (xiii.),—anon He lays down the principles that are to guide the members of the Church in their relations to one another, especially to their erring brethren (xviii.) Then as the conflict with hatred and unbelief grows ever fiercer, there break forth His prophetic denunciations against the Jewish priests

and rulers, while He becomes more and more outspoken in the assertion of His Messianic claims (xxiii.-xxv.); till at last there comes the awful tragedy upon the Cross, giving place in turn to the triumph of the Resurrection (xxvi.-xxviii.) Interspersed throughout the whole are mighty works and gracious words, spoken and wrought for the suffering and the sinful, which bespeak Him as the Sent of God.

There is a wonderful symmetry in the whole narrative, and many subtle contrasts. In xvi. 21, "From that time began Jesus to shew unto his disciples how that he must go unto Jerusalem and suffer . . . and be killed," there is a striking contrast to iv. 17, "From that time began Jesus to preach, and to say, Repent ye for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"—the one marking the commencement of His Passion, as the other of His active Ministry. There is a correspondence also between the voice from heaven at His Baptism (iii. 17), and that heard at His Transfiguration (xvii. 5), when His ministry reached its climax and was sealed by the divine testimony in the presence of the two greatest prophets of the old covenant, Moses and Elias, as it had just before been attested by the great confession of Peter (xvi. 16). That confession was a token that the ministry of power and love had done its work upon the hearts of the disciples, and it is fitly followed by the announcement of His appointed sufferings, the disciples being now ready to follow their Master through the valley of His humiliation, which was to conduct them at last from the blackness and darkness of death to the glories of divine life and immortality.

A distinguishing feature of this Gospel is the large place assigned in it to the *words* of Jesus, arranged in a *systematic* form, not broken up into fragments as they are in the other Gospels. For this reason Godet compares Luke to "a botanist who prefers to contemplate a flower in the very place of its birth and in the midst of its natural surroundings, while Matthew is like the gardener who for some special object puts together large and magnificent bouquets."

## CHAPTER IV

## "THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MARK"

**I**TS Author.—The testimony of the early Fathers, so far as it has reached us, unanimously ascribes the second Gospel to St. Mark; but with equal unanimity they connect it with the preaching of the Apostle Peter. The earliest witness is Papias, the bishop already referred to, who makes the following statement on the authority of John, a contemporary of the apostles if not the apostle of that name. "And this also the elder said: Mark having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote accurately all that he remembered of the things that were either said or done by Christ; but, however, not in order. For he neither heard the Lord nor followed Him; but subsequently, as I said, attached himself to Peter, who used to frame his teaching to meet the immediate wants of his hearers, but not as making a connected narrative of our Lord's discourses. So Mark committed no error in thus writing down particulars just as he remembered them; for he took heed to one thing, to omit none of the things that he had heard, and to state nothing falsely in his narrative of them."

So little doubt seems to have been entertained regarding the Petrine authorship of this Gospel that we find Justin Martyr apparently referring to it as the *Memoirs of Peter*. According to Irenæus, it was written by Mark at Rome after the death of Peter and Paul; while Clement of Alexandria, writing about the same time, affirms, on the tradition of a long line of presbyters, that St. Mark

wrote at the request of Peter's hearers at Rome, without any interference on the part of Peter himself.

Regarding the history of the Mark thus referred to, and his relations with the Apostle Peter, we derive information from Scripture which is fitted to corroborate in a great measure the ancient tradition. There can be no doubt that we are to identify him with the John Mark mentioned in Acts xii. 12, whose mother Mary was an influential member of the Church at Jerusalem—her house being the place where prayer was made for Peter by the brethren during his imprisonment, and where he himself repaired immediately after his liberation. It is an interesting conjecture that this house may have been the scene of the Last Supper and of the Pentecostal effusion of the Holy Spirit. It has also been suggested that the “young man” referred to in Mark's Gospel, in connection with the arrest in the garden, may have been none other than the author of the book, who was thus led to record an incident which to others would have appeared insignificant (xiv. 51). Mark's intimacy with Peter at a later time is evident from I Peter v. 13. From the designation which Peter there applies to him (“my son”), we may infer that he was one of that apostle's converts. It would appear that at the time the epistle was written he was residing with Peter in Babylon (which was then, and continued to be for long afterwards, a famous seat of Jewish learning); but there is reason to believe that in that passage Babylon is only another name for Rome (p. 134). Previous to his association with Peter in apostolic work abroad, Mark had accompanied Paul and Barnabas as their “minister” or assistant, but had withdrawn from the work (Acts xiii. 5, 13). After an interval of some years, he rejoined his cousin Barnabas, whose willingness to receive him again as a colleague was so displeasing to Paul that he parted company with Barnabas on this account (Acts xv. 37-39). At a later period we find him again enjoying Paul's confidence, during the imprisonment of the latter

at Rome; for the apostle refers to him as one of his "fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God," who had been a "comfort" to him (Col. iv. 10-11; Philemon ver. 24). Still later, we find Paul, in his Second Epistle to Timothy (iv. 11), requesting that evangelist to bring Mark with him, because he was "useful to him for ministering." This is the last time we hear of Mark in Scripture; but according to tradition he went again to Rome, and after the martyrdom of Peter and Paul, left that city and went to Alexandria, where he founded a famous catechetical school, and afterwards died a martyr's death.

Turning now to internal evidence, we find strong confirmation of the traditional account. The book may be described as very much an expansion or development of the brief statement made by Peter in his address to Cornelius the centurion (Acts x. 36-42). It also follows closely the line of apostolic testimony which Peter had himself marked out immediately after the Ascension (Acts i. 22). The whole tone of the book reflects Peter's energetic, impulsive, unconventional character. Its *rapid transition* from one incident to another—of which we have a striking illustration in the fact that the Greek word variously translated "straightway," "immediately," "forthwith," etc., occurs in it no less than forty-one times; its *practical matter-of-fact tone*, illustrated by the fact that while it records eighteen miracles it contains only four parables, and twice represents the Lord and His disciples as having their hands so full of work that "they could not so much as eat bread" (iii. 20; vi. 31); its *vivid description of the excitement* occasioned by Christ's ministry, and of the profound impression made on those who heard and saw Him, which would be a subject congenial to Peter's enthusiastic nature (i. 27; ii. 2, 12; vi. 33, etc.); its *omission* of some things redounding to Peter's credit, e.g. his designation as the rock on which the Church was to be built (viii. 29, 30; cf. Matt. xvi. 16-19), and the *insertion* of other things fitted to humble him, such as the

rebuke he received when he would have dissuaded Jesus from submitting to His appointed sufferings (viii. 33), and the warning he received by the first crowing of the cock (xiv. 30, 68-72), as well as the *introduction of details* which would be likely to dwell in Peter's memory (i. 36; xi. 21; xvi. 7)—all these things lend a high degree of probability to the traditional account of Peter's connection with this Gospel. As regards that part of the tradition which represents the Gospel as having been written at Rome for the Christians there, we find confirmation of it in the *connection of Mark with Rome* already referred to, and in his *Roman name* "Marcus," which gradually superseded the Hebrew "John"; in the *absence of the Hebrew genealogy* of our Lord; in the *explanation of Jewish words*, e.g. Boanerges (iii. 17), Talitha cumi (v. 41), Corban (vii. 11), Ephphatha (vii. 34), Abba (xiv. 36), and of *Jewish customs*, e.g. the washing of hands (vii. 3, 4) and Passover observances (xiv. 12; xv. 42); in the frequent use of *Latin words and idioms*, e.g. "legion," "centurion," "quad-rantes"—the Roman equivalent to two Jewish mites—(xii. 42); and very specially in the mention of *Alexander and Rufus* (xv. 21), if the latter be, as seems very probable, the same person as is referred to by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans xvi. 13.

**Its Date.**—With regard to the date of the Gospel we may conclude that it was written between 64 A.D. and 68 A.D.—the latter being the year of Nero's death, in whose reign Peter and Paul are believed to have suffered martyrdom.

**Its Character and Contents.**—If the first Gospel may be described as Messianic, the second may be fitly styled realistic, bearing traces throughout of the graphic report of an eyewitness.

It is minute and circumstantial, giving many details of person, number, place, and time that are not to be found in the other Gospels (xiii. 3; vi. 7; xii. 41; i. 35). It gives a vivid description of the emotions, looks, gestures, and actions of our Lord and others

(iii. 5, 34 ; vii. 33 ; viii. 33 ; ix. 36 ; x. 32, etc.) It brings out the picturesque character of many of the scenes enacted in our Lord's ministry, e.g. in the narrative of the Feeding of the five thousand (vi. 35-44) this Gospel "alone tells us of the fresh green grass on which they sat down by hundreds and by fifties ; and the word used for 'companies' means literally 'flower-beds,' as though to St. Peter those multitudes, in their festal passover attire with its many-coloured Oriental brightness of red and blue, looked like the patches of crocus and poppy and tulip and amaryllis which he had seen upon the mountain slopes." In keeping with this is the photographic character of its account of the Transfiguration<sup>1</sup> (ix.) and of the Storm on the Sea of Gennesaret (iv. 35-41). It also frequently reproduces the very words of Jesus (iv. 39 ; vi. 31 ; cf. Matt. viii. 26) and of others (vi. 22-25), using the term "Rabbi," or teacher ("Master"), as the earlier mode of addressing Jesus, where the other evangelists prefer "Lord" (iv. 38 ; ix. 5 ; x. 51 ; cf. Matt. viii. 25 ; xvii. 4 ; xx. 30-33), and narrates events in the present tense as if they were just taking place (i. 40 ; xiv. 43).

Altogether, it is a simple, direct, forcible narrative, and gives the general outline of our Lord's ministry in a clearer form than either the Gospel of Matthew or Luke. It sets Him before us as He worked and taught in the living present, making no mention of the law, and scarcely ever quoting prophecy, but aiming simply to depict Him in that aspect of energetic and victorious strength which was fitted to impress the Roman mind, and which is foreshadowed by the opening words, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God."

The following are the passages peculiar to Mark's Gospel :—

The alarm of Jesus' family (iii. 21).

<sup>1</sup> Raffaele is mainly indebted to this Gospel for the details of his great picture.

- The seed growing secretly (iv. 26-29).
- The healing of one deaf and dumb (vii. 32-37).
- The gradual healing of the blind man (viii. 22-26).
- The exhortation to watch (xiii. 33-37).
- The flight of the young man (xiv. 51-52).
- Certain details about the Lord's Resurrection (xvi. 6-11).

In this connection it may be well to recall the fact that while Mark's Gospel has a larger proportion of common matter than any of the others—amounting to no less than 93 per cent of its whole contents—this is probably due, not to its having borrowed from the others, but to its more strict adherence to the original cycle of oral teaching (pp. 8-10).

*Note.*—Verses 9-20 in the last chapter are absent from some ancient MSS. (see marginal note, R.V.) The verses referred to differ greatly in style and language from the rest of the book, and on this account it has been supposed that they were added by a later hand, probably within a few years after the publication of the Gospel.

## CHAPTER V

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. LUKE<sup>2</sup>

**I****TS Author.**—The authorship of the third Gospel has scarcely ever been disputed. It has uniformly been ascribed to Luke, the friend and companion of the Apostle Paul.

A comparison of its opening verses with the preface to the Book of Acts, and an examination of the style and structure of the two books, leave no room for doubt that they were written by one and the same person. The indications of his personality afforded by certain passages in the Book of Acts, where he joins himself with Paul by the use of the first person plural as if he were in his company at the time—viewed in the light of the information afforded by the Book of Acts and the epistles of Paul, regarding the apostle's personal associates and his relations with them,—justify us in holding that the early Church was right in ascribing the authorship to Luke.<sup>1</sup>

With regard to Luke's personal history, nearly all that

<sup>1</sup> An examination of the relative passages, which are too numerous to mention, shows that there are only three of the apostle's friends who could have been with him on the occasions referred to, viz. Luke, Jesus Justus, and Demas. But Demas is disqualified by 2 Tim. iv. 10, while Jesus Justus is referred to as "of the circumcision" (Col. iv. 11), whereas the tone, both of the third Gospel and of the Book of Acts, would lead us to suppose that the author was a Gentile. The details are given in Burks's *Horæ Apostolicæ* p. 351.

we know of him is connected with the apostolic labours of Paul. He is referred to by that apostle as "the beloved physician" (Col. iv. 14), and it has been suggested that it may have been owing to Paul's need of medical attendance that they were first brought into intimate relations with one another (Acts xvi. 6-10; Gal. iv. 13-15). Traces of Luke's profession have been discovered in the frequency with which he refers to Christ's work and that of his apostles as a ministry of *healing* (iv. 18, 23; ix. 1, 2, 6; x. 9; cf. also xxii. 51, which tells of the *healing* of Malchus' ear, a fact unrecorded by any of the other three evangelists in their account of the incident), as well as in the occasional use of *technical* and other forms of expression which a physician was likely to employ (iv. 38; v. 12; vi. 19; xxii. 44).

It has been supposed, not without reason, that it is Luke who is referred to (2 Cor. viii. 18) as "the brother whose praise in the gospel is spread through all the churches"; but whether this be so or not, we have incontestable evidence that Luke was not only a warm friend of the apostle but a valuable coadjutor. In the Epistle to Philemon (ver. 24), which was written during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome, Luke is one of Paul's "fellow-workers" who send greetings, and in 2 Timothy (iv. 11), which was written during Paul's second imprisonment when many of his friends had forsaken him, we find the brief but weighty statement, "Only Luke is with me."

Of Luke's nationality and of his history previous to his association with the apostle we have but scanty information. From the distinction drawn between him and those "of the circumcision" (Col. iv. 11-14) it may be inferred that he was of Gentile extraction; and this inference is confirmed by his Greek name and the character of his style, which—except when he is drawing from older documents or reporting speeches conveyed to him by others—is more classical than that of the other Gospels, alike as regards the structure of the sentences and the choice of words, as well as in his use of an

opening dedication, a feature quite foreign to the Hebrew style. According to Eusebius and Jerome, who wrote in the fourth century, Luke was a native of Antioch in Syria. Of this we seem to have confirmation in the full account he gives of the Church at Antioch, and also in his mention of Nicolas as "a proselyte of Antioch" (Acts vi. 5).<sup>1</sup>

While tradition has always ascribed the third Gospel to Luke, it has assigned to Paul a somewhat similar part in its production to that which Peter bore in relation to the Gospel of Mark. Such a connection is rendered probable both by what we know of the relations between Paul and Luke, and by the character of the Gospel itself, which is so liberal and philanthropic in its tone as to form an excellent *historic groundwork for the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith*, which was characteristic of Paul's preaching. There is also a striking similarity between the words attributed to our Lord in the institution of the Supper (xxii. 19, 20) and those in 1 Cor. xi. 24, 25 (Luke having doubtless often heard Paul use the words in the celebration of the Sacrament), and in the accounts which the two books give of our Lord's appearances after His Resurrection (Luke xxiv.; 1 Cor. xv. 1-7). The duty of prayer and the influence of the Holy Spirit, which figure so largely in this Gospel, are also characteristic of Paul's writings; and there are certain habitual forms of expression which are common to them both, e.g. a threefold classification of ideas (xv. 3, 8, 11; ix. 57-62; xi. 11-12; cf. 1 Cor. xiii. 13; Eph. iv. 4-6).

From his preface we learn that it was Luke's object to draw up in as complete and consecutive a form as possible an account of the main facts regarding Christ's person and work, by reference to the most authentic and reliable sources of information. His missionary travels

<sup>1</sup> A parallel has been drawn between this circumstance and the mention made by two Scottish authors alone (Scott and Alison), out of eight writers who give an account of Napoleon's Russian campaign, of the fact that General Barclay de Tolly was of Scottish extraction.

with Paul would afford excellent opportunities for collecting such information. In particular the two years which he seems to have spent in Cæsarea during Paul's detention by Felix, where he was within two days' journey of the shores of Lake Gennesaret, the scene of many incidents in our Lord's ministry, would enable him to obtain at first hand, from brethren who had been eyewitnesses, many of those narratives which are only to be found in this Gospel. His high Christian character gave him a moral fitness for the work, while his culture and the love of accuracy manifest in his historical and topographical allusions, marked him out as a suitable instrument in the hands of Providence for writing the Gospel story in a form as well adapted for the philosophical Greeks as Matthew's Gospel was to be for the theocratic Jews and Mark's for the practical Romans.

**Its Date.**—The date of its composition is uncertain. It may have been as early as 60 A.D., at the close of the two years which Luke spent with Paul at Cæsarea; or it may possibly have been during Paul's imprisonment at Rome, 61-63 A.D., or even some years later; but in any case anterior to the Book of Acts, as the preface to the latter implies.

**Its Character and Contents.**—If St. Matthew's Gospel may be styled the *Messianic* Gospel and St. Mark's the *realistic* Gospel, St. Luke's may be fitly described as the *catholic* Gospel—foreshadowing the expansion of God's kingdom in the *future*, as the first Gospel reflects its history in the *past*, and the second describes its energy in the *present*. It is not only more comprehensive in its range, beginning with the birth of the forerunner and ending with an account of the Ascension, but it also brings out more fully the breadth of Christ's sympathy and the fulness and freeness of His love. In illustration of this we may note the following points: (1) The Gospel of Luke traces Christ's genealogy, not like Matthew's by the legal line to Abraham the head of the Jews, but by the *natural line to Adam*, the head of humanity (iii. 38), forming thus a fit introduction

to the life of Him who was to be the Kinsman-Redeemer of the whole human family. (2) It exhibits more clearly the reality of Christ's humanity in all the stages of human life (ii. 4-7, 21, 22, 40, 42, 51, 52; iii. 23), bringing into prominence more especially His dependence upon God in the great crises of His life, when He had recourse to Him in prayer (iii. 21; vi. 12, 13; ix. 28, 29; xxiii. 34, 46), and inculcating earnestness in prayer by two parables peculiar to itself (xi. 5-13; xviii. 1-8). (3) In keeping with this view of it as the gospel of humanity, we find that it represents Christ's teaching not so much in its theocratic as in its human aspects—its usual formula in the introduction of a parable being not "the kingdom of heaven is like," as in Matthew's, but "a certain man made a great supper" (xiv. 16), "a certain man had two sons" (xv. 11), etc. (4) It represents Christ as far-reaching in his sympathies, full of compassion for the poor, the weak, the suffering, and ready to forgive the chief of sinners. It is in this Gospel we find the parables of The Rich Man and Lazarus (xvi. 19), The Pharisee and Publican (xviii. 9), and The Prodigal Son (xv. 11), as also the story of the Good Samaritan (x. 30). It is here we find a record of Christ's visit to the house of Zacchæus the publican (xix. 1), of His gracious reception of the woman that was a sinner (vii. 37), and of His promise of Paradise to the penitent malefactor (xxiii. 43). It is here we find the touching story of the raising to life of the young man at the gate of Nain (vii. 11), who was "the only son of his mother, and she was a widow"; it is here we are told that Jairus' daughter, whom Christ restored to life, was an "only daughter" (viii. 42); it is here we learn that the demoniac boy whom He healed at the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration was an "only child" (ix. 38). (5) It is the Gospel of toleration and brotherly love, embracing within the range of its sympathy the Samaritan (ix. 51-56; xvii. 11-19), the Gentile (iv. 25-27; xiii. 28, 29), the poor (ii. 7, 8, 24; vi. 20; ix. 58; xiv. 21), the very young, this being the only

*Jesus the healer for all*

Gospel that tells us that the children brought to Jesus were "babes" (xviii. 15, R.V.), and the *weaker* and, up to that time, *less-honoured sex* (i. concerning Mary and Elisabeth; ii. 36-38; viii. 1-3; x. 38-42; xxiii. 27, 28).

It is no accident, therefore, that the words "Saviour," "salvation," "grace," occur more frequently in this than in any other Gospel; it is no accident that it represents the Saviour's birth as heralded by angels to shepherds watching their flocks by night (ii. 8-14), and His ministry as opening in a despised village of Galilee with the gracious words of the evangelic prophet, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor" (iv. 18); it is no accident that as its first chapters resound with the voice of praise and thanksgiving for the birth of the Saviour, its closing verses tell of the disciples' joy as they returned to Jerusalem with the blessing of the Ascended Saviour resting on their heads, to be "continually in the temple, blessing God." It is because this Gospel from first to last tells the "good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people" (ii. 10), and proclaims a Saviour who is to be "a light for revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of (Thy people) Israel" (ii. 32),—in whose name "repentance and remission of sins should be preached unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (xxiv. 47). Luke is indeed the most evangelical of all the evangelists, and as such he has fitly preserved for us the first precious germs of Christian hymnology, which, after eighteen centuries, are still prized as an aid to worship by almost all sections of the Christian Church, viz. the Magnificat (i. 46-55), the Benedictus (i. 68-79), the Gloria in Excelsis (ii. 14), and the Nunc Dimittis (ii. 29-32).

It adds to the importance of this Gospel, styled by Renan "the most beautiful book in the world," that about one-third of its contents is peculiar to itself, consisting mainly of chapters ix. 51-xviii. 14, relating to the Saviour's last journey to Jerusalem.

## CHAPTER VI

## "THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN"

**ITS Author.**—It is a weighty and significant fact that until the close of the last century the Johannean authorship of the fourth Gospel was never seriously challenged. Epiphanius, indeed (380 A.D.), tells us of a very small party who had ascribed it to Cerinthus, a heretical contemporary of the Apostle John at Ephesus; but they seem to have had no other reason for rejecting it than their aversion to its teaching. During the present century no question has been the subject of more controversy; and scarcely any can be of more importance, considering its close bearing on the doctrinal aspects of Christianity, and especially on the divinity of Jesus Christ.

To a large extent the question is covered by the line of evidence already indicated in connection with the Gospels as a whole (see pp. 5-7). But in some respects the external evidence for this Gospel is stronger than for any of the others. It is specially quoted by such early Gnostic writers as Basilides (125 A.D.), Valentinus (145 A.D., whose favourite phrases were borrowed from its opening verses), and Heracleon (a disciple of Valentinus), who wrote a commentary on it—being the first known commentary on any part of the New Testament. Moreover, as John himself survived till near the close of the first century, a comparatively short interval was left between his death and the time when the four Gospels are known to have been universally accepted by the

Church (185 A.D.); and for this interval it so happens that we have a direct chain of testimony consisting of a very few strong and well-connected links. At the lower end of the chain we have Irenæus, one of the most important witnesses to the general reception of the four Gospels towards the close of the second century. Born in Asia Minor, where John spent the last twenty or thirty years of his life, he became Bishop of Lyons in Gaul, which had a close ecclesiastical connection with his native land. Early in life he was brought into familiar contact with Polycarp (born 70 A.D.), a disciple of the Apostle John, who was for more than forty years Bishop of Smyrna and was martyred 155 A.D. Among other allusions to Polycarp, he says (Eus. v. 20), in a letter to his friend Florinus (177 A.D.), "I can describe the very place in which the blessed Polycarp used to sit when he discoursed, and his goings out and his comings in, and his manner of life and his personal appearance, and the discourses which he held before the people, and how he would describe his intercourse with John and with the rest who had seen the Lord, and how he would relate their words. And whatsoever things he had heard from them about the Lord and about His miracles, Polycarp, as having received them from eye-witnesses of the life of the Word, would relate altogether in accordance with the Scriptures."

It is beyond dispute that this Irenæus accepted the fourth Gospel as a genuine work of the Apostle John. Is it credible that he would have done so, if it had not been acknowledged by his teacher Polycarp, who had been a disciple of John? And if it was accepted by Polycarp as a genuine writing, notwithstanding its marked dissimilarity to the other Gospels, what better evidence could we have that John was really its author, and that it was accepted as his, from the very first, by the leaders of the Church in Asia Minor?

It may be well to state here very briefly the principal facts in John's life, and the circumstances under which he is said to have written his Gospel.

The younger son of Zebedee, a Galilæan fisherman who was in a position to have "hired servants," he was a follower of the Baptist before joining Christ's fellowship. To his mother Salome, supposed by some to be the sister of the Virgin Mary (Mark xv. 40; John xix. 25), who was one of the most devoted followers of Jesus, he and his brother James seem to have been indebted for much of their enthusiasm. They were surnamed by Jesus "Boanerges" (sons of thunder), in allusion to the latent fervour and vehemence of their nature, of which we are not without tokens (Matt. xx. 20-24; Luke ix. 49-54). During Christ's trial and crucifixion John was a close and deeply-interested observer, receiving a charge from his dying Master to act the part of a son to the bereaved Mary (John xviii. 15, 16; xix. 25, 26). After the resurrection we find him associated with Peter on several important occasions (Acts iii., iv.), but not a single discourse of his is recorded in the Book of Acts. He still continued, however, to be revered as a leader of the Church, for we find him referred to by St. Paul (Gal. ii. 9), in connection with the Council of Jerusalem (50 A.D.), as one of those who were "reputed to be pillars." In his later life, after the fall of Jerusalem (70 A.D.), according to a general and well-supported tradition, John resided in Ephesus, as bishop of the Churches in Asia Minor which had been founded by Paul, and was banished under Domitian to the island of Patmos (where he wrote the Book of Revelation, Rev. i. 9), returning to Ephesus in the reign of Nerva, and living there till after the accession of Trajan (98 A.D.)

It was in Ephesus, which had now become the chief centre of Christianity, and was beginning to be infected by the errors of which Paul had warned its elders at Miletus (Acts xx. 29, 30), that the earliest traditions represent John to have written his Gospel. He is said to have done so on the entreaty, and with the subsequent approval, of the Apostle Andrew and other leading members of the Church, in order to supplement the teaching of the three Gospels already published, and

to counteract the errors which were beguiling some from the simplicity of the faith.

Turning now to the evidence of its authorship afforded by the Gospel itself, we may first of all note the fact that the whole tone of the book would give one the impression that it was written by some one who was *familiar with the inner life of Christ and His apostles* (i. 35-51; ii. 11, 17, 22; iv. 6, 8, 27; vi. 5, 8, 68-71; ix. 2; xi. 16; xii. 21-22; xiii.; xviii. 16; xx.) All these passages point to one of the twelve disciples as the author—in accordance with the statement (i. 14), “We beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father,” and the explicit declaration in the 24th verse of the last chapter (the whole of which seems to form a postscript added by the apostle and endorsed by his companions), —“This is the disciple which beareth witness of these things, and wrote these things : and we know that his witness is true.” As to which of the disciples is here referred to, we find a clue in verse 20 of the same chapter, where he is identified with “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” who had been previously referred to in xx. 2, and xxi. 7, in association with Peter, and in xiii. 23, where he is described as “reclining in Jesus’ bosom” at the Last Supper. The presumption that the disciple thus designated was one of the sons of Zebedee, who were admitted along with Peter (as the other evangelists tell us) to a closer fellowship with their Master than the rest of the disciples, is strengthened by the remarkable circumstance that the two brothers are never mentioned in this Gospel, except in the second verse of the last chapter where they are referred to as “the sons of Zebedee.” The position there assigned to them in the list of disciples is much lower than is usual in the other Gospels, and would lead us to suppose that it was modesty that led the author to veil his own name (i. 35-42; xviii. 15, 16; xix. 26, 27), as well as that of his brother James and his mother Salome (whom he nowhere mentions unless at xix. 25), as he is in general very precise and explicit in his mode of

designation. As between the two brothers, there can be no hesitation in assigning the authorship to John, since James early fell a victim to the Herodian persecution 44 A.D. (Acts xii. 2).

If the Gospel was not written by John, it must have been written by some one who wished to pass for that apostle; and those who reject the Johannine authorship have the insuperable difficulty to encounter of finding a writer of the post-apostolic age possessed of the intellectual gifts and the spiritual elevation needed for the production of so sublime a work, and at the same time capable of claiming for his unscrupulous fabrications, in the most solemn terms, the authority of an eyewitness and apostle who had reclined in Jesus' bosom.

Besides the allusions to the inner life of Christ and His apostles which have already been referred to, there may be discerned in this Gospel, on a close examination, many other tokens of its apostolic origin.

(1) In its account of Christ's ministry it gives a faithful picture of the *Messianic hopes of temporal sovereignty* which existed among the Jews prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, as well as of the conflict which Christ waged with such expectations (i. 19-28; iv. 25; vi. 14, 15; vii.; xi. 47-53; xix. 12); while we also find traces of acquaintance with the *Temple arrangements* of the same period (ii. 13-16; iv. 20, 21; x. 23).

(2) It shows a minute acquaintance with *Jewish customs* (ii. 6; iii. 25; vii. 22; xi. 55; xix. 7, 31), *manners* (iv. 9, 27; vii. 2, 37; x. 22; xi. 44; xviii. 28; xix. 40), and *opinions* (i. 46; vii. 35, 41, 52; ix. 2, 16; x. 19-21), frequently giving *explanations* as if it were written by a Jew for foreign readers.

(3) It also shows a minute acquaintance with the *topography* of Jerusalem (v. 2; viii. 20; ix. 7; xi. 18; xviii. 1, 15; xix. 13, 17, 41), and with the *geography* of Palestine generally (i. 28; iii. 23; iv. 5, 35; xi. 54).

(4) It is *circumstantial in many of its statements*, and bears the stamp of personal knowledge such as would be possessed by an *eyewitness* (i. 29, 35-43; ii. 1, 20;

iv. 6, 40, 52; vi. 16-24, x. 40, xi. 6, 39, etc.; xii. 1, xviii. 10, etc.; xix. 25, xx. 1-10, etc.)

(5) While written in Greek, it is *Hebraic in its style and structure*, abounding in parallels and contrasts, both in expression and arrangement (*e.g.* chap. i.), and frequently quotes from the Old Testament, sometimes directly from the Hebrew (xiii. 18; xix. 37, etc.)

All that can be alleged against the apostolic authorship of the fourth Gospel, on account of its marked divergence from the other Gospels in the representation of Christ's character and teaching, is sufficiently met by the fact that "the synoptical Gospels contain the Gospel of the infant Church; that of St. John, the Gospel in its maturity. The first combine to give the wide experience of the many; the last embraces the deep mysteries treasured up by the one." If we suppose the fourth Gospel to have been written about 85 A.D., an interval of more than half a century would thus have elapsed since the death of Christ. During that time Christianity had spread into many lands and furnished subjects for reflection to many minds, while the Jewish expectations and prejudices which had clung to many of the early members of the Church had been in a great measure dissipated by the fall of Jerusalem. In these circumstances it was inevitable that the truths of the Gospel should be viewed in new lights and assume more speculative forms; and in Ephesus, as the great meeting-place of Oriental mysticism and Greek philosophy, the deeper questions and more theological aspects of the new religion would naturally claim a large measure of attention. (Cf. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and the Ephesians, pp. 91, 99.)

We thus see that, as the other Gospels had reference to distinct types of thought for which they were severally adapted, so the fourth Gospel was designed to meet the demand for a more *intellectual* presentation of divine truth, which might serve as an antidote to the Gnostic speculations which were imperilling the recognition at one time of Christ's divinity, and at another time of His

humanity. In God's providence a worthy exponent of this phase of the Gospel was found in the aged Apostle John, whose heart and mind had been so receptive of divine truth even in his youth as to win for him the place of closest fellowship with his Master, and who had since then enjoyed the teaching of the Holy Spirit for a longer period than any of his fellows, and amid more intellectual surroundings, and was thus singularly fitted for the great task which Providence had assigned to him.

**Its Date.**—85-90 A.D., as indicated above.

**Character and Contents.**—Many of the remarks that might have been made under this head have already found place in this chapter, and at pages 11 and 14, where a contrast is drawn between the Synoptics and the fourth Gospel. On the whole perhaps no fitter epithet can be found for this Gospel than that applied to it by Clement of Alexandria at the close of the second century, viz. the *spiritual* Gospel. It may also be described as the *doctrinal* or *theological* Gospel. It represents Christ's person and work not with special reference to the Past, or the Present, or the Future; but generally with reference to *Eternity*, in which Past, Present, and Future are alike included.

Its great theme is set forth in the Prologue or Introduction (i. 1-18), which strikes the keynote of the whole Gospel. It represents Christ as the Manifestation of the divine Being, the only Source of life and light, in human form ("the Word was God" and "the Word became flesh"), and, as such, the object, on the one hand, of saving faith, and the occasion, on the other hand, of the world's unbelief. The whole book is an elaboration of this sublime thought, with a singular union of depth and simplicity—chiefly in connection with the Lord's visits to *Jerusalem* at the national feasts, when He had occasion to press His claims, as the Revealer of the Father, upon the teachers of religion. This Manifestation, attested by several forms of divine witness-bearing (including miracles, which are always called "signs" in this Gospel, as expressions of Christ's

glory), may be said to reach a climax in xii. 37-40 ("though he had done so many signs before them, yet they believed not on him"), after which there is described, on the one hand, the downward course of the world's unbelief leading to the crucifixion, and on the other, the perfecting of the disciples' faith, which attains its final and typical expression in the slowly-matured but deep-rooted confession of the doubting Thomas, "My Lord and my God" (xx. 28).

As already indicated, the fourth Gospel contains very few incidents of the ministry in Galilee. In this respect, as well as in many of its unexplained allusions (i. 32, 40; iii. 5, 13, 24; vi. 62, 70; xx. 17), it takes for granted acquaintance with the earlier Gospels. The matter which it contains in common with each of the three other Gospels is very limited in extent, but of the most profound significance, viz. the Miraculous Feeding of the Multitude and the Death and Resurrection of Christ. A crucified and risen Saviour who can say of Himself, "I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst,"—this is the essence of the four Gospels, as it is the essence of Christianity symbolised in the Lord's Supper; and the final object of the whole New Testament is summed up by the last of the apostles when he says, "These are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, ye may have life in his name" (xx. 31).

## CHAPTER VII

## "THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES"

**I****TS Author.**—There can be no doubt that the Book of Acts is from the same pen as the third Gospel. This is evident from the preface at the head of each book, and from the similarity of their general style and structure.

An attempt has been made, however, to raise a distinction, as regards authorship, between different portions of the book. There are certain passages whose genuineness has scarcely ever been disputed—those, namely, in which the writer uses *the first person plural*, as having been himself present on the occasions referred to.<sup>1</sup> It is generally acknowledged that these passages are the genuine work of a companion of the apostle. But by a certain school of critics the rest of the book has a very different character assigned to it. According to them, the "we" passages formed the original notes of an eyewitness, which were made use of by a subsequent writer in the second century, as the nucleus of a history in great part fictitious, which was designed to bridge over the gulf between Paul and the rest of the apostles.

<sup>1</sup> From these passages it appears that the writer joined Paul's company at Troas (xvi. 10), that he accompanied him to Philippi, where he was left behind when Paul departed to another city, that after an interval of six or seven years he rejoined the apostle on the latter's return to Philippi, and accompanied him on his last journey to Jerusalem (xx. 5-xxi. 18), and afterwards from Cæsarea to Rome (xxvii. 1-xxviii. 16).

Even if this theory could be proved to be correct, it would not get rid of the supernatural element to which these critics have such an aversion, for in the passages thus admitted to be genuine there are statements that imply miraculous occurrences (xvi. 18, 26 ; xxviii. 8, 9).

But in reality there is no evidence whatever to warrant such a view. With regard to external testimony, we find in some of the earliest Christian writers (Clement of Rome,<sup>1</sup> Ignatius, Polycarp, Hermas, Justin Martyr, etc.) not a few expressions which seem to reproduce the language of this book—drawn not only from the “we” sections but from other parts of it as well. The impression thus made upon us in favour of the book as it now stands is confirmed by finding it in the Syriac and Old Latin Versions, and also in the Muratorian Canon.

But it is the *internal* character of the book that affords the best refutation of the theory in question. It has a *natural unity of diction and style* which forbids us to assign it to more than one author, and its several parts are so interlaced by *corresponding observations and allusions* as to confirm us in the belief that it forms one consistent whole.<sup>2</sup>

That it is a work of the first century is proved by the fact that it *does not contain the slightest allusion to St. Paul's epistles*. In the second century these epistles were so widely circulated that no historian giving a sketch of Paul's life-work could have passed them over in silence. But during the greater part of the period covered by the Book of Acts few of them were yet in existence ; and for some years they would be very little known except in the Churches to which they were addressed. There is no notice taken of them in the Book of Acts, nor is there any echo of their teaching ;

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.* in his 1 Ep. xviii. there is a reproduction of Acts xiii. 22, in its combination of 1 Sam. xiii. 14 and Ps. lxxxix. 20, its addition of the phrase “son of Jesse,” and its allusion to the divine *testimony*. In the Greek the resemblance is even more striking.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. vi. 5, viii. 40, xxi. 8 ; vii. 58, viii. 1, xxii. 20 ; i. 5, xi. 16 (a saying of our Lord's being here twice quoted which does not occur in any of the four Gospels) ; x. 47, xv. 8 ; ix. 30, xi. 25, etc.

while there is a remarkable absence of information on several important points mentioned in them which would naturally have called for explanation had they come under the notice of the writer of this book (*e.g.* Gal. i. 17; ii. 11; 2 Cor. xi. 24).

But although there is no sign of acquaintance with the epistles themselves, there are, as we shall see when we come to deal with these writings, many "*undesigned coincidences*" between statements contained in them and in the Book of Acts, which can only be accounted for by the fact that the writers in both cases were guided by a strict regard for truth.

It has also to be noted that while there is no sign of acquaintance with Paul's letters, there is in the speeches attributed to him *an admitted resemblance to his style and diction*, which is best accounted for by the writer's having been present at the delivery of the speeches, or having received an authentic report of them. It is interesting in this connection to observe that the speech which Paul delivered *in Hebrew* (xxii. 1-21), and which was no doubt translated into its present Greek form by Luke (judging from the number of Luke's favourite words to be found in it), is far *less Pauline* in character than the speech at Athens (xvii. 22-31), which was *spoken in Greek*, and was in all probability *reported to Luke by Paul himself*. We may add that this latter speech is not only Pauline in its diction, but reflects very plainly the apostle's training in the schools of Tarsus, where the Stoic philosophy was in great repute. We have a similar token of genuineness in the harmony between the *speeches of Peter* reported in this book and the first epistle written by that apostle.<sup>1</sup>

Of the writer's *accuracy* in matters of fact abundant evidence can be adduced. In *the titles which he gives to the magistrates* of the various cities he has occasion to mention, he is supported by the testimony of ancient writings, coins, and inscriptions in a most remarkable

<sup>1</sup> Cf. ii. 23, iv. 28, and 1 Peter i. 2, 20; also iv. 11 and 1 Peter ii. 4-8.

manner; e.g. the name of politarchs ("rulers of the city"), which he applies to the magistrates of Thessalonica (xvii. 6), though otherwise unknown, has been discovered on an arch still in comparatively good preservation in the principal street of the city.<sup>1</sup> His many allusions also to *historical characters and events* that are otherwise known to us, are almost invariably found to be true to fact; while the precision of his *nautical* expressions and minute *geographical* allusions in his account of Paul's voyage and shipwreck, has been found so remarkable as to form the subject of a special dissertation.<sup>2</sup>

As a last token of genuineness may be mentioned the fact that in the Book of Acts the positions taken up by the Pharisees and Sadducees respectively with reference to Christ's cause are almost *the reverse of what they are in the Gospel*. This change of attitude was due to the apostles' preaching of the Resurrection, after their Master's departure; but it is a circumstance which only a contemporary would have been likely to realise and represent in such a vivid manner.

**Its Date.**—As to the date of its composition, its abrupt termination—leaving us in ignorance of Paul's fate and of his subsequent labours (if he was set free from his imprisonment at Rome)—has led some to suppose that the author brought up his narrative to the very moment when he closed the book and despatched it to his friend Theophilus. In that case it must have left the writer's hands about 63 A.D. But it may be that the work was broken off owing to Luke's death, or he may have had it in view to complete his narrative in another volume, or he may have felt it dangerous to go farther. Yet another view is that the apostle's preaching at Rome was purposely selected by the writer as a suitable finish to his narrative of the Church's progress. On the whole, we may be content with the assurance

<sup>1</sup> Similar instances are found at xiii. 7; xvi. 20; xviii. 12, xxviii. 7. See Salmon's *Introduction*, pp. 348-49.

<sup>2</sup> By James Smith, Esq., F.R.S., of Jordanhill.

that it was written by a contemporary and companion of the apostle.

**Its Character and Contents.**—The *keynote* of the book is struck in i. 8: "But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." The entire book records the fulfilment of this prophecy. It may be roughly divided into three parts corresponding to the widening spheres of labour which were thus indicated—"Jerusalem" (i. 13-vii.); "all Judæa and Samaria" (viii.-ix.); "unto the uttermost part of the earth" (x.-xxviii.) Each of the three is marked by a notable outpouring of the Holy Spirit (ii. 1-4; viii. 17; x. 44-48).

Throughout the whole narrative *prominence is given to the Lord Jesus Christ* as the subject of apostolic testimony (ii. 32; iii. 13-15; v. 31, 32, 42; viii. 5; x. 36-42), as the bestower of the Holy Spirit (ii. 33), with His miraculous gifts (iii. 16; ix. 34), and divine guidance (i. 24; x. 19; xvi. 6-10), as personally visible to the martyr Stephen (vii. 56), and as the personal agent in Paul's conversion (ix. 3-5).

There is great significance in the description of Luke's Gospel, given in the opening verse of this book, as a treatise "concerning all that Jesus *began* both to do and to teach, until the day in which he was received up." The position of the word "began" is very emphatic in the original, as if to imply that the Acts of the Apostles formed a *continuation of Christ's work*. The writer conceives of Him as still carrying on His work in virtue of His Resurrection and Ascension; and in the introduction to the book he refers to these events as well as to the prediction of His second Advent (i. 1-11).

The continuity of the divine work is indeed *the ruling idea* of the whole book. The Gospel kingdom is described as advancing steadily onwards, beginning at Jerusalem (in the same upper room, perhaps, as had been the scene of the Last Supper), and extending

finally to Rome, the great metropolis of the Gentiles. More than half the book is devoted to the labours of the Apostle of the Gentiles, and three of his missionary journeys are recorded—with Antioch for his headquarters, where the “disciples were first called Christians”(xi. 26).

Of necessity it is a mere *selection* of incidents that is given, both as regards the labours of Paul (cf. 2 Cor. xi. 24-27), and the history of the Church during the thirty-three years or more over which the book extends. The selection was no doubt determined partly by the information which Luke had gathered from his own observation as an eyewitness or from trustworthy reporters,<sup>1</sup> and partly by the great object he had in view, namely, to trace the gradual expansion of the Church from its first beginnings as a seeming phase of Judaism to its full development as a catholic communion, in which there was to be no distinction between Jew and Gentile, and where the Law, on which the former prided himself so greatly, was to be superseded by the *grace*<sup>2</sup> of God freely offered in the Gospel.

<sup>1</sup> E.g. the account of the mission in Samaria and elsewhere in chap. viii. would, no doubt, be mainly derived from Philip, with whom the writer had spent many days at Cæsarea (xxi. 8-10).

<sup>2</sup> A favourite word both with St. Luke and St. Paul.

1. In Jerusalem Ch. 1-7
2. In Palestine generally Ch. 8-12
3. In the Empire to Rome Ch. 13-28
  - (1) Paul's missionary journeys Ch. 13-20
  - (2) Paul's imprisonment Ch. 21-28

## CHAPTER VIII

## THE EPISTLES

*The Epistles of St. Paul—His Previous History*

**THE Epistles.**—One of the distinguishing characteristics of the New Testament as compared with all other sacred books in the world is the *epistolary* character of a large part of its contents.

It contains 21 letters by 6 different authors—10 (or 9) addressed to individual Churches,<sup>1</sup> 5 (or 6) to private persons, and 2 to Hebrew Christians, the remainder being of a more or less general nature (1 and 2 Peter, 1 John, and Jude).

Besides these, we have reason to believe from the nature of the case (2 Cor. xi. 28), and from special allusions (1 Cor. v. 9; 2 Thess. iii. 17), that there were *other apostolic letters which have not been preserved*. That Providence should have suffered such inspired writings to perish is in no degree more remarkable than that so many of our Lord's own words should have passed into oblivion; and we can readily understand that during the apostles' lifetime their letters were less prized than after their death, when the loss of any of their writings was seen to be irreparable.

Although most of the epistles were written at an earlier period than the Gospels, they represent in general *a more advanced stage of Christian theology*. In the epistles we have the fruits of twenty to fifty years'

<sup>1</sup> See p. 147.

reflection on the great facts and elementary truths contained in the Synoptical Gospels, viewed in the light of Christian experience and under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, taking of the things that are Christ's and showing them to the Church. To the epistles we are mainly indebted for our knowledge of Christian doctrine on such subjects as the Trinity, the relations of Christ to the human race and to His Church, the Atonement, Justification by Faith, and Sanctification by the Holy Spirit.

But while largely doctrinal in character, most of the epistles differ very considerably from formal treatises, being enlivened with personal allusions, and dealing largely with questions of a practical nature.

**The Epistles of Paul.**—The last remark applies specially to the epistles of Paul, which had their rise not in abstract speculations, but in the needs and circumstances of the various Churches to which they were addressed. They are filled with the living personality of the writer, and lay hold so vividly upon the reader's sympathies, that they have been described by Luther as "not mere dead words, but living creatures with hands and feet."

They are thirteen in number. Their composition ranges over a period of about fifteen years, the earliest of them (1 and 2 Thess.) having been written about ~~53~~ 50 A.D., sixteen years after the apostle's conversion; the last of them (the pastoral epistles to Titus and Timothy), very near the close of his life, approaching 68 A.D. 64-65

In the interval were produced two other groups of epistles—those designed to vindicate Paul's apostolic authority, and preserve the Gospel from the inroads of Judaism, viz. 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans (written during his third missionary journey, about 57-58 A.D.), and the Epistles of the Imprisonment, viz. Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians, written from Rome about 62-63 A.D.

The most of them were probably collected and in more or less general use in the Church within a short

time after the apostle's death, as we may infer from the traces of them to be found in the writings of Clement of Rome (95 A.D.), Ignatius (died 115 A.D.), and Polycarp (died 155 A.D.)

In our New Testament the Pauline epistles are arranged according to their length and importance, but there is an obvious advantage in studying them in their *chronological order*, as it enables us to trace the progressive development of the apostle's theology and the growth of his literary style, as well as to realise the circumstances out of which the epistles successively arose.

It is a circumstance worth noting as an explanation in some measure of the occasional abruptness and irregularity of the apostle's style (and perhaps of its vivacity), that his letters were usually *written by an amanuensis to dictation*,—the salutation only being written with his own hand, as a token of genuineness.<sup>1</sup>

**His undisputed Epistles.**—1 and 2 Corinthians, Romans, and Galatians have the distinction of being almost universally admitted to be genuine writings of Paul.

This admission is a most important one from an *evidential* point of view, as these epistles form a valuable historical link between the earliest preaching of the apostles and the composition of our four Gospels. They contain a great many references to detailed matters of fact mentioned in the Gospels, and prove that the story of Christ's death and resurrection, as told in the four Gospels, was the chief theme of Paul's preaching (1 Cor. xv. 1-8; xi. 23-28).

With regard to *our Lord's resurrection in particular*, they prove that event to have been generally believed in by the Church in St. Paul's time, and to have been from the first the basis of the apostle's preaching (1 Cor. xv. 1-20). They also imply the exercise of *supernatural powers* by the apostle himself, as a fact generally admitted and not likely to be called in question even by those who were opposed to him (2 Cor. xii. 11-13), and

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Rom. xvi. 22; 1 Cor. xvi. 21; Gal. vi. 11; 2 Thess. iii. 17; Philemon, ver. 19.

they show the existence in the Church of *spiritual gifts* on a large scale and with many well-defined variations, that were commonly regarded as the result of supernatural influence (1 Cor. xii.-xiv.)

We are thus in a great measure independent of the four Gospels for our knowledge of the original truths and principles of Christianity; and we have in the epistles a practical *refutation of the mythical theories* which would attribute the supernatural elements in our Gospels to the gradual growth of legend in the Church.

The evidence derived from the epistles is all the more valuable because it is indirect, the letters having manifestly been written without any such object in view. It has to be noted too that they are addressed to several independent communities far removed from one another. One of these communities (the Church in Rome) had received its Christianity from another source than the apostle, while in the two others (Corinth and Galatia) there were opponents to criticise his statements, as well as friends to sympathise with him. In these circumstances falsehood or error with reference to important matters of fact was extremely improbable. To this we may add that the letters are evidently the productions of a man whose sincerity is as great as his intellectual acuteness and sobriety of judgment, and who, from his early association with the Jewish authorities at Jerusalem, was in a position to know all that could be said against the alleged facts of Christianity.

Altogether, it is not too much to say that a study of these epistles leads inevitably to the conclusion that Paul's gospel had *the same historical groundwork* as the gospel preached at the present day—that groundwork consisting of the same essential and well-attested facts regarding Christ's life and teaching as we find recorded in the four Gospels.

**His previous History.**—Regarding the previous life of the author, the following brief statement may suffice. Paul (originally called Saul) was born within a few years after our Lord's nativity, in the city of Tarsus

in Cilicia, a famous seat of classical learning. His father, though a Roman citizen, was of Hebrew descent, and brought up his son in the strictest observance of the Jewish law. Trained at Jerusalem under the renowned Pharisaic teacher Gamaliel, Saul became thoroughly versed in Rabbinical literature, and was equally distinguished for his learning and his zeal. He was among the earliest and fiercest persecutors of the Christians, whom he regarded as apostates from the religion of their fathers ; and it was while he was on his way to Damascus in the execution of a warrant from the high priest that he was suddenly converted (about 37 A.D.) by the direct interposition of the Risen Christ. From Him he received a special commission to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, and in His service he continued with unflinching courage and devotion, in spite of calumny and persecution, to the last hour of his life. After about eight years, spent partly in retirement, partly in preaching in Syria and Cilicia, he joined (about 44 A.D.) his old friend Barnabas, a liberal-minded evangelist, at Antioch, which was soon to become the great centre of missionary enterprise for the early Church. In company with Barnabas, Paul made his first missionary journey (about 48 A.D.), through Cyprus and part of Asia Minor, and attended the Council at Jerusalem (about 50 A.D.), to advocate the cause of the Gentile converts in their struggle against the bigotry of their Jewish brethren. In the following year he started on his second and more extensive missionary tour, in the course of which, under the divine guidance, he crossed over to Europe, founding a number of Churches there, among others that of Thessalonica. He reached Corinth in 52 A.D., from which, as we shall presently see, he wrote the first of his epistles that have been preserved to us, namely 1 and 2 Thessalonians.

## CHAPTER IX

## I AND 2 THESSALONIANS

"THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE  
TO THE THESSALONIANS"

**WHO** wrote it.—There is ample external evidence to prove that this epistle was acknowledged to be a genuine writing of St. Paul in the second quarter of the second century, while expressions apparently borrowed from it are to be found in writings of a much earlier date.

The few critics who have called its genuineness in question have done so on internal grounds, alleging against it both its likeness and its unlikeness to the other epistles of Paul. But its *unlikeness* is satisfactorily accounted for by the comparatively early date of its composition, and the very exceptional nature of the occasion on which it was written; while its *likeness* is largely due to the habit of repetition which is a marked characteristic of the apostle, and to the germination of ideas more fully developed in his subsequent writings. Moreover, the resemblance between this and other writings of St. Paul is often so subtle and minute—depending on *the play of personal feeling*,<sup>1</sup> or on *peculiarities of style*,<sup>2</sup>—as to preclude the idea of forgery.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. ii. 18, iii. 6-10, and Rom. i. 13, 2 Cor. i. 16, xiii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *E.g.* a cursory sequence of thought (i. 2-8); the combination of seeming contraries (i. 6, cf. 2 Cor. viii. 1, Col. i. 11-12); verbal contrasts (ii. 17; iv. 7, cf. 1 Cor. v. 3, 2 Cor. v. 1, 2). The force of these arguments cannot be fully understood without a knowledge of the original (Jowett, vol. i. pp. 19-25):

The language of the epistle with reference to *the second coming of Christ* is also at variance with the supposition of forgery. It seems to imply an expectation on the part of the apostle that he would live to see that event (iv. 15-17). But such an expectation was not likely to be introduced by a forger when it had already been falsified by the apostle's death,—as it must have been, long before forgery could have been successfully attempted. In this connection we may also note *the apparent discrepancy* between Acts xviii. 5 and I Thess. i. 3, into which a forger depending for his information on the Book of Acts would not have been likely to fall, and which can only be accounted for by supposing a journey of Timothy (from Athens or Berea to Thessalonica) left unrecorded in the Book of Acts. There is a similar discrepancy between chapter i. 9, which speaks of the converts as having “turned from their idols,” and Acts xvii. 4, which would lead us to suppose that the Church of Thessalonica was largely Jewish.<sup>1</sup> In ii. 17-18 there is a reference to the apostle's disappointment in not being able to carry out his intention of revisiting his converts, but such an intention is nowhere mentioned in the Book of Acts. All the three variations may be regarded as a proof that the epistle was written *independently of the Acts*, and that their general harmony is due to their common fidelity to facts.

**To whom written.**—“Unto the Church of the Thessalonians.” Thessalonica was then, as it is still (under the name of Saloniki), an important mercantile emporium, with a considerable proportion of Jewish inhabitants sharing in its general prosperity. It is now the second city of European Turkey; in the time of the apostle it was the capital of Macedonia. It lay in the neighbourhood of Mount Olympus, the fabled home of the gods, and was a place of exile for Cicero, who

<sup>1</sup> The difficulty may be met by adopting a reading of Acts xvii. 4 that is found in some MSS., namely, “of the devout (proselytes) and the Greeks a great multitude,” or by supposing that the apostle preached to the Gentiles after the three Sabbath-days mentioned in Acts xvii. 2.

tells how he gazed up at the sacred summit, but saw nothing but snow and ice.

The Church of Thessalonica was planted by St. Paul in the course of his second missionary tour in 52 A.D. (Acts xvii. 1-11), after his memorable visit to Philippi. His stay in the city seems to have been short, owing to a rising of the mob, stirred up against him by the Jews; but it was long enough for the Philippians to send "once and again" unto his need (Phil. iv. 16). Previously he had been earning his own bread (ii. 9; 2 Thess. iii. 7-8)—doubtless in the exercise of his calling as a tent-maker (Acts xviii. 3), as "one of the staple manufactures of the city was and is goats'-hair cloth. The sound that follows the ear as one walks through the streets of Saloniki to-day is the wheezing and straining vibration of the loom and the pendulum-like click of the regular and ceaseless shuttle." Paul paid a second visit to the place shortly before his last journey to Jerusalem. The Church was mainly Gentile in its composition, as we may infer not only from i. 9 but also from the fact that the epistles addressed to it do not contain a single quotation from the Old Testament.

Thessalonica played a great part in the history of Christendom, as a bulwark against the Turks, whence it was known as the Orthodox city. Its modern population (about 90,000) consists chiefly of Mohammedans and Jews, and includes but a small number of Christians.

**Where and when written.**—The epistle itself supplies us with an answer. From iii. 6-8 we learn that it was written on the return of Timothy, whom Paul had sent (apparently from Athens) to revisit the Thessalonian Church (iii. 1-2). But Acts xviii. 5 informs us that Silas and Timothy rejoined the apostle during his stay of a year and a half at Corinth. We conclude therefore that the epistle was written from that city,—not long after the apostle's arrival, as we may infer from ii. 17. This would be about 53 A.D., probably early in that year. 50

**Its Character and Contents.**—This epistle is an

*outpouring of the apostle's feelings* towards a Church whose hearty reception of the Gospel was to him a matter of constant gratitude to God (i. 2-6), from which he had been reluctantly separated (ii. 17 ; iii. 1, 2), whose reputation had already spread far and wide (i. 7-10), and of whose patience and constancy he had received a gratifying report from Timothy (iii. 6-9). It contains also a *vindication of his own character* from the aspersions of the Jews, who seem to have put a bad construction on his sudden departure from the city. In refutation of these calumnies Paul appeals to the experience his converts had of his life and conduct while he was with them, and to the salutary effects of his preaching (ii.) He *prays* that God would grant him a fulfilment of the desire, which he feels intensely, to revisit them for the perfecting of their faith, and that meanwhile their spiritual life may be developed and strengthened (iii. 10-13). With this view he *exhorts* them (iv.) to the cultivation of certain virtues—purity (vv. 1-8), brotherly love (vv. 9-10), industry (vv. 11-12)—which they were in danger of neglecting.

The characteristic feature of this epistle, however, as of that which follows, is the prominence it gives to *Christ's Second Coming*. This had been a main theme of Paul's preaching when he was in Thessalonica (i. 10 ; ii. 12 ; cf. Acts xvii. 7), and it had so taken possession of his hearers that the bereavements they had suffered by the death of relatives since the apostle left them, were chiefly mourned because they thought the departed friends would have no share in the glory of the Saviour's Advent. The comfort which Paul administers (iv. 13-18) when he assures his converts that their fears in this matter are groundless, gives one the idea that he expected Christ to come *in his own lifetime*. In this respect the language of this epistle differs widely from the allusions to his approaching death in his later epistles (2 Cor. v. 1 ; Phil. i. 21-24 ; 2 Tim. iv. 6). That the apostle should have been left to his own impressions in this matter is in striking harmony with our Lord's

statement, "But of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only" (Matt. xxiv. 36, cf. Acts i. 7). That it would come *suddenly* and called for constant watchfulness was a truth often dwelt upon by Christ, which the apostle could safely enforce, as he does in this epistle (v. 1-11).

‘THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE  
TO THE THESSALONIANS’

**Who wrote it.**—We have the same external evidence for the genuineness of the second epistle as of the first. Internally it bears evidence of being a sequel to the other, being written, like it, in the name of Paul and Silas and Timothy (i. 1), and containing a direct allusion to the previous epistle (ii. 15). As might have been expected, it contains fewer and more distant allusions to the apostle's sojourn in Thessalonica.

The prophetic passage in chapter ii. 1-12 has been a stumbling-block to many critics, who have imagined it to bear the stamp of a later period. In reality, however, it is quite consistent with the teaching of the first epistle, which nowhere implies that the coming of Christ was to be immediate, although it was to be sudden and was apparently to take place in the apostle's lifetime. Predictions of a similar kind had been uttered by our Lord Himself (Matt. xxiv.), and were also to be found in the books of Daniel and Ezekiel.

**To whom written.**—See page 53.

**Where and when written.**—Like the first epistle, it is written in the name of Paul, Silas, and Timothy. The three were together at Corinth, and apparently, so far as the Book of Acts informs us, nowhere else. This leads to the inference that this epistle, like the first, was written from that city—probably a few months later. In the interval the excitement and disorder consequent upon the expectation of Christ's coming, in the midst of

the persecution to which the converts were exposed, had grown even more serious (i. 5 ; ii. 6 ; iii. 6-11).

**Its Character and Contents.**—Along with an expression of satisfaction with their continued faith and steadfastness in the midst of their persecutions and afflictions (i. 1-4), Paul assures the Thessalonians that Christ will infallibly come to vindicate their cause, “rendering vengeance” to His and their enemies, and at the same time “to be glorified in his saints” (i. 5-12). But he warns them against being carried away with the idea—due in some measure to a misconstruction of his own teaching (ii. 1-2)—that Christ’s coming was immediately to take place. He mentions that certain great events must first come to pass (ii. 3-12), and exhorts them to the exercise of continued patience in the strength of divine grace (ii. 13-17), bidding them lead a quiet, honest, and industrious life, such as he had given an example of while he was yet with them (iii. 6-16).

The characteristic passage is ii. 1-12. Its meaning has been the subject of endless controversy, owing to the attempts which have been made to identify the “man of sin,” and the “one that restraineth now,” with historical dynasties or persons. For the former there have been suggested Nero, Mahomet, the Pope, Luther, Napoleon ; for the latter the Roman Empire, the German Empire, Claudius, and even Paul himself. But the truer interpretation seems to be to regard those expressions as referring to two great *tendencies*—the one antichristian, in the form of secular unbelief, and the other political, in the form of the civil power. The breakdown of the latter before the aggressive march of Socialistic unbelief, under the leadership perhaps of some one realising on a gigantic scale the antichristian feeling and ambition of the age, may be the signal for the Advent of the true Christ in His heavenly power and glory.

## CHAPTER X

"THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE  
TO THE CORINTHIANS"

WHO wrote it.—As already mentioned, the Pauline authorship of this epistle is admitted with practical unanimity. The external evidence is abundant, from the end of the first century onward. In particular we find in the first epistle of Clement of Rome to the Church of Corinth (95 A.D.) the following unmistakable reference: "Take up the epistle of the blessed Paul the apostle. What was it that he first wrote to you in the beginning of the gospel? Of a truth it was under the influence of the Spirit that he wrote to you in his epistle concerning himself and Cephas and Apollos, because then as well as now you had formed partialities" (cf. 1 Cor. i. 12).

But the internal evidence would of itself be decisive. For this epistle—and still more 2 Corinthians—bears very distinct traces of *the opposition which Paul had to encounter* before his apostolic authority was firmly established; and we know that such opposition had been vanquished long before his death. It is full of *minute references* to the state of the Corinthian Church—being to a large extent the apostle's reply to a letter of inquiry from that Church (vii. 1). But it also deals with a number of evils and disorders in the Church which had come to the apostle's knowledge *through other channels* (i. 11; v. 1; xi. 18). This last circumstance,

as Paley points out in his *Horæ Paulinæ* (iii. 1), is a token of reality, as it was not to be expected that the Corinthians should deliberately expose their own faults. At the same time their *acknowledgment and preservation of the epistle*, notwithstanding the aspersions which it casts on their early character as a Church, is a proof of its apostolic claims to their regard. It is worthy of remark, too, that it contains numerous references to *Paul's movements*, which would scarcely have been ventured on by an impostor; and a comparison of the epistle with the Book of Acts and other parts of the New Testament brings out *many striking coincidences*, which can best be accounted for on the supposition of its genuineness.<sup>1</sup>

Along with Paul Sosthenes is associated (possibly the converted ruler of the synagogue, Acts xviii. 17),—who may have acted as the apostle's amanuensis.

**To whom written.**—“Unto the church of God which is at Corinth” (i. 2). In the apostle's time Corinth was practically the capital of Greece. It had attained pre-eminence at a much earlier period, owing to its commercial advantages, but had been destroyed by the Roman conqueror about two hundred years before Paul's visit. After lying in ruins for a century, it was rebuilt by Julius Cæsar 46 B.C., and peopled by a Roman colony. This may account for the Roman names mentioned in the epistle (i. 14; xvi. 17). We have an allusion to the effects produced by the ravages of the conqueror on the various kinds of buildings (iii. 12-13), and also to the gladiatorial exhibitions (iv. 9).

Situated at the foot of a great rock called Acrocorinthus about 2000 feet high on the Isthmus (famous for its games, ix. 24-27) which connected the Peloponnesus with the mainland, and lying in the direct route between Ephesus and Rome, Corinth rapidly regained its former prosperity and became the chief emporium of Europe,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. iii. 6 and Acts xviii. 24, xix. 1; xvi. 10-11, Acts xix 21-22 and 1 Tim. iv. 12; i. 14-17. xvi. 15, Acts xviii. 8 and Rom. xvi. 23.

with a population of more than half a million, drawn from many lands. It was so *notorious for its profligacy*—encouraged by its very worship—that a “Corinthian life” was synonymous with luxury and licentiousness. At the same time its inhabitants made such pretensions to *philosophy and literary culture* that “Corinthian words” was a phrase meaning polished and cultivated speech.

In this great and busy centre Paul spent a year and a half or more (Acts xviii.) in his second missionary journey—being the longest time he had ever yet laboured continuously in any city. He found a home in the house of Aquila and Priscilla, a Jewish couple who had recently come from Rome in consequence of the decree of Claudius (xvi. 19), eminent for their generosity and devotion (Rom. xvi. 4-5), with whom he wrought at his trade of tent-making (Acts xviii. 2, 3; xx. 34, 35; 1 Cor. iv. 11-12).

Beginning his ministry in the synagogue as usual, he was soon compelled by the opposition of the Jews to seek another place of meeting, which he found in the house of Justus, a converted proselyte. There he preached the Gospel, encouraged by a message from God in a vision, and continued to do so with no small success notwithstanding an attempt of the Jews to invoke the civil power against him (Acts xviii. 4-18). His converts appear to have been chiefly drawn from *the lower classes* (i. 26-29), but they were not free from the prevailing tendency to *intellectual pride* (i. 17-ii. 1 f.; viii. 1), accompanied with a proneness to *sensual sin*, equally characteristic of their city (v. 1-11; vi. 15-18; xi. 21). The apostle speaks (ii. 3) of having been with them “in weakness and in fear, and in much trembling”—possibly the result of his recent apparent failure at Athens.

**Where and when written.**—It can be proved with tolerable certainty that the epistle was written from Ephesus<sup>1</sup> about the spring of 57 or 58 A.D. 5<sup>b</sup>

From iv. 17-19 and xvi. 5 we learn that it was

<sup>1</sup> The note at the end of the epistle in the A.V. is due to a misapprehension of xvi. 5.

written on the eve of a second visit to Corinth, which the apostle was about to pay after passing through Macedonia,—having already sent Timothy in advance as his representative (xvi. 10). When we turn to the Book of Acts we find that such a visit to Greece was paid by the apostle at the close of a sojourn of about three years at Ephesus (Acts xix. 8-10; xx. 1-3, 31), and it appears from xix. 21-23 that almost immediately before he left Ephesus he sent Timothy before him to Macedonia. Moreover, several expressions in the epistle plainly point to Ephesus as the place from which it emanated (xvi. 8-10, cf. Acts xix. 20-26; xvi. 19, cf. Acts xviii. 18-26; xv. 32).

As the apostle appears to have travelled for about a year after leaving Corinth on the first occasion (54 A.D.), previous to settling at Ephesus, his stay in the latter city may have extended to the beginning of 58 A.D. Several allusions to the seasons which occur in the epistle (v. 7-8; xvi. 6, 8) lead us to place its composition in the spring of 58 A.D. or of the preceding year. 55'

**Its Character and Contents.**—Of this epistle it has been fitly said that it is “a fragment which has no parallel in ecclesiastical history.” It deals with a section of early Church history which exhibits the most marked and varied features. It sets the apostle vividly before us as a teacher and governor, *confronted with the dangers and perplexities, the errors and corruptions* to which the Corinthian Church was liable, planted as it was in the midst of the rankest heathenism. In the words of Dean Stanley, “we are here allowed to witness the earliest conflict of Christianity with the culture and the vices of the ancient classical world; here we have an insight into the principles which regulated the apostle’s choice or rejection of the customs of that vast fabric of heathen society which was then emphatically called ‘the world’; here we trace the mode in which he combated the false pride, the false knowledge, the false liberality, the false freedom, the false display, the false

philosophy, to which an intellectual age, especially in a declining nation, is constantly liable."

The epistle is thus *eminently practical*, dealing with questions that had actually emerged in the experience of the Church to which it is addressed. In form it is *orderly and logical*, taking up one point after another in regular succession; in style it is more *simple and direct* than most of Paul's compositions, rising at times into the sublimest eloquence, as in the eulogium on charity in the 13th chapter.

As already mentioned, the epistle was in part the reply to a letter of inquiry which had been sent to the apostle by the Corinthian Church in consequence of a letter which he had previously addressed to them (v. 9-11; vii. 1; xvi. 17-18).

But the first six chapters have mainly reference to certain dangers threatening the Church, of which information had reached the apostle from another quarter, causing him the utmost anxiety and grief (2 Cor. ii. 4). These dangers were mainly twofold—the prevalence of *party spirit*, and the tendency to *immorality*. Hence the prominence given, in the opening salutation, to the holiness to which Christians are called, and to their unity in Christ; hence, too, the fact that in the accompanying thanksgiving for tokens of grace in the Corinthian Church, it is gifts of *knowledge and utterance* rather than graces of character that are specially mentioned.

(1) The tendency to *sectarian division* mentioned in i. 12 seems to have been fostered by emissaries from Jerusalem, who wished to undermine Paul's authority, and wrought upon the feelings and prejudices of the Jewish portion of the Church (ix. 1-5; 2 Cor.) The visit of Apollos, a learned and eloquent Jew of Alexandria, after Paul's departure (Acts xviii. 27-28), had tended in the same direction, by leading to an invidious comparison between his philosophical and rhetorical style of preaching and the more simple method of Paul, although the latter continued to regard him as a valuable

coadjutor (xvi. 12). But there were some—probably the Judaizing party—who were content neither with the teaching of Paul nor of Apollos, but were disposed to range themselves under the name and authority of *Cephas*, as the leader of the twelve apostles and an observer of the Law. Others professed to be independent of human teachers, and claimed a more direct connection with *Christ*, probably through their personal acquaintance with “the brethren of the Lord” (ix. 5), or their national and historical affinity with Christ. In opposition to all these divisive courses, the apostle insists on *the supremacy of Christ* as the one Lord and Saviour. He introduces His name more frequently in this epistle than in any other of his writings (nine times, for example, in the first nine verses), and represents himself and other apostles as being not the heads of different schools, but simply the ministers of Christ, by whom their converts were brought to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus.

(2) With regard to the *immorality* invading the Church, the apostle begins by referring to a terrible scandal—the marriage by a Christian of his stepmother during his father’s lifetime (v. 1-5, cf. 2 Cor. vii. 12). In the exercise of his apostolic authority he pronounces a stern sentence on the offender, and urges the necessity for an uncompromising opposition to all such sin, and separation from those guilty of it, if they be members of the Church (chap. v.) In the next chapter, after deprecating the bringing of legal actions by Christians against one another in the *heathen courts*, he rebukes the Antinomian tendencies among them, and lays down the fundamental principles on which *the Christian law of purity* must rest.

The apostle then proceeds to answer the inquiries of his converts on the subject of *marriage and celibacy*, distinguishing between his own personal views and the expressed will of Christ (vii.) In viii.-x. he deals with what was to his readers a subject of vast importance—the duty of Christians with reference to the *feasts that were held* in the idol temples, and more particularly with regard to the

use of the *flesh of animals offered in sacrifice*, which was almost the only kind of animal food that could be bought in the market. This question he bids them consider not in the abstract, but as it bears on the interests of Christian society, and as it is likely to affect not only their own character but the character and feelings of their fellow-Christians. In this connection he cites his own example of self-denial even in things lawful. In xi.-xiv. he lays down directions for the guidance of his converts in *matters of public worship*,—dealing with such questions as the wearing of a covering on the head in the public services, the duty of a modest reticence on the part of the female members of the congregation, the necessity for sobriety and decorum in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, the harmony and common end of the various gifts conferred by the Spirit (of which he enumerates no less than nine), the superiority of love to all such gifts, the relative value and importance of the several gifts, the propriety of making the religious services intelligible to all, so that they may be able to join in the loud Amen as the token of their fellowship. He sums up his teaching on public worship in the two *cardinal principles*, “let all things be done unto edifying,” “let all things be done decently and in order” (xiv. 26, 40). The 15th chapter contains a dissertation of incomparable value on the *Resurrection of the dead*—a doctrine which some of the Corinthians had begun to call in question, partly in a spirit of worldly-mindedness, and partly as the result of a sceptical philosophy. In verses 4-8 we have a summary of evidences for the historical reality of our Lord's resurrection, delivered within twenty-five or thirty years after His death, while most of the witnesses were still alive. In the 16th or closing chapter we find a number of directions and intimations having reference, among other things, to *the collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem* (which the apostle hoped to find ready on his next visit to Corinth),—after which the epistle concludes with the usual kind messages and autograph greeting from the apostle.

## CHAPTER XI

"THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE  
TO THE CORINTHIANS"

**WHO** wrote it.—The Pauline authorship of this epistle is involved in that of 1 Cor. There is in several points such a *subtle harmony* between them as can only be accounted for by their common authorship; and the impression that both are genuine writings of Paul is confirmed by an examination of relative passages in the Book of Acts.<sup>1</sup>

That the author did not derive his information from the Book of Acts may be inferred from the circumstance

<sup>1</sup> The truth of this statement will be manifest to any one who will take the trouble to compare carefully the following corresponding passages with the assistance of Paley's *Horæ Paulinæ* (iv.) :—

- 1 Cor. xvi. 5; 2 Cor. vii. 4-7; ix. 2-4 (regarding Paul's visit to Macedonia).
- 1 Cor. v. 1-5; 2 Cor. ii. 7, 8; vii. (regarding the scandalous offence).
- 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2; 2 Cor. viii. 10, (regarding the money promised but not collected).
- Acts xix. 23-xx. 1; 2 Cor. i. 3-10 (regarding the trouble which befell Paul in Asia).
- 2 Cor. i. 15, 16; i. 23-ii. 9; 1 Cor. (regarding his change of route xvi. 5-7; iv. 17, 18; Acts xix. previous to writing 1 Cor., and his motive for it).
- Acts xviii. 1-5; 2 Cor. i. 19; xi. 9 (regarding Silas and Timothy's coming to him from Macedonia).
- Acts xx. 6, 7; 2 Cor. ii. 12, 13 (regarding the door opened to him at Troas).
- 1 Cor. x. 14-16; Acts xviii. 1-18 (regarding the limits of his missionary travels).

that the name of *Titus*, which is prominent in the epistle, is not once mentioned in Acts. The same conclusion may be drawn from a comparison of xi. 32 and Acts ix. 23-25, as well as from the fact that xi. 24-25 has *nothing corresponding* to it in the Book of Acts, though at the same time there is nothing inconsistent with it. With regard to the apparent discrepancy in chapter xiii. see page 67.

Apart from the minute correspondences above referred to, there is a *living interest* and an *air of reality* about the epistle which is scarcely ever met with in forgeries, especially of that early period.

With regard to *external evidence* a few echoes of expressions occurring in the epistle are to be found in the fragmentary writings that have come down to us from the beginning of the second century. By the end of that century the quotations from the epistle in the writings of Irenæus, Tertullian, etc., are explicit and unmistakable.

The amanuensis in this case was probably Timothy, as he is associated with the apostle in the opening verse.

**To whom written.**—"Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in the whole of Achaia." See page 59.

**Where and when written.**—It was evidently written a few months after 1 Cor., say in the ~~summer~~ <sup>autumn</sup> of ~~57 or 58~~ A.D., from some town in Macedonia, probably Thessalonica.<sup>1</sup> *Philippi*

In the interval the apostle had left Ephesus (i. 8-10), after his narrow escape from the violence of the crowd, and had proceeded to Troas, where he anxiously expected the arrival of Titus. The latter had been sent to Corinth, either with the first epistle or shortly after its dispatch, to enforce the apostle's views and to bring him back word of the effect produced by his epistle at

<sup>1</sup> "From Philippi" according to note at end of epistle in A.V. But this is not so probable in view of the fact that the apostle seems to have already visited the Churches of Macedonia (viii. 1-4), in the course of which Philippi would naturally come first, to one travelling southward.

this momentous crisis in the history of his most influential Church (viii. 6 ; xii. 18 ; 1 Cor. xvi. 12).

In his disappointment at not finding Titus, he had no heart to embrace the opportunity of preaching at Troas, and had proceeded to Macedonia (ii. 12-13), where Titus at length joined him (vii. 5-6). It was after getting Titus' report, bringing him *great relief of mind* in the midst of his severe trials and heavy responsibilities (vii. 4-16 ; xi. 28), that he appears to have written this epistle,—which he sent by the hands of Titus and “the brother whose praise in the gospel is spread through all the churches” (viii. 6, 16-18).

A difficulty has been raised about the expression in xiii. 1, “This is the third time I am coming to you.” Some think the apostle had paid a second visit to Corinth, from Ephesus, prior to the writing of his first epistle. But another explanation is to be found in the importance attaching to the visit he had intended to pay on his way to Macedonia (i. 15). The confidence of the Corinthians in him had been shaken by the disappointment he had caused them ; and he wished to impress upon them the reality of his intention, although he had been unable to fulfil it. No doubt he would have been more strictly accurate if he had expressed himself as in xii. 14, “Behold, this is the third time I am ready to come to you.”

**Its Character and Contents.**—If 1 Cor. may be said to be our great instructor regarding the inner life of *the Church*, the second epistle is our chief source of information regarding the personality of the *apostle himself*. It is *an outpouring of personal feeling* almost from beginning to end, expressing itself in many different moods and with a great variety of style. It is well described by Erasmus when he says that “at one time the apostle wells up gently like some limpid spring, and by and by thunders down like a torrent with a mighty crash, carrying everything before it ; now he flows placidly and smoothly, now spreads out far and wide, as if expanding into a lake, then disappears, and

suddenly reappears in a different place." But although the least systematic of Paul's writings, it contains *many passages of priceless worth*, for the comfort and edification of the Church.

The apostle had learned from Titus that his first letter had served its purpose and that the interests of Church discipline had been secured. But the same messenger had informed him that *fresh cause for anxiety* had arisen in the rapid growth of a party hostile to his influence, who were seeking to trade upon the *disaffection* which had been caused among his converts by his failure to visit them according to promise (i. 16-17).

Traces of such opposition are discernible even in the first epistle (I Cor. i. 12; ix. 1-6); but it had been greatly stimulated by the intrigues and false pretensions of *rival teachers* from Jerusalem, who had brought letters of commendation with them, and were using Peter's name, and even that of Christ, for party purposes (ii. 17; iii. 1-2; v. 12; x. 7-12, 18; xi. 3-5, 12-15, 22-23).

To defeat the efforts of these Judaising teachers and to refute the charges and insinuations which they were bringing against him was the main object of this epistle. By doing so the apostle hoped to obviate the necessity for any sharp dealing after he arrived at Corinth (xii. 20-21; xiii. 10).

In i.-vii. Paul seeks to *conciliate the affection* of his converts by giving them an account of his sufferings and of the anxiety he had felt on their behalf. He explains that his delay in visiting them had not been owing to any fickleness of purpose on his part, but to a desire for the restoration of peace and purity before he came among them. He gives a frank exposition of his views and feelings, his trials and supports, as a minister of Christ, making glad and thankful acknowledgment of the kind reception they had given to his deputy, and of the full amends they had made in the important case of Church discipline about which he had written to them. In viii.-ix. he exhorts them to a *prompt and liberal fulfilment* of their promise to contribute for the relief of

the needy brethren at Jerusalem,—a promise of which he had boasted to the churches at Macedonia in order to stimulate their generosity. In this connection he sets forth more fully than anywhere else in his writings the motives and dispositions which should actuate Christians in the discharge of this duty of pecuniary liberality.

At this point there is a sudden change in the apostle's tone; and the remainder of the epistle (x.-xiii.) is devoted to a *vindication of his character as an apostle*. He enumerates his many claims to the respect and obedience of his converts, and closes with an impressive salutation, followed by the form of Benediction which has now become so general in the Church: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all."

That the epistle succeeded in regaining, or rather in retaining, for the apostle the general confidence of his Corinthian converts, may be inferred from the veneration in which his memory was held amongst them a few years after his death. Of this veneration we find unmistakable tokens in the epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, written towards the close of the first century.

## CHAPTER XII

## "THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE GALATIANS"

**WHO** wrote it.—This is another epistle whose genuineness is scarcely disputed. Its main topic—the relation of Christians to the ceremonial law of the Jews—would lead us to fix its composition at a period anterior to the destruction of Jerusalem, when the question was practically set at rest.

*Its character and style are inconsistent with the idea of forgery.* (1) The picture which it gives of the state of the Galatian Church is too lifelike, and the play of feeling it exhibits on the part of the apostle is too subtle for the inventive power of an age so little skilled in that kind of fiction. (2) Its representation of facts, as regards the relations of Paul with the other apostles, is too candid to have been got up in the interests of Church unity, and on the other hand is too moderate in its tone to have been framed in the interests of any known party in the Church. (3) A comparison of the personal and historical allusions in the epistle with statements in the Book of Acts and some of the other epistles ascribed to Paul, shows a substantial harmony, along with an occasional diversity that betokens independence—the epistle furnishing details of many incidents in Paul's life that are only mentioned in a general way by the author of the Book of Acts.<sup>1</sup> (4) There is in several respects a

<sup>1</sup> For proofs of independence, cf. i. 15-18, Acts ix. 19-26; ii. 7-10, Acts xv. 1-21; ii. 17-14 (which has nothing corresponding to it in

strong resemblance between this epistle and those to the Corinthians and the Romans (see p. 74).

With regard to *external evidence* there are the usual echoes and reflections in the Apostolic Fathers and the apologetic writers of the first two centuries; while many direct quotations are to be found in the writings of the Fathers about the end of the second century. The epistle is also included in the Canons and Versions of the second century.

**To whom written.**—“Unto the churches of Galatia.” In the time of the apostle, Galatia might either be understood to refer to the recently created Roman province of that name in Asia Minor, or be used in the older and more popular sense, to designate a broad strip of country in that province, about two hundred miles long, running from south-west to north-east. It is in this latter sense that the term “Galatia” is usually understood here, in accordance with the usage in the Book of Acts.\* It was inhabited by a mixed race of Phrygians, Greeks, Celts, Romans, and Jews, who had successively obtained a footing in it by different means and with varying degrees of success. Of these elements of the population it was the Celtic invaders from Western Europe that had made their influence most strongly felt. They found their way into the country in the third century B.C.; and after them and the Greek immigrants who were there before them the country was called Gallo-Græcia. So deep and lasting was their influence, that even in the end of the fourth century A.D. Jerome was able to trace a strong resemblance between the language of Galatia and that spoken on the banks of the Moselle and the Rhine; and modern travellers have been struck with the fair hair and blue eyes that mark an affinity between the pastoral tribes of Galatia and the peasantry of Western France.

Acts, although corroborated in some of its circumstances by xi. 25, 26; xiv. 26, xv. 1-24, xxi. 18-25). For fulness of detail in this epistle see ii.; i. 17-19, Acts ix. 25-28, xxii. 18; iv. 13-14, cf. 2 Cor. xii. 7-9; vi. 1, cf. 2 Cor. ii. 6-8; vi. 11, cf. Rom. xvi. 22, 2 Thess. iii. 17.

\* See Note A, p. 76.

As regards the internal evidence on the subject, it has been pointed out that *enthusiasm*, *fickleness*, and *love of novelty*, which have been characteristic of the Gauls both in Europe and Asia, left their mark on the early history of the Galatian Church (i. 6; iii. 1-3; iv. 13-16; v. 7). We can also discern traces of *superstition*, *drunkenness*, *avarice*, *vanity*, *irascibility*, and *strife*, which sometimes impair the charm of the Celtic character (v. 15, 21, 26; vi. 3, 4, 6).

The preaching of the Gospel in Galatia by Paul seems to have been due to his detention in that country on his way to the more promising field of proconsular Asia, caused by an attack of the painful and humiliating malady to which he was liable—probably an aggravated form of ophthalmia (iv. 13-16, cf. 2 Cor. xii. 7-10). This visit to Galatia, which took place in the course of his second missionary journey, about 51 A.D., is alluded to in the Book of Acts in the most general terms (xvi. 6); but from some passages in this epistle already quoted, it would appear that his faithful and energetic preaching of Christ crucified (iii. 1, 2) had excited great enthusiasm and affection. A second visit to Galatia is recorded in Acts xviii. 22, 23, during the apostle's third missionary journey, about 54 A.D., when he "went through the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, establishing all the disciples." From this language we may infer that not a few congregations had been formed in the district; but it would seem that their feelings towards the apostle and his Gospel had in the meantime undergone a change, and that he had, on this second occasion, to speak to them in tones of warning (i. 9; v. 21; iv. 16-20).

The only other intercourse between Paul and the Galatian Church, of which we have any record in the New Testament, is that mentioned in 1 Cor. xvi. 1-6, concerning the collection for the poor of the Church at Jerusalem. From this passage it appears that the apostle had held communication with Galatia some

years after his second visit—possibly while he was at Ephesus; and in this way the news may have reached him of his converts' lapse from the truth.

Their falling away had evidently been connected with an attempt on the part of Judaising teachers to take advantage of the ritualistic tendencies which, as Cæsar tells us, were characteristic of the Gauls, and which had been fostered by the worship of the Phrygian Cybele, with its "wild ceremonial and hideous mutilations"—the object of these teachers being to persuade to an observance of the ceremonial law of Moses (iii. 1-3; iv. 10, 11, 21; v. 2-4, 7, 12; vi. 12, 13).

Although the Galatian Christians were mainly converts from heathenism (iv. 8; v. 2; vi. 12), some of them had doubtless been connected with the Jewish synagogues, either as members or as proselytes. Numerous Jews had been attracted to the cities of Galatia by the commercial advantages which these afforded; and of their privileges, Josephus tells us, a monumental record existed in the temple of Augustus at Ancyra, the ancient capital of the district. The existence of this Jewish element in the Church explains the frequent allusions to the Old Testament and the influence gained over the impressible and impulsive Galatians by the Judaising Christians of Jerusalem, who were "zealous of the law," and desired to make the Gospel tributary to the synagogue and the temple (i. 7). They had taken advantage of Paul's absence to undermine his character as an apostle, and had endeavoured only too successfully to cause a reaction, in the minds of the superstitious Galatians, from the simplicity and spirituality of the Gospel. It was an attempt to recover the ground which they had lost at Antioch and elsewhere (ii. 4, 5, 11, 14; Acts xv. 1, 23-29).

**Where and when written.**—From what has been already said as to the allusions in this epistle to the apostle's second visit to Galatia, we may infer that its composition was subsequent to 54 A.D., the date of the visit referred to. The expression "so soon" (i. 6—

R.V. "so quickly") has been thought to imply that the epistle must have been written very shortly afterwards. But it is their *calling*, or conversion, that the apostle had in view, and the language would be equally appropriate whether an interval of five or of ten years had elapsed.

A comparison of this epistle with 2 Cor. and Rom. brings out its striking resemblance to both of these—to the former in the writer's tone of feeling regarding his apostleship and the attacks made upon him; to the latter, in language, reasoning, and general cast of doctrine. It was manifestly written previous to *Romans*, being to it as "the rough model to the finished statue"; and it appears also to have been written when the tension of the apostle's feelings was less severe than when he wrote 2 Cor. With great probability, therefore, we may place its composition in the period of transition between these two epistles towards the close of the year 57 A.D. It may have been written on the apostle's journey from Macedonia to Achaia (Acts xx. 2), for the expression "all the brethren which are with me" (i. 2) would be more likely to be used by the apostle while he was the centre of a travelling party, than if he had been residing at the seat of a congregation.

**Its Character and Contents.**—From first to last the epistle is marked by a conspicuous unity of purpose—its main object being *to counteract the Judaising process* that had been going on for some time in the Galatian Church. An important factor in that process had been the denial of Paul's apostolic authority on the ground that he had never seen the Lord, and that he owed his knowledge of the Gospel to the apostles who had their headquarters at Jerusalem. On the question of circumcision and the observance of the law it was alleged that he was particularly to be distrusted, as a renegade from the religion of his fathers.

Without a word of his usual praise and thanksgiving, the apostle begins with a *bold assertion of his apostolic office* as directly conferred upon him by the Lord.

is followed by an account of his intercourse and relations with the other apostles after his conversion, showing that he owed his conception of the Gospel not to them, but to influence exerted on him from above (*e.g.* in the solitudes of Arabia, i. 17). His ministry had been acknowledged by the reputed pillars of the Church (James and Cephas and John) as having the same Divine sanction for the Gentiles, as their preaching had for the Jews. Since that time he had consistently maintained the freedom of his converts from the bondage of the Law, having even gone so far on one occasion as to rebuke Peter for his dissimulation, when he would have withdrawn from fellowship with the Gentile Christians at Antioch (i. 18-ii.)

Having thus disposed of the personal aspect of the question, he passes to its more *doctrinal aspect* by appealing to the spiritual blessing which the Galatians had experienced under his ministry when he preached the Gospel to them without any mixture of Jewish ritual. He proves that the Law has been superseded by the Gospel, the latter being the full assertion of that principle of faith that had always lain at the foundation of men's acceptance with God, even in the time of Abraham. He shows that the Law given by Moses could only create a sense of sin without providing a remedy. It was but a temporary means of training God's people for the enjoyment of their privileges as His children—standing in the same relation to the Gospel, as the children of Hagar the bondwoman did to Isaac the child of promise (iii.-iv.) In v.-vi. the apostle warns them against the abuse of their spiritual freedom, setting before them the true principles of Christian morality, and exhorting them to several duties of which they had need to be reminded. He concludes with a postscript in his own handwriting (vi. 11-18), in which he sums up the argument with an emphasis and decision that contrast strongly with the hesitation apparent in some of the earlier passages, where he is trying to vindicate his conduct without casting any unnecessary reflections on the other apostles.

He exposes the unworthy motives of his opponents, reaffirms the supreme importance of the Cross of Christ and of regeneration in Him as essential to the true Israel of God, and appeals to the marks which he bears of recent persecution, as the seal of his apostleship and the token of his renewed devotion to the Saviour. "From henceforth let no man trouble me, for I bear branded on my body the marks of Jesus."<sup>1</sup> Finally he invokes the Divine blessing on his converts in terms specially fitted to lift them above the thought of carnal ordinances—"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren."

The whole epistle is marked by a force and vehemence that strain the apostle's power of expression to the utmost. It has done more than any other book of the New Testament for the emancipation of Christians, not only from the yoke of Judaism, but from every other form of externalism that has ever threatened the freedom and spirituality of the Gospel. It was Luther's favourite epistle, to which he was "wedded," as he said; and from it he largely drew his inspiration in his conflict with the Church of Rome.

<sup>1</sup> With this we may connect the fact that in the very next epistle which he writes Paul styles himself "the bondservant of Jesus Christ" (Rom. i. 1, R.V. margin), being the first time, so far as we know, that he ever so designated himself.

NOTE A.—Until recently the majority of scholars have given to Galatia the narrower interpretation that is assumed in the foregoing chapter, but there are an increasing number who hold that the name is to be taken in its wider meaning as a designation of the Roman province, which included several other districts besides that of the Asiatic Celts. Recently a careful and elaborate argument in favour of this view has been advanced by Professor W. M. Ramsay, who brings to the discussion of the question a rare knowledge of the archæology and topography of Asia Minor. He maintains that the Churches to which the Epistle was addressed were no other than those of Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, which were planted by Paul in his first missionary journey, and of which we have an account in Acts xiii. xiv. For an analysis of Professor Ramsay's arguments see the demy 8vo edition of this book, pp. 138-141, or Guild Library vol., pp. 89-93.

## CHAPTER XIII

“THE EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE ROMANS”

**WHO wrote it.**—The Pauline authorship of this epistle is universally admitted. It has a fair amount of external evidence in its favour; but its strong resemblance to Galatians is enough to prove its common authorship with that epistle. Moreover, a comparison of its contents with other Pauline epistles and with the Book of Acts affords valuable confirmation of its genuineness and authenticity.<sup>1</sup>

From xvi. 22 we learn that the epistle was written by Tertius as the apostle's amanuensis.

**To whom written.**—“To all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints.” These words and

<sup>1</sup> Besides the remarkable coincidences with regard to the time and place of its composition, p. 79, the following points are worthy of notice. (1) The statement of the apostle's long-felt desire to visit Rome, and of his hope of now doing so after fulfilling his mission to Jerusalem, is in harmony with the purpose he expressed at Ephesus some time before, i. 13; xv. 22-25; Acts xix. 21. (2) The request which the apostle makes to the Christians at Rome that they would unite with him in prayer that he “may be delivered from them that are disobedient in Judæa,” corresponds with the later expression of his feelings as he was approaching Jerusalem (xv. 30, 31; Acts xx. 22, 23). (3) The apostle's teaching in this epistle and in Galatians is in striking harmony with his mission as the apostle of the Gentiles, and goes far to explain the accusation brought against him on his last recorded visit to Jerusalem (Acts xxi. 19). (4) The nature of the visit to Rome contemplated by the apostle when he wrote this epistle, namely “that I may come unto you in joy through the will of God, and together with you find rest” (xv. 32) is so very different from what he actually experienced, when he was carried a prisoner to Rome, that it could not have been so described by any one who drew his information from the Book of Acts.

the absence of any mention of bishops and deacons either in this epistle or in the account of the welcome which Paul received from the Roman brethren three years afterwards (Acts xxviii. 15) would seem to indicate that there was no formally organised Church in the city, but merely groups of believers meeting for worship in private houses (xvi. 5). They seem to have been mainly of Gentile origin (i. 5, 6, 13-15; xi. 13-24; xv. 15, 16). But the whole tenor of the epistle, abounding as it does in quotations from the Old Testament and in allusions to the Jewish Law, clearly shows that they had been led to a knowledge of the truth through their connection with the Jewish faith as proselytes of the gate (indeed, some of them appear to have been born Jews—ii. 17; xvi. 7—and hence the expression, “I speak to men that know the law”—vii. 1). The Jews had for a long time been a numerous and powerful section of the community at Rome, and their religion had gained great influence among the educated classes. The introduction of Christianity among them had apparently been due not to apostolic labour (certainly not to the labours of Peter whose alleged episcopate of twenty-five years at Rome is contrary to all the evidence of the New Testament), but to the influence of Christian travellers, especially, we may believe, of the “sojourners from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,” who had witnessed the wonderful works of God on the great day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 10). Although Paul had never been at Rome, many of the Christians there were personally known to him—possibly owing to their banishment from Rome by the Edict of Claudius,—as we may infer from the numerous greetings in the closing chapter. From i. 7, 8; xv. 14, it would appear that the condition of the Christians at Rome was in many respects satisfactory, and in keeping with this we learn from Tacitus that a great multitude of Christians suffered martyrdom there in the reign of Nero a few years later. But the Apostle’s language (in chap. xiv.) would indicate the existence of weakness and disagreement among them, in connection with certain scruples

felt by some of their number with regard to the eating of animal food and the observance of days and seasons. They were also liable to many serious temptations, as we may infer from the exhortations in xii.-xiii.; and their spiritual life required to be strengthened (i. 11).

**Where and when written.**—From the writer's circumstances, as stated in xv. 22-26, viewed in the light of Acts xx. 1-3, xxiv. 17-19; 1 Cor. xvi. 1-4; 2 Cor. viii. 1-4, ix. 1, 2, we gather that the epistle was written towards the close of Paul's second visit to Corinth (early in 58 A. D.), on the eve of his journey to Jerusalem to carry up the alms collected for the poor brethren there, after which he was to make his long-intended visit to Rome.<sup>1</sup>

**Its Character and Contents.**—In an intellectual sense this epistle may be said to be the apostle's *master-piece*; theologically it is the most important of all his epistles. Coleridge has pronounced it "the most

<sup>1</sup> In remarkable harmony with this inference as to the *date* of the epistle are the facts (1) that of those who were with Paul previous to his journey into Asia, as stated in the Book of Acts (xx. 4), three, namely, Sosipater, Gaius, and Timothy send their salutations in this epistle; (2) that salutations are sent to Priscilla and Aquila (xvi. 3), who are mentioned as having rendered great service and incurred great danger on behalf of the apostle and in the interests of the Church of the Gentiles—which finds confirmation in Acts xviii. 2-26; 1 Cor. xvi. 19; (3) that the apostle speaks (xv. 19) of having preached the Gospel "from Jerusalem, and round about even unto Illyricum"—a country adjoining the western frontier of Macedonia,—a statement which could not have been made before the visit recorded in Acts xx. 2, as the previous visit, of which an account is given in Acts xvi.-xviii., was confined to the eastern coast of Europe.

Equally in keeping with the inference as to the *place* of composition are the facts (1) that "Gaius my host" and "Erastus the treasurer of the city," send their greetings (xvi. 23), the former being mentioned in 1 Cor. i. 14 as one of the very few persons at Corinth whom the apostle had himself baptized, the latter in Acts xix. 22 as a companion of Paul and in 2 Tim. iv. 20 as left behind at Corinth; (2) that Phœbe, by whom the epistle was apparently sent to Rome, is commended (xvi. 1-2) as "a servant of the church that is at Cenchrææ," this being one of the ports of Corinth which had been previously visited by Paul (Acts xviii. 18).

In connection with the mention of Phœbe it is interesting to observe that even at this early period the Christian Church had learned to appreciate the value of female energy and devotion.

profound work ever written." Calvin said of it that "it opened the door to all the treasures in the Scriptures"; while Luther pronounced it "the chief book of the New Testament, and the purest Gospel."

As already mentioned, it bears a striking resemblance to Galatians (written a short time before it) not only in individual words and phrases, but in the general drift of its teaching with regard to the superiority of the Gospel to the Law. It is, however, more dispassionate in tone, being less personal in its character, and containing a more full and comprehensive treatment of the subject.

It may be said to embody the results of the recent controversy with the Judaisers, stated in a logical and systematic form, and at the same time with such moderation and caution as was fitted to disarm the prejudices and conciliate the favour of the Jewish element in the Church. That element had not yet been infected with the leaven of malignant bigotry, emanating from Jerusalem, which had made its influence felt in so many of the other Churches where Paul had laboured; and the epistle was intended to serve the purpose of prevention rather than cure. It was also intended to pave the way for the apostle's visit to the Church at Rome, whose destined greatness he foresaw, and by whose assistance he hoped to obtain a still wider field for his missionary labours.

Being addressed to the Christians of imperial Rome, this epistle is distinguished by its *cosmopolitan* tone, which is shown at the outset (i. 4, 5) by a reference to the "obedience of faith" to which "all the nations" are called in "Jesus Christ our Lord." It sets forth the *universality of the Gospel* as "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (i. 16), and brings out the contrast not between Moses and Christ, as in Galatians, but between *Adam* and *Christ* as the representatives of *nature* and of *grace* (v. 12-21). With no less propriety, in writing to the inhabitants of a city that was the seat of justice for the whole civilised world, the apostle looks at

the great question of salvation from a *judicial or forensic* point of view,—exhibiting the bearing of the Gospel on the interests of law and righteousness, proving the guilt of all men, both Jews and Gentiles, at the bar of Divine judgment, and proclaiming the doctrine of justification by faith as the only means of acceptance with God.

Having set forth the great scheme of redemption, the apostle deals with its bearing on the fortunes of *the chosen people* (ix.-xi.) He shows that their failure to enter into the blessings of the New Covenant, which gave him “great sorrow and unceasing pain in (his) heart,” was due to their own spiritual blindness, as foretold in the writings of the prophets. Their recent experience was in keeping with the analogy of God’s dealings with them in the past, but their rejection was only partial and temporary, destined to lead in the mysterious wisdom of Divine providence to a still fuller manifestation of Divine goodness. “For God hath shut up all unto disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all” (xi. 32).

After this lesson on the philosophy of history, in which the apostle seeks to justify the ways of God with men and is moved again and again to adoration of the Divine wisdom, he exhorts his readers to the cultivation of various graces and virtues as the best refutation of the charge of lawlessness to which the gospel of the free grace of God is liable (xii.-xiv.) In conclusion, he sends numerous greetings to individual Christians with whom he is personally acquainted, many of whom had rendered valuable service to the Church, and with whom he had probably been brought into contact at Ephesus and other great centres.

There are several breaks in the epistle where it might have fitly terminated; and this circumstance, together with variations in the arrangement of these passages in some of the MSS., has given rise to the idea that the epistle was sent as an encyclical or circular-letter, with varying terminations, to a number of Churches. We may add that the fact of this epistle, although addressed

to Romans, being written in Greek, is not only in keeping with the apostle's literary habit, but is also in accordance with the general use of Greek at the time throughout the civilised world. The Christian congregations of the first century were like so many Greek colonies, as far as language was concerned ; and it was not till the latter part of the second century that a Latin version and a Latin literature arose, chiefly for the benefit of the Christians in North Africa. It may be noted that most of those to whom the apostle sends salutations in this epistle bear Greek names.

## CHAPTER XIV

## THE EPISTLES OF THE IMPRISONMENT

AFTER the letter to the Romans there is an interval of three or four years before we can trace any further correspondence on the part of the apostle. Leaving Corinth in the spring of 58 A.D., he made his way to Jerusalem along the coast of Macedonia and Asia Minor. In the course of his journey we find him taking farewell of one Church after another, under a strong presentiment of approaching calamity. Soon after his arrival in Jerusalem, he was arrested on account of a tumult resulting from a last effort which he made to conciliate the Jewish Christians. Removed as a prisoner to Cæsarea, he was there detained in custody for two years under the governor Felix; but, soon after the appointment of Festus as the successor of Felix, the apostle appealed for trial to the imperial judgment-seat, and was sent to Rome accordingly, under a military escort. After a disastrous voyage, in which he suffered shipwreck on the island of Malta, where he had to pass the winter, he arrived at Rome in the early summer of 61 A.D.—his long-cherished wish at length realised, but in a very different manner from what he had at one time anticipated. Owing to protracted delay in the hearing of his case—a thing by no means uncommon under the Emperors—he remained for two years in military custody, his right hand chained to the left hand of the soldier who guarded him. He was permitted, however,

to reside in his own hired lodging, and to hold free converse with friends and visitors.

It was during this period that the epistles to the *Philippians*, the *Colossians*, *Philemon*, and the *Ephesians* were composed. Each of these epistles bears tokens of having been written during the author's imprisonment (Phil. i. 7, 13, 14, 17; Col. iv. 3, 18; Philemon vv. 9, 10, 13; Eph. iii. 1, iv. 1; cf. Acts xxviii. 16, 20). It is further evident that the imprisonment was occasioned by his preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles (Col. i. 24-27; Eph. vi. 19-20; Acts xxii. 21-22, xxvi. 19-21). Some think that the imprisonment in question was that which the apostle endured at Cæsarea. But in several respects the circumstances referred to in the epistles harmonise better with his stay in Rome. In particular the impression made by his bonds which "became manifest in Christ throughout the whole prætorian guard, and to all the rest" (Phil. i. 13), and still more the mention of "Cæsar's household" (iv. 22), point to the *imperial* city—while the apostle's purpose of visiting Macedonia after his release (ii. 24), would not answer to his state of mind while he was looking forward to a visit to Rome. We may add that the expression used in Acts xxviii. 20 to describe Paul's confinement, namely "this chain," is almost identical with the language of Ephes. vi. 20, margin. The same cannot be said of Acts xxvi. 29, relating to the imprisonment at Cæsarea.

With regard to the order in which these four epistles were written, many critics have been disposed to assign *Philippians* to a later date than the three others. But none of their arguments when examined appear to have much weight. *Philemon*—which can be shown to be contemporaneous with *Colossians* (see p. 93)—affords as probable an indication of having been written when the imprisonment was drawing to a close (ver. 23,) as anything to be found in *Philippians*. We cannot, however, infer much, from such expressions, as the apostle's prospects may have undergone various vicissitudes during his imprisonment. We are on safer ground

when we base our judgment on the general character of the several epistles. When we do so we are led to the conclusion that this epistle marks the *transition* from Romans to Colossians and Ephesians. While the former resembles it in many points both verbal and doctrinal,<sup>1</sup> we discern in the two latter a new phase of doctrine of which scarcely any trace can be found in the Epistle to the Philippians.

But while Philippians was probably anterior in date to the three others, the effects of the apostle's preaching in Rome, as stated in i. 13, as well as the account of Epaphroditus' mission to that city, with its attendant circumstances (ii., iv.), imply that some considerable time had elapsed since the apostle's arrival. We may therefore assign this epistle to the early part of 62 A.D., and the three others to the close of the same year or the beginning of 63 A.D.<sup>2</sup>

"THE EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE  
PHILIPPIANS"

**Who wrote it.**—The Pauline authorship of this epistle is generally admitted. It is a characteristic outpouring of the apostle's tender, affectionate, and devout heart; the circumstances which gave rise to it come out in the course of the epistle in a casual and unaffected manner; and corroboration of them is found in the Book

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Phil. i. 3-8, Rom. i. 8-11; Phil. i. 10, Rom. ii. 18; Phil. iii. 4, 5, Rom. xii. 1; Phil. iii. 9, Rom. x. 3; Phil. iii. 10, 11, Rom. vi. 5. In a general sense the similarity of these two epistles as contrasted with Colossians and Ephesians may be accounted for by the former being addressed to Churches in *Europe*, the latter to Christians of *Asia Minor*.

<sup>2</sup> It is possible the apostle may have written other letters during his imprisonment. His anxiety about his own prospects did not prevent him from engaging in active labour among the soldiers and others brought into contact with him, or from superintending by means of his colleagues and envoys the various Churches which looked to him for guidance. In this connection the following names occur in the epistles—Luke, Timothy, John Mark, Demas, Jesus Justus, Epaphroditus (of Philippi), Tychicus (of Ephesus), Epaphras (of Colossæ), and Aristarchus (of Thessalonica).

of Acts and elsewhere. It is difficult to imagine what purpose a forger could have had, or how he could ever have achieved success, in fabricating a letter of such a distinctly personal character.

With regard to external evidence, traces of expressions used in the epistle may be found in several writers at the end of the first and at the beginning of the second century. A little later we find increasing evidence of the epistle's recognition as an apostolic work, until at the close of the second century its general acceptance in the Church is put beyond doubt. One writer (Tertullian, about 200 A.D.) states that it had all along been read and acknowledged by the Church of Philippi.

**To whom written.**—“To all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.” Philippi was *the first place* at which St. Paul preached the Gospel in Europe—in the course of his second missionary journey, 52 A.D. A very full and graphic account of this visit is given by St. Luke, who along with Timothy and Silas accompanied the apostle on the occasion (Acts xvi. 11-40.) The city lay a few miles inland from the coast of Macedonia, at the confluence of Asiatic and European life on the great Egnatian highway, where there was a pass in the mountain barrier stretching north and south. Founded on an ancient site by Philip, king of Macedonia (who named it after himself) in the middle of the fourth century B.C., the city was raised to the dignity of a Roman colony by Augustus (42 A.D.) in commemoration of his great victory over Brutus and Cassius gained in the immediate vicinity. As a colony it became politically “*a miniature likeness of Rome*”; and the high sense of Roman citizenship which pervaded the community may be seen at several points in Luke's narrative (Acts xvi. 20, 21, 35-39) as well as in allusions in the epistle (i. 27, R.V. margin; iii. 20, R.V.) There were comparatively few Jews in the place, as we may infer from the want of any regular synagogue and the absence of any Hebrew name in the list of converts. Only three members of the Church are specially men-

tioned in the account of Paul's visit. These are a *proselyte of Asia, a Greek, and a Roman*—representing the catholic nature of the Church which Paul had come to establish,—representing, too, the liberal and liberating spirit of the Gospel, two of them being *women*, and one of the two a *slave*, the absolute property of her master. The consecrating influence of the Gospel on *family relations* is brought out here for the first time in the history of the Church,—Lydia's "household" being baptized with her, and the jailor rejoicing greatly "with all his house." The prominence assigned to women both here and in the neighbouring Churches of Thessalonica and Berea (Acts xvi. 13; Acts xvii. 4, 12; cf. iv. 2, 3) is in harmony with what we know from other sources to have been characteristic of Macedonian society.

Paul's visit to Philippi was memorable not only for the converts whom he made but also for the sufferings he endured and the signal deliverance that was granted to him. The Church which he then formed *excelled all others* in its devoted attachment to his person and its repeated acts of generosity to him. This generosity he accepted, contrary to his ordinary rule, because of his perfect confidence in the sincerity and affection of the donors.

We hear of two subsequent visits which the apostle paid to Philippi—in 57 and 58 A.D. (Acts xx. 2, 6). His experience on these occasions, as well as in other communications which he held with them, had done much to cheer his heart. In their contributions for the relief of the poor saints at Jerusalem they appear to have contributed, in common with the other Macedonians, even "beyond their power" in "much proof of affliction" and "deep poverty" (2 Cor. viii. 1-4).

**Where and when written.**—At Rome, 61-62 A.D. (see pp. 84-85).

**Character and Contents.**—Of all St. Paul's epistles this is the most benign, breathing a spirit of the warmest *sympathy and approval*. At chap. iv. 1 he addresses the Philippians as "my brethren beloved and longed for, my joy and crown" In this respect it sur-

passes even 1 Thess., which it resembles not a little in its gentle and confiding tone.

Without any assertion of apostolic authority, it begins with a very full *thanksgiving* for the tokens of grace which the Philippians had so generally manifested since the Gospel was preached among them. These tokens led the apostle to cherish a confident persuasion that they would advance more and more in the Christian life and realise a fulfilment of his constant prayer on their behalf (i. 1-11).

He then adverts to his own circumstances, and refers to the salutary influence of *his bonds* in witnessing for Christ among the imperial guard and in the city generally, while his friends were stimulated by his example, and even his enemies the Judaisers were provoked to greater activity on his account. The mutilated gospel taught by these he regards as better than none for those who know not Christ; and instead of troubling himself about their opposition to him, he will rather take comfort from their labour, feeling assured that all his trials will work together for good. He is prepared either for *life* or for *death* as the will of the Lord may be, although he has a strong impression that he will be delivered and permitted to visit Philippi once more (i. 12-26). In any case he would appeal to them to be *firm and united* in defence of Christ's cause—counting it a token of salvation that they are permitted “not only to believe on him, but also to suffer in his behalf” (i. 27-30). He would counsel them to avoid all rivalry and self-seeking, and to cultivate that humility which was so signally displayed by the Lord Jesus Christ and was attended in His case with such glorious results. He exhorts them to work out their salvation with fear and trembling as in God's presence and with God's help, striving to walk worthy of their calling and to justify the apostle's boast concerning them. They might rest assured that he was as devoted to their interests as ever, and was ready, if need be, to give up his life on their behalf. He hoped soon to send to them their mutual and trusty friend Timothy with

news of his prospects, and in return he hopes to hear of their state before he visits them in person. Meanwhile he is sending to them Epaphroditus, the messenger of their bounty, who has been of invaluable service to him since his arrival, but whose recent illness and anxiety on their account render it expedient that he should return to Philippi (ii.)

At this point (iii. 1) it would seem as if the apostle had intended to draw to a close—probably by a renewal of his counsels to unity and brotherly love. But from some cause—perhaps owing to his being interrupted by fresh news of the Judaisers—he launches into a new subject, warning his converts against the infatuation of those who would put their confidence in *Jewish rights or privileges*, and avowing his own renunciation of all such claims, in view of the new life which comes from fellowship with the risen and exalted Christ. That life cannot be realised without *strenuous and persevering effort* in the path of duty. He would therefore caution them against the gross abuse of the doctrines of grace which some are guilty of, and he bids them take his own life as an example of the Christian course. In chap. iv. he returns to the subject of *the dissensions* among them, and refers to two women of influence in the Church whom he is anxious to see restored to terms of friendship. For this purpose he invokes the aid of Epaphroditus (“true yoke-fellow”) and other leading members of the Church. He adds *several exhortations* of a general nature that are among the most beautiful precepts in the New Testament (iv. 4-9). In conclusion, before sending the final salutations, he thanks the Philippians warmly for the renewal of their bounty towards him, which he welcomes not so much on his own account as for the evidence it affords of their devotion to the Gospel. For their kindness to him God will yet reward them with the higher treasures that are hid in Christ Jesus (iv. 10-23).

It is worthy of note that the “bishops and deacons” specially addressed in the opening of the epistle (i. 1) represent the only two classes of local Church office-bearers

that are mentioned in the New Testament. The former (bishops or *overseers*, R.V. margin) are identical with the "elders" or presbyters elsewhere mentioned, to whom were entrusted the *governing and teaching* functions in the Church, while the deacons appear to have been specially charged with *the care of the poor*. The three Episcopal orders of bishop, priest, and deacon cannot be distinctly traced before the second century.

## CHAPTER XV

## COLOSSIANS—PHILEMON

“THE EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE  
COLOSSIANS”

THE Pauline authorship of this epistle, as well as of that to the Ephesians (which it closely resembles), has of recent years been called in question, not for any want of external evidence, but because of its *peculiar phraseology* as compared with the earlier epistles of Paul. The objection, however, is one of little force. It is no uncommon thing for a writer's vocabulary to undergo a considerable change in the course of a very short period, when he is placed amid new surroundings and under the influence of new associations.<sup>1</sup> Anything strange about the apostle's language in this epistle is sufficiently explained by the circumstances under which he wrote, and was evidently occasioned by the *new errors* which he was called to encounter.

It is alleged, however, that we have in this epistle, not only novelty in language but also in *doctrine*, especially with regard to the nature and office of Christ. But the truth is we have here only the full development of ideas which had germinated in the apostle's mind years before (1 Thess. i. 1 ; 1 Cor. viii. 6, xi. 3 ; 2 Cor. iv. 4), and are to be found in other books of the New

<sup>1</sup> A close examination of the works of Xenophon, for example, has brought to light a remarkable variation of language in the books he wrote after he began to move about from place to place like St. Paul.

Testament (1 John i. 3; Heb. i. 2). In the notable passage in Philippians (ii. 5-11) regarding the original glory and the ultimate exaltation of the Saviour, as lofty a claim is made on His behalf to the reverence and adoration of the Church as is anywhere to be found in this epistle.

It is worthy of note, too, that this epistle has a special mark of genuineness in the singular connection which subsists between it and the Epistle to Philemon (iv. 7-18, Philemon 2, 10-12, 23, 24).<sup>1</sup>

**To whom written.**—"To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colossæ." The Church at Colossæ seems to have been the *least important* of the Churches to which Paul is known to have written. The city itself had at one time been populous and important, but its prosperity was very much reduced before the days of the apostle. It lay on the river Lycus, a tributary of the Mæander in the Phrygian part of Asia Minor, not many miles distant from its more prosperous neighbours, Laodicea and Hierapolis (iv. 13), in "a sombre and melancholy region" covered with the traces of volcanic action. In common with these cities, Colossæ had doubtless been indebted for its knowledge of Christianity to the evangelistic labours of Paul at *Ephesus*, the metropolis of the district, from which his influence had spread far and wide, "almost throughout all Asia" (Acts xix. 10, 26; 1 Cor. xvi. 19). Although we may infer from his language in the epistle (ii. 1) that Paul had not personally laboured among the Colossians, it would seem that their chief evangelist, *Epaphras*, had been one of his disciples (i. 7, R. V.)

<sup>1</sup> This connection is such, that if Philemon be genuine (as generally admitted), Colossians must likewise be so; otherwise it must be a forgery founded on Philemon. But this is seen to be very unlikely when it is remembered that—(1) in the Epistle to Philemon there is no mention whatever of Colossæ, or of any place in its neighbourhood, nor yet of the messenger Tychicus; (2) there are variations in the salutations sent in the two epistles, such as we can scarcely imagine to have been resorted to in the interests of forgery; and (3) in Colossians there is no reference whatever to Philemon himself or the peculiar circumstances of Onesimus as a runaway slave.

This Epaphras had paid a visit to Rome during Paul's imprisonment there. Whether he had come for the express purpose of consulting the apostle regarding the state of the Colossians is not clear; but at all events he made Paul acquainted with the dangers that were besetting the Church notwithstanding many tokens of grace (i. 3-8; ii. 8-20; iv. 12, 13). The interest in Colossæ which was thus awakened in the mind of the apostle by his conversation with Epaphras was further stimulated by his intercourse with *Onesimus*, a runaway slave from the same city, who was in some way or other brought under his influence at Rome, and proved an invaluable friend (iv. 9, cf. Philemon). He could not permanently retain Onesimus in his service, as he was the lawful property of another, so he took the opportunity afforded by the mission of *Tychicus* (a trusty delegate) to Asia (iv. 7-9; Acts xx. 4; 2 Tim. iv. 12) to send Onesimus along with him, giving the latter a conciliatory letter to his master Philemon (pp. 95-98). At the same time he addresses a longer communication to the members of the Colossian Church, with special reference to the evils to which they were exposed. The latter he entrusts to the care of Tychicus, by whom he also despatches another epistle intended for a still wider circle of readers (Eph. vi. 21, 22).

**Where and when written.**—At Rome, 62-63 A. D. (pp. 84-85).

**Character and Contents.**—It has been remarked that this epistle lacks the vivacity and fluency which characterise the apostle's style when he is addressing readers personally known to him.

To the ordinary reader it is probably the most difficult of Paul's epistles, owing to the fact that it was designed to be a *corrective of certain errors* of a recondite nature with which we have little or nothing to do at the present day. For these errors the Jewish element of the population, which prevailed so largely in that part of the world, was largely responsible. It was not the Pharisees, however, whose endeavours, at an earlier

period, to foist the ceremonial law of the Jews on the Christian Church had been so strenuously and successfully resisted by the apostle of the Gentiles, but the *Essenes*, another sect of the Jews, that were now the corruptors of the faith. Their pretensions were of a more abstruse and philosophic character, savouring of combined mysticism and asceticism; and along with their teaching was mingled the theosophy of Asia Minor, resulting in the strange form of heresy which we find the apostle combating in this epistle.

The heresy was partly speculative, partly practical, but at the root of the whole there lay an abhorrence of matter as the abode of evil, and a consequent depreciation of everything connected with man's physical existence. This led, on its *speculative* side, to an elaborate system of mediation between the Supreme Being and the world of matter, by means of a spiritual hierarchy consisting of a graduated series of emanations from the deity, the lowest of which was supposed to have been far enough removed from the Supreme Being to be capable of bringing into existence the base material world. In opposition to this theory the apostle insists upon the *absolute and universal mediatorship of Christ*—in the outward universe created through Him (i. 16) as well as in the Church of which He is the Head (i. 18).

On its *practical* side the error took the form of a rigorous asceticism, intended to free man's spirit from the degrading influence of the world and the flesh. To counteract this tendency, the apostle proclaims the inspiring and life-giving power of fellowship with *Jesus Christ*, by whose death upon the Cross reconciliation has been effected between heaven and earth, and in whom "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." The spirit of Christ ought to raise Christians above the mere elements or "rudiments" of the world, imparting to them new motives and a higher consciousness; and the apostle calls upon his readers to consecrate "in Christ" all departments of their personal and social life.

While the speculative and practical aspects of the

subject are not kept entirely distinct, the former is chiefly dealt with in chap. i., following the opening salutation, thanksgiving, and prayer; while the latter is treated in ii.-iv. 6. The remainder of the epistle (iv. 7-18) is occupied with salutations and personal explanations and directions.

In several passages a reference may be traced to the *intellectual pride and exclusiveness* which were associated with the errors of the Colossian Church. Among its Jewish members, the pride of intellect was taking the place of the old pride of nationality. In opposition to this tendency the apostle declares that "*in Christ*"—not in any philosophy which man could devise—"are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden" (ii. 3). He prays that they "may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding" (i. 9). He represents the Gospel as a "mystery" that has been "manifested" to the whole Church—his duty as an apostle being to proclaim Christ, "admonishing every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that he may present every man perfect in Christ" (i. 25-28; ii. 2-3). He thus declares the Church to be a spiritual democracy in which there is no room for any privileged class or inner circle of disciples—even the Scythians, the least refined of nations, being raised to the same level, in a spiritual sense, as the Jews themselves, or the most cultivated of the Gentiles (iii. 11).

#### "THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO PHILEMON"

**Who wrote it.**—This epistle is thoroughly Pauline; and its contents are of too *private* and (from a doctrinal and ecclesiastical point of view) too *insignificant* a nature to have ever been admitted into the Canon if it had not been a genuine writing of Paul's.

Its close connection with Colossians has already been referred to. The circumstances under which it reached Philemon, and even the latter's place of residence, would

be shrouded in mystery if it were not for Colossians. Yet no hint is given there of the episode in Paul's life which gave rise to this epistle—the only thing relating to it being an allusion to Onesimus as “the faithful and beloved brother who is one of you” (Col. iv. 9). So independent are the two epistles in their contents.

**To whom written.**—“To Philemon our beloved, and fellow-worker.”

To ascertain Philemon's residence we have, as already remarked, to consult the epistle to the *Colossians*. Philemon himself is not mentioned there; but Archippus whom Paul associates with Philemon and Apphia (probably Philemon's wife) in the opening greeting of this epistle, is mentioned in Colossians in such a way as to imply that he was an office-bearer of the Church either at Colossæ or in the neighbourhood (iv. 17). From the context (iv. 15, 16) it has been suggested that Laodicea, which was about twelve miles from Colossæ, was the scene of Archippus' labours. The association of his name with that of Philemon, in the epistle addressed to the latter, would lead us to suppose that he was either Philemon's son or his minister. The connection of Philemon with Colossæ is further evident from the fact that his slave Onesimus is spoken of in Colossians as “one of you,” and is announced as a visitor to Colossæ (Col. iv. 9) at the same time as he is restored to his master (Phil. 12).

We gather from the epistle that Philemon had been converted to Christianity through the instrumentality of the apostle, and had since then earned a reputation for charity and devotion, his house being one of the meeting-places of the Church. It was owing to *special circumstances*, however, that he had the distinction of having an apostolic letter addressed to him. A slave of his, Onesimus by name, had absconded (like many another Phrygian slave) and made his way to Rome, apparently with the aid of money stolen from his master. There he was providentially brought under the influence of Paul, and became a confirmed Christian, endearing him-

self to the apostle by his grateful and devoted services in the Gospel. As he was Philemon's lawful slave, Paul could not think of retaining him permanently in his service. He therefore took the opportunity afforded by Tychicus' return to Asia to send him back to his master. In doing so he gave him a letter to Philemon with the view of winning for him a merciful reception, and to save him from the severe and cruel punishment which was permitted by the Roman law—even to the extent of death—in such cases.

**Where and when written.**—At Rome, 62-63 A.D. (see pp. 84, 85).

**Character and Contents.**—This is the only extant letter of Paul's written to a friend on a matter of private business. On all sides it has received the warmest praise and admiration—not on account of its language, which has nothing particular to recommend it, but for its *tact, delicacy, and good feeling*. While the apostle puts the case very strongly in favour of Onesimus—so strongly that it has been finely said “the word emancipation seems trembling on his lips,”—he refrains from any interference with Philemon's civil rights, seeking only to awaken within him such feelings of humanity and kindness as will be a safeguard against harsh and unbrotherly conduct. In this respect the epistle affords a good illustration of the remedial and reforming influence of the Gospel, which seeks to gain its ends from within and not from without, by persuasion rather than by compulsion.

It has been described as the letter of a Christian *gentleman*, animated by strong Christian feeling, tempered with discretion, and expressed with dignity and moderation not untouched with humour.<sup>1</sup> The whole tone and structure of the letter was well fitted to bring out the better nature of Philemon; and it was doubtless to strengthen the appeal—by making Philemon realise that the eyes of his fellow-Christians were upon him—that

<sup>1</sup> In verse 11 there is a play on the name “Onesimus,” which in the original means “profitable.”

Paul associates Timothy with himself in his opening greeting, and sends salutations from several others whose names are given at the close. He even throws out a hint that it may not be long before he visits Philemon in person (verse 22).

## CHAPTER XVI

"THE EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE  
EPHESIANS"

**WHO wrote it.**—As regards external evidence, this is one of the *best-attested* of Paul's epistles; and until recently its genuineness was never doubted.

Internally it bears a *strong resemblance to Colossians*, 78 of its 155 verses containing expressions that are also found in that epistle. No doubt the resemblance is due to the fact that the two epistles were written at the *same time on kindred subjects to kindred Churches*. In both epistles Tychicus is referred to in similar terms as the apostle's messenger; and they both bear to have been written by the apostle while he was a prisoner (vi. 21, 22; Col. iv. 7-9). From the occurrence of the significant word "also" in the former passage, we may infer that Ephesians was written later, although but a few days may have intervened—the closing verses of Colossians (iv. 15-18) having been subsequently added. As might have been expected under the circumstances, the similarity between the two epistles does not extend to continuous passages, but is confined to single verses and occasional expressions such as would be likely to remain in the writer's memory and reappear in his language if he were writing a second time within a very short interval.

We have a remarkable token of the genuineness of this epistle, as of several others attributed to Paul,

in the fact that while the writer dwells with great satisfaction on the admission of the Gentiles to the blessings of the Gospel, he shows so much regard for the rite of circumcision interpreted in a spiritual sense, and is so careful to show that in this sense it is realised in the hearts of all true Christians (ii. 11; iii. 1-9; cf. Col. ii. 11; Phil. iii. 2, 3; Gal. vi. 16; Rom. ii. 28, 29). This is a state of feeling which was most natural in a Jewish-born Christian like Paul, after the struggle against the bondage of the Law was practically over.

**To whom written.**—It is now generally agreed that this epistle was not addressed to the Church at Ephesus exclusively, but was of the nature of a *circular-letter* for the general use of the Churches of Proconsular Asia.<sup>1</sup>

There can be little doubt, indeed, that we have here the epistle referred to in Col. iv. 16, where the apostle directs the Colossians to read also "*the epistle from Laodicea*," and to send their own letter in exchange, for the benefit of the Christians there. Even before the middle of the second century we find a heretical writer (Marcion) connecting this epistle with Laodicea. Yet it is evident that it could not have been specially addressed to Laodicea, as the apostle sends his salutations to "the brethren that are in Laodicea" through another channel (Col. iv. 15). The difficulty is met by supposing that we have here a circular-letter of which Laodicea

<sup>1</sup> In favour of this supposition are the facts (1) that the words "in Ephesus" (i. 1) were absent from many of the ancient MSS. known to Basil (360 A.D.), and are wanting in the two oldest MSS. that have come down to us (N and B); (2) that no personal salutations are found in the epistle although Paul had laboured successfully for several years at Ephesus, forming many intimate friendships (Acts xx. 17-38), nor any reference whatever to his experiences during that time; (3) that he writes as if the Christian graces of his readers were only known to him by report, and as if his apostleship to the Gentiles were only known to them by hearsay (i. 15-19; iii. 1-4; iv. 17-22; cf. Col. i. 3-9); (4) that the usual apostolic autograph is absent, owing, we may suppose, to copies of the epistle for the several Churches having to be made out in the course of the messenger's journeys or at the different places at which they had to be delivered.

received a copy in common with other Churches of the province,—to be communicated to the neighbouring church at Colossæ. The name of the Ephesian Church would naturally become associated with the epistle owing to its being the leading Church of the district, receiving the first copy from Tychicus on his way to Colossæ, and being the source of many later copies to Churches in other parts of the world.

**Its Character and Contents.**—It has been said by Coleridge that this is “one of the divinest compositions of man. It embraces every doctrine of Christianity; first, those doctrines peculiar to Christianity; secondly, those precepts common to it with natural religion.” In its *doctrinal* part (i.-iii.) the epistle is distinguished by a tone of exultation which will not stoop to controversy, expressing itself in the flow of a sublime eloquence rather than in the form of a logical argument. Instead of labouring to demonstrate those truths, regarding the standing of the Gentiles and his own position as the apostle of the Gentiles, for which he had contended in his earlier epistles, the writer takes these things for granted and soars into far loftier regions—viewing the Gospel and the Church in relation not to time, but to eternity, not to the nations of the world, but to the universe at large. Here, as in Colossians, Paul recognises Christ as the appointed *Head of the universe*—material as well as spiritual—and sees in His atoning death the universal centre of divine providence. Here, as there, he is thrilled with a sense of joy not untouched with awe when he contemplates the great mystery of the divine will—the eternal purpose of God so long concealed, but now at length revealed and so far realised through his instrumentality, to wit, the destined union of Jew and Gentile in the mystical body of the risen and exalted Christ. In this union he sees the pledge and token of that universal gathering together in one of “all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth,” that is to be the consummation of God’s purposes in Christ (i. 10). But, whereas in Colossians he dwells

mainly on the *person of Christ* as the "fulness of the Godhead bodily," here he is impelled rather to the contemplation of the *Church* as "the body of Christ, the fulness of him that filleth all in all," and expatiates upon the glory and riches of the spiritual blessing with which its members are blessed in heavenly places in Christ.<sup>1</sup>

The first half of the epistle is thus for the most part a hymn of praise for the *grace of God*, manifested according to His good pleasure which He had purposed in himself,—accompanied with the apostle's prayer for his readers that they may realise the glory of their *calling*. Hence it was Calvin's favourite epistle, as Galatians was of Luther.

In the second part the apostle descends by a swift and beautiful transition to the *duties of common life*, "I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called" (iv. 1); and the remainder of the epistle consists of practical exhortations based on the ideal unity of the Church as the harmonious body of Christ, and embracing the various forms of social and domestic duty to which "the new man" is called in the ordinary relations of life. Finally there is a stirring call to put on the whole armour of God for the conflict with the powers of evil,—expressed in the language of a metaphor which may have been suggested to Paul by his military surroundings at Rome, and forming a passage of great force and beauty, which of itself would make this epistle a precious heritage of the Church.

The catholic nature of this epistle shows that the apostle's education was now complete. The Saviour, whom he only knew at his conversion as the Risen One dwelling in another world, has become to him as an all-pervading Presence which may be realised even now in the sphere of human life, as the type of all affection and the centre of all authority, in the State and in the

<sup>1</sup> The word "spirit" or "spiritual" occurs 13 times in this epistle, "the heavenlies" 5 times, "the grace of God" 13 times.

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family as well as in the Church. During his residence at Rome, the seat of empire and the centre of the world's secular life, Paul learned, as he had never yet done, the meaning of the Saviour's prayer, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

## CHAPTER XVII

## THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

1 and 2 Timothy and Titus are known as the Pastoral Epistles, because they relate chiefly to the qualifications and duties of office-bearers entrusted with the pastoral care of the Church.

They are distinguished from all the other epistles of Paul by their want of historical agreement with any period in the life of the apostle as recorded in the Book of Acts, and also by their strongly-marked individuality alike in style and substance. Hence their genuineness has been more called in question than any of the other epistles of Paul—notwithstanding a large amount of external testimony in their favour.

The objections taken to them, however, on these grounds are almost entirely obviated if we suppose them to have been written subsequently to the events narrated in the Book of Acts. This is a supposition that in itself involves no improbability. It was, as we have seen, Paul's own expectation (Phil. ii. 24; Philemon, ver. 22) that he would be released from the imprisonment in which the Book of Acts leaves him; and for this expectation he seems to have had sufficient grounds in the inadequacy of the evidence brought against him, as well as in the tolerant attitude of the Roman Government previous to the great fire in Rome (64 A.D.), which was falsely attributed to the Christians and brought terrible persecutions in its train. Moreover, there is an early and general

tradition to the effect that he was released. Assuming that his liberation did take place, the difficulty of harmonising the epistles with his life disappears; while the late date of their composition—possibly some years after his release—would go far to account for the peculiarity of their contents. It is no wonder that questions of discipline and government as well as of orthodoxy should now receive from the apostle a larger measure of attention than they had ever yet done, considering the growing needs of the Church and the responsible position of those to whom the epistles are addressed. The Church had now been for many years a visible institution with office-bearers of its own; and important doctrines had been vindicated and established. To conserve these doctrines and to provide for the regular superintendence of the Church after he and the other apostles had passed away, was Paul's great object in writing these epistles.<sup>1</sup>

The idea that the epistles may have been the products of a *later age* is in many respects untenable. Alike as regards the office-bearers mentioned, namely, bishops and deacons, and the doctrinal needs and dangers of the Church, they remind us far more of the state of things existing during Paul's first imprisonment, when he wrote Philippians and Colossians, than of anything in the second century. By the latter time the name of "bishop" had been appropriated to a chief dignitary ruling over the "presbyters" or elders, instead of being applied as here to the presbyters themselves as the overseers of the congregation (Titus i. 5, 7, cf. Acts xx. 17-28); while the vague notions engrafted on the Jewish Law, towards the close of the apostolic age, as a more enlightened kind of piety ("knowledge falsely so called"), had then developed into an elaborate system called Gnosticism, which set itself in direct opposition to the orthodox faith, and, unlike the heresy in these epistles, repudiated all affinity with the Jewish Law.

<sup>1</sup> The large infusion of new words (*i.e.* words not elsewhere used by the apostle) is in accordance with the gradual expansion of his vocabulary, which is evident on a comparison of Paul's successive writings.

“THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO  
TIMOTHY”

**Who wrote it.**—We can trace allusion to this epistle as far back as the close of the first century. A hundred years later we find it universally accepted as Paul's, although it had been rejected in the course of the second century by one or two heretical writers,<sup>1</sup> owing to the difficulty of reconciling its teaching with their favourite tenets.

In a general sense its peculiarities in language and contents have already been accounted for. In some respects, however, its peculiarities are positively in favour of the Pauline authorship. How unlikely that a forger would insert the word “mercy”<sup>2</sup> (i. 2) in the usual Pauline greeting “grace and peace,” or that he should have failed to make a lavish use of the connecting particles “wherefore,” “then,” etc., which are so common in Paul's writings.

Objection has been taken to the expression “let no man despise thy youth” (iv. 12), as if the apostle could not have applied that language to Timothy when he was already a man of about thirty-five years of age. But youth is relative; and in Paul's eyes Timothy, being so much his junior, and having been known to him as a lad, would naturally seem young,—especially in view of his great responsibilities in being set over so many elders.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Marcion and Basilides.

<sup>2</sup> This remark applies also to 2 Tim. (i. 2.) and Titus (i. 4).

<sup>3</sup> Equally groundless is the objection that Paul had predicted to the Ephesian elders that “he should see their face no more” (Acts xx. 25), whereas this epistle implies that he had recently paid them another visit. For the words quoted contain the expression of a presentiment or at most of a conviction, not of an inspired prophecy, on the part of the apostle; and, besides, the language of the epistle, “as I exhorted thee to tarry at Ephesus when I was going into Macedonia,” does not necessarily imply that the writer himself had been at Ephesus. It is quite possible he may have exhorted Timothy by a message from a distance, or have met him at Miletus as he had met the Ephesian elders several years before.

Again it has been argued that the instructions contained in this epistle might have been more easily given by the apostle in person during his recent visit to Ephesus, or on the subsequent visit to

**To whom written.** — “Unto Timothy, my true child in faith.” The disciple thus addressed was one of the apostle’s converts, and became his dearest friend and coadjutor in the closing years of his life. Of a pious Jewish family by the mother’s side—his father was a Greek—he received a strict religious training in the scriptures of the Old Testament (Acts xvi. 1; 2 Tim. i. 1-5; iii. 14-15). He seems to have been converted to Christianity during Paul’s first visit to Lystra and Derbe; for on the apostle’s second visit to that quarter about three years afterwards, Timothy was a disciple so well reported of by the brethren at Lystra and Iconium as to be deemed worthy of being associated with Paul as a labourer in the Gospel (Acts xvi. 1-2; 1 Tim. i. 2; 2 Tim. iii. 10-11, cf. Acts xiv. 9-21). To this position he was duly ordained by the laying on of hands, after being circumcised to render him more acceptable to the Jews (Acts xvi. 3; 1 Tim. vi. 12; iv. 14; 2 Tim. i. 6). Thereafter we find him constantly associated with the apostle either as his companion or as his delegate to Churches at a distance. He was with the apostle during his first imprisonment at Rome, being associated with him in three of the four epistles which Paul then wrote (Phil., Col., and Philemon). From this epistle we gather that after the apostle’s release Timothy was left for a time in charge of the Church at Ephesus; and it was while in this trying and responsible position that he received the two epistles that bear his name.

**Where and when written.** — The first epistle seems to have been sent to Timothy from Macedonia

which he was still looking forward (iii. 14). But this latter visit was regarded by the apostle as very uncertain (iii. 15); while the former one, as we have seen, is a very doubtful inference from i. 3. Even if it be true, however, that the apostle had recently been at Ephesus, there is nothing improbable in the supposition that it was in consequence of what he then learned of the condition of the Church, and as the result of subsequent reflection, that he was led to furnish Timothy with these rules and directions in a written form, which could be of permanent service, and if necessary might be referred to in the hearing of the congregation.

under the circumstances referred to in i. 3 ; but whether before or after Paul's intended visits to Philippi (Phil. ii. 24), Colossæ (Philemon, ver. 22), and Spain—which, according to an ancient tradition originating in the first century, he did visit (Rom. xv. 24)—it is quite impossible to say. Various routes have been sketched by which Paul may have travelled after his release from Rome, comprising visits to the places just mentioned and also to Ephesus, Crete (Tit. i. 5), Nicopolis (Tit. iii. 12), and Troas (2 Tim. iv. 13) ; but they are all more or less conjectural. While it is impossible to ascertain the precise movements of the apostle after his release, or the exact year in which this epistle was written, we may safely place it between 64 A.D., the year after Paul's release, and 67 A.D., shortly before his death,—the date usually assigned to the latter being 68 A.D., the last year of Nero, under whom, according to the general tradition, Paul suffered martyrdom. The more probable year is 67 A.D., which gives an interval of several years to account for the change in the apostle's style and in the condition of the Church, and makes the three pastoral epistles very nearly contemporaneous.

**Its Character and Contents.**—These have been already indicated in the general remarks at pp. 104, 105. The epistle is partly official, partly personal. Although addressed to Timothy individually, it contains Paul's apostolic instructions to guide him in the work of supervision assigned to him at Ephesus (i. 1-4). The anticipations of evil which Paul had expressed to the Ephesian elders at Miletus (Acts xx. 29-30) had already in some measure been realised, and there was great need for wisdom in the rulers of the Church. It is not easy to trace any regular sequence in the topics discussed ; but the contents of the epistle may be summarised as follows :—

The folly and danger of the Judaic fancies with which false teachers were overlaying the Gospel (i.) ; exhortations to catholicity of spirit as well as to reverence and decorum in acts of worship (ii.) ; the qualifications

requisite in the office-bearers of the Church (bishops and deacons), and the need for fidelity and care on their part in view of the increasing corruption (iii.); counsels regarding Timothy's treatment of the elders and other classes in the congregation (iv.-v.); cautions against covetousness, and exhortations to the rich to make a good use of their means—concluding with an appeal to Timothy to guard that which was committed to his trust, and to avoid “profane babblings, and oppositions of the knowledge which is falsely so called” (vi.)

Although in some respects on a humbler level intellectually than most of Paul's writings, and bearing traces of the writer's advancing years, this epistle contains not a few golden texts to be held in everlasting remembrance.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> i. 5, 15; ii. 3-6; iii. 16; vi. 6, 10, 12.

*Christian remembrance  
& expression  
fatherly love*

## CHAPTER XVIII

## TITUS—2 TIMOTHY

## "THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO TITUS"

**WHO** wrote it.—To the general remarks at pp. 104, 105 we may add the following notes of genuineness :—

(1) The quotation in i. 12 is in accordance with the manner of St. Paul, who is the only New Testament writer that quotes *heathen* authors (Acts xvii. 28; 1 Cor. xv. 33). At the same time the use of the word "*prophet*" in this passage, as compared with "*poet*" in Acts xvii. 28, is against the supposition of imitation.

(2) The introduction of such *unknown names* as Artemas and Zenas, as well as of Nicopolis (iii. 12, 13), which are mentioned nowhere else in the New Testament, and the *unique* designation of the apostle himself (i. 1), are at variance with the idea of forgery.

**To whom written.**—"To Titus, my true child after a common faith" (i. 4). Judging from the allusions to Titus in Paul's epistles<sup>1</sup> he seems to have been the ablest and most reliable of all the friends and coadjutors whom the apostle had about him in his later years. As an uncircumcised Gentile who had been converted by Paul, he represented in his own person the breadth and freedom of the Gospel, for which the apostle had so zealously and successfully contended.

<sup>1</sup> In the Book of Acts Titus is never mentioned.

The conversion of Titus had taken place at a comparatively early period in the apostle's ministry, for he accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their visit from Antioch to Jerusalem to vindicate the freedom of the Gentiles from the ceremonial law of the Jews (Gal. ii. 1-4).

From the allusion to him in the passage just cited we may infer that he was well known to the Galatians; and it is possible he may have been the labourer among them referred to in Gal. iii. 5. We find him figuring prominently at another crisis in the apostle's ministry, when the strife and confusion in the Corinthian Church threatened to destroy the apostle's influence. His remarkable success in the difficult mission then assigned to him (pp. 66, 67), which called for the exercise of combined firmness and tact, and from which Apollos appears to have shrunk (1 Cor. xvi. 12), marked him out as an able and trustworthy delegate, and explains his selection ten years later for the important and trying position which he temporarily held in Crete when this letter was addressed to him.

Of the state of the Church in Crete we know very little except what may be gathered from this epistle. In all probability the Gospel had been first brought to the island by those of its inhabitants who witnessed the outpouring of the spirit on the day of Pentecost ("Cretans," Acts ii. 11). More than thirty years had passed since then, and there were now, probably, quite a number of congregations in the island, which was 140 miles long and was famous for its hundred cities.

Paul had been there once before, on his way from Cæsarea to Rome; but being a prisoner at the time he could have had little or no opportunity of preaching. It may have been on that occasion, however, that he saw the necessity for organising the various congregations, as he was now seeking to do through the instrumentality of Titus. It was a difficult task, for the Cretans bore a bad character. "Liars, evil beasts, idle gluttons," was the description given of them by "one of themselves" (Epimenides, 600 B. C.)—a testimony confirmed by several

other ancient writers. They were a mixed population of Greeks and Asiatics, with a considerable infusion of Jews. To the influence of these latter, acting on native superstition, the corruption of Christian doctrine, of which we hear in the epistle, appears to have been largely due (i. 10, 14; iii. 9).<sup>1</sup>

**Where and when written.**—The striking resemblance of this epistle to 1 Tim. justifies us in assigning it to the same year (say 67 A.D.) It may have been written in Asia Minor when the apostle was on his way to Nicopolis.

**Its Character and Contents.**—Although addressed to a friend, this letter, like 1 Tim., has to a certain extent an official character. This is evident from the greeting: "Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ . . ." (i. 1-4). It was intended to furnish Titus, as the apostle's representative in Crete, with the same assistance in his work as had already been rendered to Timothy. From i. 5 it would appear that the apostle had heard of opposition being offered to Titus, and desired to strengthen his hands for his arduous undertaking. With this view he gives him directions for the appointment of properly-qualified presbyters in every city, who should be able and willing to teach "the sound doctrine," and to counteract the useless and unwarrantable speculations of a semi-Jewish character, involving endless controversy, which were propagated by dishonest self-seeking teachers. He also reminds Titus of suitable exhortations to be addressed to the various classes in the Church, for the promotion of that practical godliness which ought to accompany sound doctrine. Titus himself is admonished to show himself in all things "an ensample of good works."

The epistle contains a number of memorable sayings, including several of the most comprehensive statements of Christian truth to be found in the New Testament (ii. 11-14; iii. 4-7). In ii. 11-14 we have an excellent

<sup>1</sup> In the subsequent history of the island, Titus has figured prominently as the patron-saint of the community.

illustration of that "doctrine which is according to godliness," that sober-minded union of faith and practice, which is the ripest fruit of Christianity, and which forms the chief burden of this most salutary letter.

The epistle concludes with some allusions to personal matters (iii. 12-15), in the course of which Paul bids Titus come to him at Nicopolis as soon as Artemas or Tychicus has arrived to relieve him. This is an arrangement scarcely consistent with the view of some Episcopalian writers that Titus held a permanent official position in the island.

"THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE  
TO TIMOTHY"

**Who wrote it.**—In several passages this epistle bears the stamp of genuineness as a writing of St. Paul's, notably at i. 5-18 and iv. 9-22. In particular the *opening thanksgiving* (i. 3) is characteristic of Paul, eight of his ten other epistles having a similar commencement. At the same time this is not such a prominent feature as to lead to imitation; and, as a matter of fact, it is not found in the two other pastoral epistles.

A strong proof of genuineness is afforded by the *proper names* in the epistle. They are twenty-three in number, including ten mentioned elsewhere. In connection with several of these ten, remarks are made which a forger would have been very unlikely to invent. *E.g.* "Demas forsook me, having loved this present world" (iv. 10, cf. Col. iv. 14), is a record more like what we should have expected to find concerning Mark, in view of his former desertion of Paul (Acts xiii. 13); whereas we find favourable mention of him in this epistle (iv. 11). Dalmatia is also a strange place to have invented as a destination for Titus (iv. 10), considering that he had been written to so recently at Crete. A striking argument has been derived from the occurrence of the name *Linus* in iv. 21. The argument is based on the fact that Linus, Cletus, and Clement are the names of the

first three "bishops" of the Church of Rome, preserved in her Eucharistic Service, dating from the second century. If the epistle had been written in the post-apostolic age, Linus, it is held, would have been sure to receive a more prominent place in the list of salutations, and his name would have been accompanied with that of Cletus, or at all events with that of Clement, as the latter was believed to have been an immediate disciple of Paul.

These marks of genuineness are so numerous and striking that this epistle is accepted by many critics who reject the two others. But as the main objections to the latter, on the score of their novel language and teaching, and their want of correspondence with the Book of Acts, apply equally to 2 Tim., it is generally admitted that the three epistles must stand or fall together. Hence any argument for the Pauline authorship of this epistle has a reflex influence on that of the two others.

**To whom written.**—“To Timothy, my beloved child” (i. 2), see p. 107.

**Where and when written.**—From i. 8, 16-18, it is evident that this epistle was written by Paul while a prisoner at Rome. That it was a *different imprisonment* from that mentioned in Acts xxviii. may be inferred not only from the general considerations adduced on p. 104, but more particularly from the apostle's anticipation of a fatal result (iv. 6-8) as compared with his expectation of release in Phil. ii. 24 and Philemon, ver. 22.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, the difference between Paul's position during

<sup>1</sup> The same conclusion may be drawn from the fact that Timothy was now at a distance from the apostle (i. 2), whereas he had been with him when he (the apostle) wrote Philippians (i. 1), Colossians (i. 1), and Philemon (ver. 1); as well as from the absence of Demas and Mark (iv. 10-11) who had sent salutations from Rome in Col. iv. 10, 14. In this inference we are further confirmed by iv. 20, “Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus I left at Miletus sick.” On his last journey to Jerusalem, before his imprisonment at Rome, Paul was accompanied by Trophimus from Miletus to Jerusalem (Acts xx. 4, 15; xxi. 29); and as Timothy was with Paul during his visit to Corinth, narrated in the same chapter, he could not have required to be informed that Erastus had abode in that city, if it were the same occasion that was referred to.

his first imprisonment (Acts xxviii. 30-31; Phil. i. 12-14) and at the time when he wrote this epistle (ii. 9; i. 15-17; iv. 16) leads us to the same conclusion. Such a second imprisonment was in itself not at all unlikely after the great fire in 64 A.D., when the Christian religion was put under the ban; and we know the apostle had no lack of enemies to give information against him. If we are right in dating the first epistle 67 A.D., we may assign this one to 67-68 A.D.

**Its Character and Contents.**—We have here the apostle's last will and testament in favour of the Church, in the form of a *farewell charge* to his beloved child Timothy. He still hoped to see him once again, and repeatedly urges him to do his best to come to him shortly—"before winter," while navigation is still practicable (iv. 9, 21). His yearning for Timothy's society in his lonely prison reminds us of our Lord's desire for the sympathy and prayers of His disciples on the eve of His Passion; and in this epistle, as in our Lord's teaching during the week preceding His death, there is blended with a sublime confidence in the speaker's own future, dark foreboding of approaching trial and temptation for the Church. He warns Timothy of the "grievous times" to come (iii. 1), and exhorts him to adhere steadfastly to the teaching he had received from the apostle on the foundation of the Scripture "inspired of God," and to take security for such teaching being continued by "faithful men who shall be able to teach others also"—bidding Timothy emulate his own example in the endurance of hardship and in the practice of self-denial for the sake of the Gospel.

A peculiarity of this as of the other pastoral epistles is the introduction of short and weighty sayings with the words, "Faithful is the saying." In ii. 11-13 we have what is probably part of a Christian hymn, expressing the faith in which the apostle would have Timothy to meet his trials

## CHAPTER XIX

"THE EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE  
HEBREWS"

**WHO** wrote it.—This is a question which cannot be answered with any degree of certainty. The earliest witness on the subject is Pantænus of Alexandria, in the middle of the second century, who assigned the epistle, as Eusebius tells us, to the apostle Paul. In keeping with this opinion we find that the *Eastern* Church generally regarded it as the work of Paul; but some of the most learned of its bishops and teachers were constrained by internal evidence to depart somewhat from the traditional view. Their idea was that Paul might have written the original, and one of his disciples have translated it into Greek; or that the apostle might have supplied the thoughts, and some disciple have put them into words. In this sense Origen maintains that the thoughts were worthy of the apostle, but "who it was that wrote the epistle, God knows."

The opinion of the *Western* Church was for a long time adverse to the Pauline authorship. Clement of Rome, who wrote before the close of the first century, frequently quotes the epistle, but never claims for it the authority of Paul. If he believed that the epistle was written by Paul, it is difficult to account for the ignorance of the Roman Church on the subject in succeeding generations—all the more so because of the connection of the epistle with Italy (xiii. 24). It was not till the

close of the fourth century, and in spite of its traditions to the contrary, that the Western Church accepted the epistle as a writing of Paul's.<sup>1</sup>

Even if the external testimony in favour of the Pauline authorship were much stronger than it is, a study of *the style and structure of the book* would compel us to adopt a different view. Instead of the rugged, impetuous, and occasionally disjointed style of the apostle, we have here polished diction and carefully-constructed sentences. "The movement of this writer resembles that of an oriental sheikh with his robes of honour wrapped around him; the movement of St. Paul is that of an athlete girded for the race. The eloquence of this writer, even when it is at its most majestic volume, resembles the flow of a river; the rhetoric of St. Paul is like the rush of a mountain torrent amid opposing rocks." On account of this general dissimilarity of style, as well as because of many well-marked differences in detail,<sup>2</sup> the idea that Paul wrote this epistle has now been generally abandoned. Nor can we even regard it as the *translation* of a Hebrew work of the apostle's. Not only is it possessed of such a rhetorical *grace and finish* as is scarcely attainable in a translation, but in several other respects it bears unmistakable tokens of having been

<sup>1</sup> But it is interesting to observe that the Westminster Confession does not include it among St. Paul's epistles.

<sup>2</sup> (1) There is in this epistle a marked absence of the opening salutation and thanksgiving usual with St. Paul.

(2) There is an acknowledgment on the part of the writer that he and his readers were indebted in some measure for their knowledge of the Gospel to "them that heard" the Lord (ii. 3), whereas Paul repudiated for himself any such dependence on the testimony of others (Gal. i. 11-17).

(3) In quoting from the Old Testament the writer of this epistle makes use of such phrases as "God saith," "the Holy Spirit saith," "he testifieth," which are not found in St. Paul's writings.

(4) He invariably quotes from the Septuagint in its Alexandrian MS., without regard to the Hebrew, whereas Paul often corrects the Septuagint by the Hebrew, and when he quotes from the Greek version, follows the text found in the Vatican MS.

(5) He never designates the Saviour as "our Lord Jesus Christ" or "Christ Jesus our Lord" (expressions which occur nearly seventy times in Paul's epistles), but generally speaks of Him as "Jesus," or "Christ," or "the Lord."

*originally written in Greek.*<sup>1</sup> But although we cannot assign the epistle to St. Paul, this need not impair our sense of its value as an acknowledged portion of the New Testament. Its value is independent of its human authorship. "If it should be found that a noble picture which had been attributed to Raphael was not by that artist, there would not be one masterpiece the less, but one great master the more."

While the evidence is conclusive against the epistle having been written by Paul, there is yet reason to believe that it was the work of *one of Paul's school*. The writer appears to be acquainted with some of Paul's epistles.<sup>2</sup> He uses many words which are found nowhere in the New Testament except in Paul's writings, or in his speeches as reported by Luke; and he refers to Timothy as a personal friend (xiii. 23).

By which of Paul's friends or associates the letter was written it is difficult to say. Neither Clement nor Luke (whose names were suggested as early as the third century) can have been the author, so greatly do their styles differ from that of the epistle. Luther's conjecture that Apollos may have been the writer is favoured by the description of the latter in Acts xviii. 24-28, viewed in connection with the internal characteristics of the epistle. But if Apollos was the writer, it is difficult to account for the complete disappearance of his name from the traditions of the Church, more especially in the East.

There is another name, in itself not at all an improbable one, for which we have the authority of Tertullian of Carthage, who wrote in the beginning of the third century. That presbyter refers to *Barnabas* as the author of the epistle, in terms which imply that this was no new supposition; and his testimony is all the more important

<sup>1</sup> It has numerous plays on Greek words, and contains expressions that have no equivalent in Hebrew; it makes its Old Testament quotations direct from the Septuagint, in some cases even building an argument on forms of expression which do not occur in the Hebrew.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. ii. 8 and 1 Cor. xv. 27; ii. 10 and Rom. xi. 36; ii. 14, 2 Tim. i. 10 and 1 Cor. xv. 26; v. 12-14 and 1 Cor. iii. 2; vi. 10 and 1 Thess. i. 3; x. 30 and Rom. xii. 19; xii. 14 and Rom. xii. 18.

because he had been at one time resident in Rome and knew what was the current belief of the Church there. In many respects the name of Barnabas answers the requirements of the case. As a Jewish Christian who enjoyed the confidence of the apostles and was on intimate terms with the Church at Jerusalem, of which he had been an early benefactor; as a Levite, familiar with the usages and customs of the Jewish sanctuary; as a native, and frequent visitor, of Cyprus, sufficiently acquainted with Hellenistic literature to be able to preach to Hellenists, and at one time (according to an ancient tradition) a teacher, like his nephew Mark, at Alexandria, with which Cyprus was closely connected; as a good man full of the Holy Ghost and of faith, whose surname of Barnabas, "son of exhortation" (conferred on him by the apostles), marked him out as a man of great persuasive influence:—in all these respects this Church-leader was well fitted to be the writer of a "word of exhortation" (xiii. 22)—in the Greek language and after the Alexandrian mode of thought—to the wavering and distracted Hebrews (Acts iv. 36, 37; ix. 26, 27; xi. 19-30; xiii. 1; xv. 39).

**To whom written.**—"To the Hebrews." We have no reason to doubt that this part of the superscription—which probably formed the whole of the original—gives a correct indication of the readers for whom the epistle was intended. The whole tenor of the epistle implies that it was written for *Jewish Christians*. But various allusions show that it was not intended merely for Hebrew Christians in general, but for *some definite community* (v. 11-12; vi. 9-10; x. 32-34; xiii. 1, 7, 19, 23). Which of the Hebrew communities, in particular, is addressed has been much disputed. Alexandria, Antioch, Ephesus, Rome, have all been suggested. But from the way in which the Gentiles are entirely ignored in the epistle—the word "people," which frequently occurs, being always used to designate the Jews—it would seem most probable that the letter was intended for Christians in *Jerusalem* or in some other part of

*Palestine.* It was only in Palestine that Churches were to be found entirely composed of Jewish Christians; and the troubles that overtook these congregations soon afterwards in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem would go far to account for the ignorance and uncertainty of the early Church as to the authorship and the original destination of this epistle. Moreover, it was in Palestine that the *temptations to relapse into Judaism*, against which the writer is so anxious to guard his readers, were most formidable. The sacerdotal splendour of the ancient sanctuary threw into the shade the simple forms of Christian worship; and the flames of patriotic zeal burned more fiercely in the Holy Land than among the Jews of the Dispersion. The Hebrew Christians residing there must have felt themselves more and more under the necessity of choosing between their country and their faith, between a revolt against the Romans and a patient waiting for the coming of the Saviour. Exposed to persecution and excommunication at the hands of their fanatical and exasperated countrymen, deeply attached to the religion of their fathers and with a strong love of outward ceremonial, disappointed by the delay of the Second Coming and by the rejection of the Gospel on the part of so many of their kindred, they stood in urgent need of the consolations and the warnings which are addressed to them in this epistle.

**Where and when written.**—The only clue to guide us as to the place of writing is to be found at chap. xiii. 24: "They of Italy salute you." This may either mean that the writer was sending greetings from the Church in Italy, or from Italian Christians resident in some foreign city from which he wrote. On the whole, *the former* seems the more natural interpretation. If it be adopted, we may suppose the writer to have been waiting in some Italian city for the arrival of Timothy after his liberation from imprisonment at Rome (xiii. 23).

On this supposition the date of the epistle would be about 68 A.D., which tallies with other indications of time in the epistle. That it was written before the Fall

of Jerusalem is evident not only from the allusions to the sacrificial system as still going on (x. 2-3, etc.) and to the old covenant as "becoming old" and "nigh unto vanishing away" (viii. 13), but still more perhaps from the absence of any allusion to the destruction of the Temple. That event, if it had already occurred, would have rendered superfluous any other proof of the transitory and imperfect nature of the Old Testament dispensation.

**Its Character and Contents.**—In many respects this book has more of the character of a *treatise* than of a letter. Its great theme is the superiority of Christianity to Judaism. This superiority it proves not so much by minimising the old covenant—which Paul had been obliged to do in vindicating the freedom of his Gentile converts—as by magnifying the new in the sense of its being a fulfilment of the old.

The epistle may be divided into two parts, the first mainly ~~an~~ *argumentative or expository* character (i.-x. 18), the second chiefly *hortatory and practical* (x. 19-xiii.)

(1) In the former the writer seeks to establish the supremacy of Christ and of the Christian Dispensation. After the opening statement (i. 1-3) as to the divine revelation being completed and concentrated in the "Son," he proceeds to show His superiority to the *angels*, through whom the Law was believed to have been given (i.-ii.), to *Moses* (iii.), and to *Joshua* (iv.) But his main efforts are directed to proving His superiority and that of His religion to the *sacerdotal system* of the Jews. In v.-vii. he shows that Christ, while possessing in common with Aaron all the qualifications of a true priest, belongs to a *higher order* of priesthood, represented not by Aaron but by Melchizedek. In the story of the meeting of Melchizedek with Abraham (Gen. xiv. 18-20) and the prophetic allusions to the former (Ps. cx. 4) he finds many reasons of an allegorical nature to justify this view. He represents the Head of the Christian Church as the possessor of an unchangeable priesthood, secured by the divine oath—not

transitory, but permanent—exercised not on earth but in heaven—constituted “not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.” In viii.-x. 18, a similar superiority is proved to belong to the *Christian Dispensation*, with its law written on the heart, and its sacrifice offered “once for all” in a “tabernacle not made with hands,” whereby Christ hath “through his own blood” “obtained eternal redemption.”

(2) In the course of the argument occasional exhortations and warnings are introduced (ii. 1-4 ; iii. 7-13 ; iv. 11-16 ; v. 12-vi. 20). But *the practical application* is mainly reserved for the concluding chapters, x. 19-xiii. After exhorting his readers to avail themselves of the “new and living way” which has been thus consecrated for them into “the holy place,” and warning them against the terrible consequences of apostasy, he comforts their hearts with the assurance that though they may be disowned by the sacerdotal leaders at Jerusalem, they are in the true line of fellowship with the saints and holy men of old, whose devotion had been shown, not by the observance of an outward ceremonial, but by *faith in the unseen* (xi.) In the next chapter, after exhorting them to patience under their trials through the sustaining power of God’s fatherly love, he introduces a striking contrast between the terrors of Sinai and the attractive glories of Mount Zion. In the last chapter (xiii.) he gives a number of salutary counsels and admonitions, in the course of which he calls upon his readers to go forth unto Jesus (as it were) “without the camp, bearing his reproach,” remembering that Jesus Himself “suffered without the gate.” He alludes to the sacrifices of praise and well-doing which are required of the Christian, and bids his readers “obey them that have the rule over (them), and submit to them.” The epistle concludes with a beautiful benediction, and a few last words of personal explanation and greeting.

## CHAPTER XX

## THE CATHOLIC EPISTLES

THERE are seven epistles which from the fourth century have gone under the name of the Catholic (or General) Epistles, viz. James; 1 and 2 Peter; 1, 2, 3 John; and Jude. They were so called in contradistinction to Paul's epistles, which, with the exception of the pastoral epistles, are addressed to *individual Churches*, also seven in number. In most of the Greek MSS. the Catholic epistles stand next to the Book of Acts, although they were much later than the epistles of Paul in obtaining general recognition in the Church.

"THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF JAMES"<sup>1</sup>

In common with four other of the Catholic epistles, viz. 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, and Jude, this epistle is described by Eusebius (about 325 A.D.) as a disputed book of the New Testament, in the sense of not being universally acknowledged by the Church.

In the fourth century the claims of these and other writings to a place in the New Testament Canon were carefully sifted, the result being to vindicate the character of each of the disputed epistles (as appears from the Decrees of the Council of Laodicea, 364 A.D., and of

<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew original of this name is Jacob-

Them - *Life & conduct acceptable to God*  
*The practical Christian life*

Carthage, 397 A.D.), while a number of other books which, although not in the New Testament, had been read in church along with them were finally disallowed.

With regard to the Epistle of James in particular the rarity of allusions to it in the early Christian writers<sup>1</sup> may be accounted for by its circulation being confined to Jewish Christians, as well as by the narrow sphere of labour in which the writer himself moved, his life apparently having been entirely spent in Jerusalem.

The internal evidence of the book is entirely in its favour, and it is now generally admitted to be a genuine work of "James, the Lord's brother" (Gal. i. 19), who presided for many years over the Church at Jerusalem. (1) The writer's modest designation of himself—"James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ" is against the idea of forgery. (2) The epistle was evidently written for Jewish Christians by one of themselves. It speaks of Abraham as "our father" (ii. 21); it calls the readers' place of worship "your synagogue" (ii. 2, R. V.), it calls God "the Lord of Sabaoth" (v. 4); it takes for granted an acquaintance with Old Testament characters (ii. 25; v. 10, 17); it alludes to Jewish forms of oath (v. 12); it refers to "the law" as still binding (ii. 8-11; iv. 11); and it contains no allusions to those sins of the flesh which figure so prominently in epistles meant for Gentile readers. (3) It bears traces of having been written by a native of Palestine—in its allusions to "the scorching wind" (i. 11), the sea (i. 6; iii. 4), "sweet water and bitter" (the latter referring to the brackish springs of the country, iii. 11-12); the vine, olive, and fig (iii. 12); "the early and latter rain" (v. 7). (4) It shows a familiar acquaintance with Christ's teaching, although in doing so it does not use precisely the language of our Gospels.<sup>2</sup> (5) It reflects

<sup>1</sup> The earliest express quotation from this epistle is found in the writings of Origen; but the language of Clement of Rome, and still more clearly of Hermas, would lead us to believe that it was known to these writers. Still more significant is the fact that it has a place in the ancient Syriac Version (the *Peschito*).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. i. 5, 6 and Mark xi. 23; i. 25 and John xiii. 17; ii. 5 and Luke

a state of Jewish society, the rich oppressing the poor, which in a great manner ceased to exist after the rebellion that terminated in the destruction of Jerusalem.

With regard to the author's personal history the following points may be noted. He and his brothers Joses, Simon, and Jude (Matt. xiii. 55; Mark vi. 3) were either the children of Joseph and Mary, and younger brothers of our Lord, or else they were the children of Joseph by a former marriage. The latter supposition seems the more probable, both because it is in harmony with the earliest traditions of antiquity, and because it helps to explain the attitude of James and his brothers towards Jesus during His lifetime (Matt. xii. 46 and John vii. 3-5), and the committal of Mary to the keeping, not of her stepsons, but of the Apostle John (John xix. 26). We find that at an advanced period in our Lord's ministry His brethren did not believe in Him (John vii. 5); but immediately after the Ascension they are associated with the disciples in the upper room (Acts i. 14).

According to a tradition, which we have no reason to disbelieve, their conversion was due to the appearance of the risen Lord to James, which is mentioned I Cor. xv. 7. Among the Christians at Jerusalem James soon took a prominent place, being, indeed, the recognised head of the Church there after the death of James, the brother of John (44 A.D.), and the dispersion of the other apostles. This commanding position he owed partly, no doubt, to the special relation in which he stood to Jesus, and partly to his own high character, which procured for him the name of the *Just* (or *Righteous*) and *Obliam* ("the bulwark of the people"). He is said to have been a Nazarite, and so much given to prayer in the Temple that his knees had grown hard like those of a camel. He was essentially a Hebrew of the Hebrews, who clung to the law and the prophets, and valued the Gospel as their fulfilment. Hence his

vi. 20; iv. 9 and Luke vi. 25; iv. 10 and Matt. xxiii. 12; v. 12 and Matt. v. 37.

name was sometimes used by the Judaising party in opposition to Paul (Gal. ii. 12; cf. Acts xv. 24)—as indeed it continued to be long after his death<sup>1</sup>—although he himself recognised Paul as the apostle of the Gentiles, and did not insist on a full observance of the law by Gentile converts (Gal. ii. 9; Acts xv. 19-21, 25-26). He died a death of martyrdom, being stoned by the Jews—as Josephus and Hegesippus relate—shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem, on account of his testimony to Jesus as the Messiah.

**To whom written.**—“To the twelve tribes which are of the Dispersion” (i. 1). In view of the Jewish traits in the epistle, which have been already pointed out, and having regard to the migratory habits of the readers (iv. 13), there is no reason to take these opening words in any other than a literal sense. Jews of the Dispersion were to be found in almost every part of the world, as appears from Acts ii. 5-11. The expression there used to describe the pilgrims who came up to Jerusalem, “devout men from every nation under heaven,” is supported by the evidence of many independent witnesses, such as Philo and Josephus. These exiled Jews were chiefly located in Babylon, Syria, and Egypt; and it was probably to those resident in Syria that copies of this epistle would be first sent. The epistle is addressed to *Christian* Jews (ii. 1, 7; v. 7-8), of whom there were many in Syria liable to persecution and violence similar to that which Saul was inflicting on the Christians previous to his conversion; cf. ii. 6-7 and Acts ix. 1-2. While addressing himself mainly to Christian readers the writer seems also to have occasionally in view his unbelieving countrymen. The denunciations in v. 1-6 may be regarded as an apostrophe to the wealthy unbelievers, chiefly of the sect of the Sadducees, who truckled to the Romans and oppressed their poorer brethren, especially those who professed Christianity. James would have many opportunities of hearing of the trials which beset his believing countrymen

<sup>1</sup> In the (so-called) *Clementine Homilies* and *Recognitions*.

in their distant homes; and, as he seems never to have left Jerusalem, it was natural that under a sense of the high responsibility attaching to his position he should wish to address them in writing as he does in this epistle.

**Where and when written.**—Both Scripture and tradition concur in representing James as having constantly resided at Jerusalem, so there is no reason to doubt that the letter emanated from that city. With regard to the date of its composition there is less certainty. That it was written before the outbreak of the war, 66 A.D., which put an end to the Sadducean ascendancy, is generally admitted. We may also infer, from the absence of any allusions to the sharp controversy regarding the obligations of the Jewish law on Gentile converts which gave rise to the Council of Jerusalem (50 A.D.), that it was not written either at that time or for several years afterwards.

On the whole, considering the marked absence from the epistle of anything like developed Christian doctrine, the continued expectation which it exhibits of Christ's speedy coming to judge the world (v. 8), and the application of the term Synagogue to an assembly of Christian worshippers (ii. 2), we are justified in assigning to the epistle a very early date—say 44-49 A.D. If this supposition be correct, we have here the oldest book of the New Testament.

**Its Character and Contents.**—This epistle is *less doctrinal or theological* than any other in the New Testament. It partakes largely of the character of the *Sermon on the Mount*, which it resembles, not only in its general tone and sentiment, but in many of its expressions.<sup>1</sup> Its tone is *eminently practical*, the object of the writer being to inculcate *Christian morality as essential to salvation* (e.g. ii. 14-26). But it gives a prominent place to *faith and patience* (e.g. i. 2-12), and includes in its good works *the careful ruling of the tongue* (iii. 1-12). It also dwells

<sup>1</sup> Cf. i. 2 and Matt. v. 10-12; i. 4 and Matt. v. 48; i. 5 and Matt. vii. 7-12; i. 20 and Matt. v. 22; ii. 13 and Matt. vi. 14-15; ii. 14 and Matt. vii. 21-23; iv. 4 and Matt. vi. 24; iv. 10 and Matt. v. 3-4; iv. 11 and Matt. vii. 1-5; v. 2 and Matt. vi. 19; v. 10 and Matt. v. 12; v. 12 and Matt. v. 34-37.

much on the *wisdom*<sup>1</sup> which should characterise the religious man (*e.g.* iii. 13-18), and refers in detail to many other forms of duty—Christian practice being to the writer the highest form of outward worship (i. 27). The style of the epistle is sententious and forcible, passing swiftly, and sometimes without any apparent logical formation, from one topic to another, and it has about it not a little of the vehemence and fervour of the old prophets. James does not hesitate to denounce in very strong and plain terms, which savour, in some respects, of the language of Amos,<sup>2</sup> the greed and cruelty of the rich, the servility of the poor, and the general vanity, strife, hypocrisy, and worldly-mindedness which were characteristic of the Jews at this period of their history, and had begun to infect the Christians in their midst.

He insists on *character* as the test of true religion, and demands that a man shall show the reality of his faith by his life and conduct. In his protests against an empty profession of religion, he is led into the use of language which has sometimes been supposed (by Luther, for example) to be irreconcilably at variance with the teaching of Paul.<sup>3</sup> But in reality there is no such inconsistency between them.

The good works which James contends for are altogether different from the ritualistic observances which Paul refused to acknowledge as necessary for salvation; the justification he has in view in this epistle is not the initial admission into the Divine favour which Paul's Gentile converts needed, but the continuance of God's people in a state of grace to which they are already called; while the faith which he depreciates is not that personal union with the Lord Jesus Christ which Paul declared to be all-important for the Christian, but mere intellectual belief, such as the acceptance of the monotheistic doctrine (ii. 19)

<sup>1</sup> Hence James has been called "the Apostle of Wisdom"; and the designation given to him in the Greek liturgy is that of "James the Wise."

<sup>2</sup> Cf. iv. 13, v. 1-2 and Amos viii. 5, 10; v. 5 and Amos vi. 1-6.

<sup>3</sup> It may have been the language of James ii. 10 that gave colour to the misrepresentations referred to in Acts xv. 24.

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that lay at the foundation of the Jewish faith. No one can read Romans ii. 17-24 without seeing that Paul would have concurred most heartily in all that this epistle says about the necessity for carrying religion into practice.

## CHAPTER XXI

## "THE FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL OF PETER"

THERE is abundant evidence to prove that this epistle was written by the apostle whose name it bears. Hardly any book of the New Testament is better supported by external evidence (extending as far back as the writings of Polycarp in the early part of the second century), while internally it bears in many of its features the stamp of Peter's mind, and the traces of his experience, as these are represented to us in the Gospels and in the Book of Acts.

From these sources we learn that the apostle was originally called "Simon, the son of John," and that he was a fisherman of Bethsaida before he attached himself to Jesus. With his brother Andrew, who brought him to Jesus, he was a disciple of John the Baptist before finding the Messiah. At His very first interview with the new disciple, Jesus discerned his great capacity for rendering service to His cause, and gave him a prophetic token of the part he was to play in the early history of His Church by conferring on him the new name of Cephas (in Greek, *Peter*, meaning rock or stone), (John i. 40-42). The significance of the name was more fully unfolded at a later time on the occasion of Peter's great confession of Jesus as the Christ (Matt. xvi. 13-19). Like John and James, Peter was admitted to a closer fellowship with his Master than the rest of the disciples (Mark v. 37; Matt. xvii. 1; xxvi. 37, cf. Mark iii. 16, 17). In company with John he was a witness of Christ's

trial in the high priest's palace, where he fell into the threefold denial of his Master—to be bitterly repented of immediately afterwards (Matt. xxvi. 69-75; Mark xiv. 66-72; Luke xxii. 54-62; John xviii. 15-27). On the third day after the crucifixion the same disciples went together early in the morning to the tomb and found it empty, as Mary Magdalene had told them. The new faith which then sprang up in Peter's heart was confirmed by several interviews granted to him by the risen Christ, who gave him a new commission, thrice uttered, to devote himself to the interests of his Master's flock, and predicted that he would die a martyr's death (John xx. 1-10, 19; Luke xxiv. 33-34; I Cor. xv. 5; John xxi.)

In the Book of Acts we find Peter acting as the leader and spokesman of the early Church at several crises in its history, viz. the election of an apostle in place of the betrayer; the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost; the admission of the Gentiles, in the person of Cornelius, the Roman centurion, to the communion of the Church; and the emancipation of the Gentile converts from the bondage of the Jewish law at the Council of Jerusalem (Acts i. 15-26; ii. 1-42; x. ; xv. 6-11). It appears that shortly after the last-mentioned occasion (50 or 51 A.D.) Peter was guilty of vacillation in his relations with Gentile Christians at Antioch—reminding us of his earlier weakness,—which called forth a public remonstrance from the apostle of the Gentiles (Gal. ii. 11-14).

Regarding Peter's subsequent life scarcely any information is furnished by the New Testament; but there is an ancient and general tradition that he suffered martyrdom at Rome along with Paul during the persecution in the reign of Nero. Many legends have gathered round his imprisonment, death, and burial. The lack of evidence for these need not prevent us from acquiescing in the general belief of the early Church that it was at Rome Peter suffered the death by martyrdom which had been predicted by his Lord. This is contradicted by no other ancient tradition of the Church, and we have some confirmation of it in this epistle (see p. 134).

In illustration of the remark already made as to the harmony of this epistle with Peter's experience and character, we may note the following points. (1) The writer claims to have been "a witness of the sufferings of Christ" (v. 1), and retains a vivid impression of them, as shown in his description of Christ's patience (ii. 20-24) and the frequency of his allusions to the subject. (2) He gives prominence to Christ's resurrection, and represents it as the source of a new and living hope (i. 3-4, 21; iii. 20-21), which had precisely been Peter's experience. (3) He dwells upon the pastoral aspect of Christ's ministry (ii. 25; v. 2-4) as if under an abiding sense of the responsibility laid upon him by his Master's threefold charge to act the part of a shepherd to his flock. (4) He enlarges on the idea embodied in Peter's name, representing the Church as "a spiritual house" composed of living stones, with Christ Himself as the chief corner-stone (ii. 4-8)—to which he had already given expression in his address to the Sanhedrim (Acts iv. 11-12), after the example of his Lord—quoting from the Old Testament (Matt. xxi. 42). (5) His injunction to his readers, "all of you gird yourselves with humility" (literally, "put on humility like a slave's apron," v. 5), sounds like a reminiscence of the Saviour's action which so astonished Peter when "he took a towel and girded himself" in order to wash His disciples' feet, saying, when He had finished, "I have given you an example that ye also should do as I have done to you" (John xiii. 2-17). (6) His language in i. 17 ("And if ye call on him as Father, who without respect of persons," etc.) bears a strong resemblance to Peter's words at Cæsarea, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons," etc. (Acts x. 34). (7) In ii. 13-16, "Be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake . . . as free," we have probably the reproduction of the lesson taught to Peter by his Lord with regard to the payment of the tribute money (Matt. xvii. 24-27).

In the last-mentioned passage, as in many others, we can discern traces of the graphic and pictorial style charac-

teristic of the Gospel of Mark, which there is reason to believe is largely a record of Peter's preaching. Such are the expressions, "not using your freedom for a cloke of wickedness" (ii. 16), the word translated "*cloke*" being peculiar to Peter (only used here), and meaning a *veil* or *covering*; "ye should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men" (ii. 15), the word rendered "*put to silence*" meaning, in a literal sense, to *muzzle* (as a dog), and being only applied elsewhere in the New Testament to the subduing of an unclean spirit, and the stilling of the raging sea—both in the Gospel of Mark (i. 25; iv. 39); "leaving you an example that ye should follow his steps" (ii. 21), the literal meaning of the word translated "*example*" being the *copy-head* set before a scholar for his patient and persevering imitation; "your adversary the devil, as a *roaring lion*, walketh about seeking whom he may devour" (v. 8). Akin to the pictorial style of the epistle is the "wealth of epithets" by which it is distinguished, e.g. "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away" (i. 4). Cf. i. 7, 19; ii. 9, etc.

It appears from v. 12 that in writing this epistle he had the assistance of "*Silvanus, our faithful brother,*" as his amanuensis, who is, no doubt, to be identified with the "*Silas*" mentioned in Acts xv. 22, 32, 40, and the Silvanus of 1 Thess. i. 1; 2 Thess. i. 1; 2 Cor. i. 19.

**To whom written.** — "*To the elect who are sojourners of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.*" The meaning of this address has been much disputed. By some it has been taken in a literal sense as denoting the Christian Jews of the Dispersion residing in the various parts of Asia Minor that are here specified. But this is inconsistent with the language used by the apostle to his readers in i. 14; ii. 9-10 (where he quotes the same passage from Hosea that Paul applies to the calling of the Gentiles in Rom. ix. 25); iii. 6 (R.V.); iv. 3 (R.V.) All these passages would lead us to suppose that the readers of the epistle were largely Gentiles, as we know the mem-

bers of the Churches in Asia Minor for the most part were.<sup>1</sup>

The best interpretation of the words "sojourners of the Dispersion" is to take them in a spiritual sense with reference to the heavenly Canaan, from which Christ's followers on earth may be regarded as temporary exiles, the Churches to which they belong being scattered branches of a commonwealth that has its home and its metropolis in heaven. This interpretation is justified by the whole tone of the epistle, which gives a spiritual meaning to the blessings of the Old Covenant. It accords in particular with ii. 11, "Beloved, I beseech you as sojourners and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul."

**When and where written.**—The only thing we have to guide us as to the place of writing is v. 13: "She that is in Babylon, elect together with you, saluteth you," *i.e.* the Church (or else St. Peter's wife, 1 Cor. ix. 5; Matt. viii. 14). By "Babylon" we are probably to understand the city of Rome, as the new seat of oppression and cruelty to God's people. This was the view generally held by the early Church Fathers; it is in accordance with the figurative language of the epistle, referred to in the previous section; and it accounts for the strong resemblance between this epistle and that of Paul to the Romans.<sup>2</sup> It is almost certain that Babylon has this meaning in the Revelation; and it would add to the force of Peter's exhortations to courage and patience, that he was himself, when he wrote, in the very heart of the conflict.

With regard to the date of its composition, the proba-

<sup>1</sup> For information regarding the Church in Pontus see Acts ii. 9; xviii. 2; in Galatia, pp. 71-73; in Cappadocia, Acts ii. 9; in Asia, Acts xviii. 24-26; xx. 17-35; Ephesians and Colossians. These Churches had received the Gospel from Paul and his associates. Hence the value of Peter's testimony in v. 12.

<sup>2</sup> *E.g.* cf. ii. 6-8, Rom. ix. 33, and Isa. viii. 14, xxviii. 16; ii. 13-14, Rom. xiii. 1-4. A resemblance can also be traced to Ephesians and the Epistle of James, showing how little truth there is in Baur's theory of an irreconcilable opposition between Paul and the rest of the apostles (Salmon's *Introduction*, pp. 485-89).

bility seems to be that the letter was written shortly after the outbreak of the Neronian persecution, when the Churches in the provinces were beginning to experience the effects of the imperial example at Rome. This would be about 64-5 A.D.

**Its Character and Contents.**—This epistle breathes the spirit of *practical earnestness* so characteristic of its author. The Greek word “to do good” occurs no less than nine times in the course of the five chapters. There is no want of allusion to Christian privilege and Christian doctrine; but it is always for a practical purpose, as furnishing motives for Christian obedience. Of this we have an illustration in the frequent use of the words “wherefore,” “because,” etc., by way of enforcing practical applications (i. 13, 16, 22; ii. 1, etc.). ~~The chief duty which the writer wishes to inculcate is that of patience under suffering~~ (i. 6-7; ii. 19-21; iii. 13-18; iv. 12-19). In many cases this suffering arose from persecution. But it was social rather than legal persecution, proceeding from suspicion and ill-will on the part of the non-Christian members of the community (ii. 18-19; iii. 16). The very name of Christian was becoming a term of reproach (iv. 16); and even worse trials were in store for them (iv. 12, 17). For the endurance of all such unmerited sufferings the apostle points them to the example of the Saviour (whose sufferings are referred to in every chapter), at the same time bidding them take care that they did not bring trouble on themselves by their unworthy conduct. Their trials, he reminds them, are only for a time (i. 6; iv. 7; v. 10), and will receive abundant compensation at the revelation of Christ’s glory (i. 7; iv. 13-14; v. 10). “The sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow” are indeed the two poles around which the whole argument of the epistle turns, resulting in a beautiful blending of patience and hope. Hence Peter has been styled “the Apostle of Hope.”

Along with the calls to patience there are mingled various other admonitions addressed to *citizens*, ii. 13.

17; *servants*, ii. 18-20; *wives*, iii. 1-6; *husbands*, iii. 7; *elders of the Church*, v. 1-4; and the *congregation* generally, with reference to various duties, iv. 5-11, etc. It is worthy of note, that although this epistle has so little of a speculative character, it has been the means of revealing two interesting truths, which would not have been otherwise known to us (i. 12, last clause; iii. 18-20). It may also be said to contain a practical refutation of the Romish theory as to Peter's jurisdiction in the Church. So far from making any claim to authority or pre-eminence, the writer expressly puts himself on a level with the other presbyters, and deprecates anything like a spirit of lordship in the exercise of their ministry (v. 1-3). The names "priest," "bishop,"<sup>1</sup> "Church," are never even mentioned by him.

<sup>1</sup>Except in ii. 25, where, however, it is Christ Himself who is so designated.

## CHAPTER XXII

2 PETER—JUDE<sup>1</sup>

## "THE SECOND EPISTLE GENERAL OF PETER"

**WHO** wrote it,—The genuineness of this epistle has been more questioned than that of any other book in the New Testament. The external evidence for it is comparatively meagre. While it may be true that echoes of its language are to be found in not a few works of the second century, yet the first writer to make express and unmistakable mention of it is Origen (230 A.D.), and he does so in such a manner as to show that he has doubts about its genuineness. A century later it is classed by Eusebius among the disputed books of the New Testament.

The difficulty of accepting it as a genuine writing of Peter has chiefly arisen both in ancient and in modern times from its differing so greatly in tone and substance from the first epistle, written, as we have seen, near the close of Peter's life. There is scarcely any reference in it to our Saviour's sufferings or resurrection, which figure so largely in the first epistle; and what it chiefly inculcates is *knowledge rather than hope*.

But, apart from the versatility of Peter's mind, this difference may to a large extent be accounted for by the different circumstances under which the two epistles were written. While the first epistle was evidently designed to encourage and support Christians under persecution, this later one was intended to warn them against false teachers who were spreading corruption in

<sup>1</sup> On the connection between these two epistles, see p. 142.

the Church. At the same time this epistle, like the first, is eminently practical, insisting on the necessity of Christian duty for the perfecting of Christian knowledge, emphasising the danger of knowledge without practice (i. 5-10; ii. 20-21), and giving a practical turn to the argument (iii. 11, 14). Moreover, a close examination of the language and thought in this epistle brings out many points of resemblance between it and *Peter's language elsewhere*. A likeness to the first epistle will be found on a comparison of the undernoted passages.<sup>1</sup> It may also be seen in the frequent use of twofold expressions, *e.g.* (in this epistle) "precious and exceeding great," "not idle nor unfruitful," "without spot and blameless" (i. 4, 8, 9, 19; ii. 3, 10, 13, etc.), and in the marked recurrence in both epistles of the word "holy." A number of verbal coincidences have also been observed between this epistle and the Gospel of Mark as well as Peter's speeches in the Book of Acts; but they are for the most part of such a nature as can only be appreciated by a student of the original.<sup>2</sup>

It has also been found that this epistle, like the first, is distinguished by the use of rare words, occurring scarcely anywhere else in the New Testament; and these are, for the most part, of a striking and pictorial character, after the manner of Peter. *E.g.* "whose sentence now from of old *lingereth not*" (ii. 3), "*turning* the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah *into ashes*" (ii. 6), "*enticing* unstedfast souls," "they *entice* in the lusts of the flesh" (ii. 14, 18) (the word translated "entice" meaning literally to *take with a bait*, being such a word as a fisherman would naturally use) "which the ignorant and unstedfast *wrest*, as they do also the other scriptures" (iii. 16)—the Greek word for "wrest" meaning to put on the rack, like a criminal, for the purpose of extorting a desired confession.

It is worthy of remark as a note of genuineness that

<sup>1</sup> i. 2, 1 Pet. i. 2; i. 7, 1 Pet. i. 22, iii. 8; i. 19-20, 1 Pet. i. 10-12; ii. 1, 1 Pet. i. 18; iii. 5, 1 Pet. iii. 20; i. 3, 1 Pet. v. 10; iii. 14, 1 Pet. i. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Traced by Dr. Lumby in *Speaker's Commentary*, and *Expositor*, vol. iv., First Series.

although the writer was evidently acquainted with the first epistle (iii. 1), he does not copy its designation of the apostle, as a forger might surely have been expected to do, nor does he attach the same address to the epistle (i. 1, 1 Pet. i. 1). Similarly, when he mentions the words spoken by the voice from heaven at the Transfiguration, he does not give them exactly as they are reported in the Gospels; and, in immediate connection with the Transfiguration, he makes use of two words, namely "tabernacle" and "decease," that would naturally be associated in Peter's mind with the memory of that great incident (i. 14-18, cf. Luke ix. 31-33). In his use of the expression in the same passage, "even as our Lord Jesus Christ signified unto me," we may trace an allusion to our Lord's prophecy in John xxi. 18-19.

**To whom written.**—Apparently to the same readers as the first epistle (iii. 1).

**Where and when written.**—We may regard it as certain that it was written before the destruction of Jerusalem. Otherwise such an impressive instance of divine judgment could scarcely have been left unnoticed in alluding to the retributive justice of God.

At the same time the errors and dangers described in this epistle, which bear a strong resemblance to those referred to in the pastoral epistles (1 Tim. iv. 1-2; vi. 5, 20-21; 2 Tim. ii. 18; iii. 1-7), prove that it could not have been written much sooner than 70 A.D. The allusion to Paul's epistles as known to the readers (iii. 15-16) leads to the same conclusion, as does also the frequency of the expression "put in remembrance" and kindred words (i. 12, 13, 15; iii. 1-2), which indicate an advanced period in the apostolic age, as well as in the life of Peter—if he was the writer.

Like the first epistle, this was probably written from Rome; but the use of the apostle's Hebrew name of Symeon, or Simon (i. 1), as well as the connection of this epistle with that of Jude, would seem to indicate a Palestinian influence of some sort, possibly in the person of Peter's amanuensis or secretary.

c. 150

9 Philo  
Clement

70.

Cp. Justin

Very like Apoc of Peter - same school prob -

trace for. p. Alex. in Egypt -

**Its Character and Contents.**—This epistle, unlike the first, is full of denunciation and warning. It was designed to put its readers on their guard against false teachers, who were enticing unsteadfast souls, “promising them liberty while they themselves are bondservants of corruption.” In opposition to their immoral doctrines this epistle inculcates a steady and persevering endeavour after holiness as the only way to advance in true knowledge and secure an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In particular, the writer seeks to confute the arguments and counteract the influence of certain scoffers who made light of the Second Coming, as if it were a vain delusion, and appealed to the constancy of Nature as a warrant for their unbelief. The delay of the divine judgment the writer attributes to the fact that “one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day,” alleging the delay to be a proof of God’s mercy and long-suffering. The destruction of the world in the days of Noah is cited as an act of divine judgment analogous to that which is to take place at the end of the world, when the destroying element, however, shall be not water but fire. From the dread catastrophe there shall arise “new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness,” for which Christians ought to be preparing; and the epistle concludes much in the same way as it commenced, by a call to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

The intrinsic worth of the epistle is well expressed by Calvin when he says, “the majesty of the Spirit of Christ exhibits itself in every part of the epistle.”

#### “THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF JUDE”

**Who wrote it.**—“Judas, a servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James.” It may be regarded as certain that the James here referred to was the well-known head of the Church at Jerusalem, one of our Lord’s brethren, and the writer of the epistle that bears his name (cf.

Matt. xiii. 55 ; Mark vi. 3). Jude is therefore not to be identified with any of the apostles of the same name mentioned in the Gospels. Had he been an apostle he would doubtless have claimed the title, instead of being content to call himself "the brother of James." Regarding Jude personally we know little or nothing, but an interesting tradition concerning two of his grandsons has been preserved by Hegesippus. That historian (as quoted by Eusebius) tells how the Emperor Domitian, being moved with jealousy, sent for these two kinsmen of our Lord to inquire of them regarding the kingdom to which they aspired. When he learned from them that they were merely peasant proprietors farming a few acres of land in Palestine, and saw their hands horny with constant labour, and when they told him further that the kingdom to which they looked forward was not of this world, but to be revealed when Christ came to judge the quick and the dead, his alarm was removed, and he allowed them to depart in peace. Tradition tells that they lived to the reign of Trajan, honoured by the Church for their confession and for their relation to the Lord.

The obscurity of Jude himself is a strong argument for the genuineness of the epistle, as a forger would have chosen some more distinguished name to associate with his work. Although it is reckoned by Eusebius among the disputed books, we find it quoted by Clement of Alexandria in the end of the second century ; and it has also a place in the Muratorian Canon.

**To whom written.**—On this subject we are left to conjecture. Considering the Jewish features of the book and the Jewish character of its author, it would seem probable that it was written to Christians in Palestine, but not to any particular Church, as it contains no special salutations or messages.

**Where and when written.**—Regarding the place of writing we have no direct information, but all the circumstances point to Palestine as its source. From the absence of any allusion to the destruction of Jerusalem

we may infer that it was written prior to that event; but here, as in 2 Peter, the evils with which the epistle deals preclude us from giving it a much earlier date, say 65-68 A.D.

**Its Character and Contents.**—This epistle, consisting of a single chapter, bears a very striking likeness to the second chapter of 2 Peter, so much so that we may conclude with confidence that the one was borrowed from the other. As this epistle has certain features of originality about it which the other lacks, we may infer that St. Peter and not Jude was the borrower. It is quite possible, however, that the Epistle of Jude may itself be the translation of an Aramaic original—judging, for example, from its fondness for threefold expressions.

The epistle is remarkable for several allusions to matters of ancient history that are not recorded in the Old Testament. In ver. 14 we have a quotation from an apocryphal book of Enoch (of which several copies of an Ethiopic version were brought from Abyssinia by the traveller Bruce in 1773); and ver. 9 seems to have been derived from a book called "The Assumption of Moses," only a small part of which has been preserved to us. These allusions are no more at variance with the doctrine of Inspiration than the quotations in the Old Testament from the "Book of Jasher," etc, or Paul's allusions to "Jannes and Jambres" (2 Tim. iii. 8), or his quotations from heathen writers. In 2 Peter, however, these quotations are so modified as to lose their apocryphal character, and there is also an omission of one or two references to Levitical uncleanness, as if the writer desired to adapt his epistle as far as possible for general use.

The epistle is full of sharp and stern denunciation, aimed at practical evils of a most heinous character, committed by men who were "turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ." These evils were founded upon a gross abuse of Christian liberty, and were somewhat similar to the terrible excesses which broke out among

the Anabaptists after the Protestant Reformation, resulting from the abuse of the doctrine of Justification by Faith, when professing Christians combined the guilt of Cain (bloodshed), of Balaam (seduction), and of Korah (insubordination) ver. 11. In view of the corruption both of faith and manners that was thus beginning to infect the Church, Jude exhorts his readers to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints," and appeals to the past history of God's judgments for proof of the punishment in store for the present offenders, whom he commends nevertheless to the compassion and care of their believing brethren.

The epistle concludes with one of the most beautiful doxologies to be found in the New Testament.

## CHAPTER XXIII

## I, 2, AND 3 JOHN

## "THE FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL OF JOHN"

**WHO** wrote it.—This epistle is quoted by two of the Fathers who had been disciples of the Apostle John, viz. Polycarp and Papias. It is also recognised, and quoted, as John's by Irenæus, who had been a disciple of Polycarp. It is freely quoted by Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian; it is referred to in the Muratorian Fragment, and it is one of the books contained in the old Syriac Version.

Its *internal* character is such as to confirm us in the belief that it was written by the author of the fourth Gospel. Not only has it many verbal similarities,<sup>1</sup> but it is dominated by the same Christian idealism which refers all things in human life to the ultimate principles of light and darkness, truth and error, good and evil, love and hatred, life and death, God and the devil. So intimate is the connection between the two books that the epistle was regarded by the late Bishop Lightfoot as forming a postscript to the Gospel.

**To whom written.**—In all probability it was addressed in the first instance to the Churches of Asia,

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.* cf. i. 1, John i. 1, 14, xx. 27; i. 2, John iii. 11; i. 3, John xvii. 21; i. 4, John xvi. 24; i. 5, 6, John i. 5, iii. 21, viii. 12; ii. 11, John xii. 35; iii. 14, John v. 24; iv. 9, John i. 14, iii. 16; iv. 14, John iv. 42; v. 6, John xix. 34.

among whom the Apostle John spent the latter part of his life. The exhortation in v. 21, "guard yourselves from idols," would have special significance in the neighbourhood of Ephesus, which was a great stronghold of idolatry; and the absence of allusions to the Old Testament bears out the supposition that the epistle was addressed to converts from heathenism. Although there are no personal or historical allusions such as would have been likely to occur if it had been a letter addressed to *an individual Church*, yet the writer speaks in a quiet tone of authority as if he were well known to his readers and expected that his words would command respect.<sup>1</sup>

**Where and when written.**—It was probably written in the same city as tradition assigns to the Gospel, viz. Ephesus; and about the same time—85 A.D., *e. 95*, or a few years later. It takes the Gospel for granted, and in certain passages (e.g. ii. 1, etc., "my little children") the tone of its language is such as would befit an aged apostle addressing men of a later generation.

**Its Character and Contents.**—In this epistle—probably the last inspired utterance of the New Testament excepting the two brief missives that follow it—we have the translation into the *Christian life* of those great truths, regarding the fellowship of God with man, that are found in the fourth Gospel in connection with the life and ministry of *Jesus Christ*. That Gospel, as we have seen, is doctrinal as well as historical, but its doctrines are here applied to the lives of Christ's followers. The epistle is thus in advance of the Gospel, being designed to lead Christians to a *conscious realisation* of the new life to which they are called in fellowship with Christ (cf. v. 13 and i. 4 with John xx. 31).

Its thought springs mainly out of a twofold conception of the Divine Nature as "*light*" (i. ii.), and as

<sup>1</sup> Augustine and other Latin writers speak of the epistle as addressed to the *Parthians*, but this was probably a mistake occasioned by the Greek term *parthenos* ("virgin"), which was frequently applied to the Apostle John, in allusion to his supposed lifelong celibacy.

"love" (iv. 7-v.), united by a bond of *righteousness* (ii. 29-iv. 6). There is no laboured argument such as we find in some of Paul's epistles, but simply an appeal to first principles that are to be seen with the spiritual eye, not to be proved by means of logic.

Although lofty and spiritual, the teaching in the epistle is at the same time *intensely practical*. It was evidently intended to counteract the growing tendency to magnify knowledge at the expense of practice (i. 6-7 ; ii. 3-6 ; iii. 6-10 ; cf. ii. 18-19). One form of this incipient Gnosticism was associated with the name of Cerinthus, who lived at Ephesus in the time of the apostle. Cerinthus, like many others,<sup>1</sup> denied the reality of Christ's humanity, maintaining, in particular, that the Divine Being only entered into the man Jesus at his Baptism and left him on the eve of his Passion. Hence the emphatic statement of the apostle (v. 6), "This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood,"—that is to say, the Saviour fulfilled His divine mission in His *death* upon the cross as well as in His baptism. Again and again, in other passages, the apostle insists on the reality of the union between Jesus and the Christ, as an essential element of the Christian faith (ii. 22 ; iv. 2-3, 15 ; v. 1, 5 ; cf. i. 1-4).

While it gives no quarter to evil and falsehood, the epistle overflows with exhortations to the love of God and man (ii. 9-11 ; iii. 11-18 ; iv. 7-13, 16-21 ; v. 1-2). As we read the apostle's language here, we find it easy to believe the story told of him by Jerome, that when he was too old to preach he used to be carried to church, simply to repeat in the hearing of the congregation, "Little children, love one another." And when some one asked him, "Master, why dost thou always speak thus?" he answered, "Because it is the Lord's command ; and if only this be done, it is enough."

<sup>1</sup> Called *Doceta* from a Greek word meaning *apparent*, not *real*.

“THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN”

**Who wrote it.**—The external evidence for the genuineness of this epistle is not so convincing as in the case of the one that we have just been considering; but this is easily accounted for by its brevity and its being less suitable for public reading in church. At the same time, it is expressly quoted by Irenæus and Clement of Alexandria, and is mentioned in the Muratorian Fragment. It appears also to have been acknowledged by Eusebius, although he placed it among the “disputed” books. With regard to internal evidence, it has all the appearance of being genuine. Like the third epistle it bears to be written by “the elder,” a designation which implies that the writer was a well-known personage in the Church. Papias applies the name of “elders” specially to the surviving disciples of the Lord, as men of a past generation,—so that there was a certain appropriateness in John so describing himself, as the last of the apostles.<sup>1</sup> An imitator who wished to pass for John would have made his claim in more distinct terms; and the contents of the epistle are such that no reasonable motive can be assigned for forgery.

The genuineness of the epistle derives considerable support also from its strong resemblance to the first epistle,—no less than seven of its thirteen verses having something parallel in the other.<sup>2</sup>

**To whom written.**—“Unto the elect lady and her children.” It is a question whether these words are to be taken literally, or in a figurative sense as the designation of a Church and its members. On the whole the latter seems the more probable, in view of the expressions used in verses 1, 4, 5, 10, 13. Such language

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Peter's use of the expression “a fellow-elder,” as applied to himself (1 Peter v. 1).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. ver. 1 and 1 John iii. 18; ver. 4 and iv. 21; ver. 5 and ii. 7; ver. 6 and v. 3; ver. 7 and iv. 1-3; ver. 9 and ii. 23; ver. 12 and i. 4.

need not surprise us in the case of a writer so fond of symbolism as the author of the Apocalypse and the fourth Gospel.<sup>1</sup> But which of the Churches in Asia is thus addressed we have no means of knowing.

Where and when written.—Probably from Ephesus,—subsequently to the first epistle.

Its Character and Contents.—While the epistle contains expressions of warm affection for the members of the Church in question (whom the apostle appears to have recently visited), its main object was evidently to warn them against the insidious and corrupting influence of certain *heretical teachers* who were going about denying the reality of Christ's humanity (ver. 7). The apostle urges an uncompromising opposition to all such teachers, in terms that remind us of the story told by Irenæus on the authority of those who had received it from Polycarp, that finding Cerinthus in a public bath, the apostle rushed out at the sight of him, exclaiming, "Let us fly lest even the bath fall on us, because Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is within,"—a speech that betrays a lingering of the spirit that had once been rebuked by his Lord (Luke ix. 54). On the other hand, the blending of love<sup>2</sup> with truth in the earlier part of the epistle is equally characteristic of the disciple "whom Jesus loved"; and it finds similar illustration in the beautiful story of "St. John and the Robber."

#### "THE THIRD EPISTLE OF JOHN"

Who wrote it.—If we admit the second epistle to be the work of John, we can have no difficulty in accepting this also as his. The two epistles have been aptly termed "*twins*";<sup>3</sup> and the contents of this epistle are so peculiar

<sup>1</sup> Some think that a similar metaphor is to be found in the First Epistle of Peter (v. 13), whom tradition associates in his later years with John.

<sup>2</sup> The word "love" occurs four times in this short epistle, and "truth" five times.

<sup>3</sup> For resemblances cf. ver. 1 and 2 John ver. 1; ver. 3-4 and 2 John ver. 4; ver. 13 and 2 John ver. 12.

in their bearing on the position and authority of the apostle, as to preclude the idea of forgery.

**To whom written.**—“Unto Gaius the beloved.” The name *Gaius* occurs several times in the New Testament;<sup>1</sup> but whether the receiver of this letter is to be identified with any of those who are elsewhere so called it is impossible to say, the name being a very common one. He is addressed as a faithful and liberal member of the Church (verses 1-6).

**Where and when written.**—Probably from Ephesus,—subsequently to the first epistle.

**Its Character and Contents.**—This epistle, like the second, gives us a momentary glimpse of Church-life in Asia towards the close of the first century. While the second contains a warning against *heresy*, this relates rather to the evil of *schism*. It shows us the practical difficulties which even the Apostle John had to encounter in the government of the Church. In *Gaius* (the recipient of the letter) we have a sincere and charitable Christian whose influence and example John invokes in opposition to the factious and intolerant conduct of an ambitious ecclesiastic named *Diotrephes*, who has gone so far as to close his doors on “the brethren” who had come in the apostle’s name, apparently bearing a letter from him—perhaps our second epistle (verses 9-10). The aged head of the Church in Asia feels that it will be necessary, the next time he visits the district, to hold a reckoning with the offender for his malice and presumption. Meanwhile he warns *Gaius* against being led astray by the example of *Diotrephes*; and in pleasing contrast he refers to one *Demetrius*—possibly the “silver-smith” of Ephesus (Acts xix. 24), and apparently the bearer of this letter—who “hath the witness of all men, and of the truth itself.” Finally the apostle pleads the same excuse for his brevity as he does in the case of the second epistle, viz. that he hopes soon to visit his readers, when they “shall speak face to face.”

<sup>1</sup> Acts xix. 29; xx. 4; Rom. xvi. 23; 1 Cor. i. 14.

## CHAPTER XXIV

## "THE REVELATION OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE"

**THE Author.**—There is very strong external evidence to prove that this book was written by the Apostle John. Passing over some earlier apparent witnesses, we find unmistakable mention of it in the writings of Justin Martyr. He expressly refers to it as the work of the apostle, in the dialogue which he held with Trypho, an unbelieving Jew, in the very city of Ephesus where John lived, and within half a century after his death. Equally clear and explicit is the testimony of Irenæus, who, as we have seen, was a disciple of Polycarp, the disciple of John. In one passage of his writings, Irenæus even gives as his authority for preferring 666 to 616 as "the number of the beast," in the disputed reading (xiii. 18), the testimony of those who had seen John face to face. The book is twice mentioned in the Canon of the Muratorian Fragment, once in such a way as to imply that it was publicly read in church; it was one of the books on which Melito, Bishop of Sardis, wrote a commentary (about 170 A.D.); and it is expressly quoted as "the Scripture" in the letter sent by the persecuted Christians of Vienne and Lyons to their brethren in Asia Minor (177 A.D.)

But soon after the middle of the second century the book began to be regarded with suspicion, owing to the use made of it by a heretical party called the Montanists, who indulged in extravagant notions regarding the

“ thousand years ” of Christ’s reign with His saints which was to take place before the end of the world (xx.) The feeling of distrust was strengthened by observing what a marked difference there was in the language and style of the Revelation and of the other works ascribed to John ; and a considerable amount of controversy took place on the subject. Ultimately, however, the objections were overruled, and the book obtained general acceptance in the Church.

In modern times the controversy has been renewed ; and objectors are still disposed to insist, as of old, on the internal marks of a different authorship from that of the fourth Gospel.<sup>1</sup> In particular it is pointed out that whereas the Gospel is written in good Greek, the Revelation is full of grammatical mistakes and eccentricities ; so that while there is scarcely anything in the former to show that the writer was other than a Greek, the latter would give us the impression of its having been written by a person who first thought in Hebrew and had afterwards to turn his thoughts into a language with which he was imperfectly acquainted.

To meet this objection the following considerations may be adduced :—

(1) The difference in the nature and contents of the two books ; the one being mainly narrative or colloquial, the other being formed on the model of the Old Testament prophets. (2) The possible effect on the apostle of twenty years’ residence in Ephesus, in the way of improving his knowledge of Greek. (3) The unfavourable circumstances under which he appears to have written the Revelation ; and the possible employment by him of a skilled Greek amanuensis in the composition of the Gospel.

On the other hand, amid all the diversity between the two books both in ideas and in language, there are not wanting some important features of resemblance, betokening an identity of authorship.

<sup>1</sup> The Tübingen school, however, generally admit Revelation as the work of the apostle, and reject the fourth Gospel.

(1) The name "Lamb" is only applied to the Saviour in the fourth Gospel (i. 29, 36) and in the Revelation (v. 6, 8, 12, etc.), although it is indirectly referred to in 1 Peter i. 19 and Acts viii. 32. In like manner the name "Word" is only applied to the Saviour in the Gospel of John (i. 1, etc.), in First Epistle of John (i. 1, "the Word of life"), and in the Revelation (xix. 13, "The Word of God").

(2) Some of John's favourite expressions, such as, "he that overcometh," "witness" (noun or verb), "keep (my) word," are of frequent occurrence in the Revelation.

(3) In Revelation i. 7 we seem to have an echo of John xix. 34-37, where alone the piercing of our Lord with the spear is recorded, and where there is the same quotation of Zech. xii. 10—in the same unusual form.

(4) The Greek word meaning "true" or "real," in opposition to what is false or spurious, occurs nine times in St. John's Gospel, four times in 1 John, and ten times in the Revelation; but only five times in all the rest of the New Testament.

(5) The Revelation, like the fourth Gospel, recognises our Lord's pre-eminence and His title to divine honours (i. 8, 17, 18; iii. 14, 21; v. 9, 13; xix. 16; xxii. 13).

(6) A still stronger feature of resemblance may be seen in the similarity of the representations which the two books give of the Saviour's triumph as resulting from successive conflicts terminating in apparent and temporary defeat. In these conflicts the Gentiles take the place held by the unbelieving Jews in the Gospel; and the "disciples" of the earlier days are represented by the Church, or "the bride" (of Christ).

It has been objected that the Revelation, unlike the other writings of John, gives the name of its avowed author (i. 1, 4, 9; xxii. 8). But this is sufficiently accounted for by the prophetic character of the book. It was the practice of the prophets of the Old Testament, although not of the historians, to mention their names in their writings.

**For whom written.**—It was evidently meant for the Church at large—represented by “the seven Churches which are in Asia” (i. 4).

**Where and when written.**—From i. 9 we learn that the revelation was made to John when he “was in the isle that is called Patmos” (in the Ægean Sea) “for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.” From i. 11; x. 4; xiv. 13; xix. 9; xxi. 5, we should infer that it was committed to writing in the island immediately after it was received. As to the *date* of the apostle’s banishment to Patmos, Irenæus expressly mentions that the vision was seen almost within his own generation at the end of the reign of Domitian (Emperor 81-96 A.D.) There is nothing in any earlier writer to throw discredit on this statement; and there are several things in the book itself which seem to point to a late date of composition, *e.g.* the appearance of marked spiritual declension in several of the Churches addressed (ii. 4-5; iii. 1-2), the use of the expression “the Lord’s day” (i. 10), instead of the earlier “first day of the week,” and of the phrase “synagogue of Satan” (ii. 9; iii. 9), which would scarcely have been employed by a Christian writer previous to the destruction of Jerusalem.

At the same time there are some observations by writers later than Irenæus that favour an earlier date. Tertullian tells us that at Rome the Apostle John was plunged in burning oil, without sustaining any injury, and that he was afterwards banished to an island. It is in connection with the martyrdom of Peter and Paul that he makes the remark, which suggests the close of Nero’s reign as the time referred to; and accordingly we find Jerome (about the end of the fourth century) making an explicit statement to that effect. It is quite possible Irenæus may have made a mistake, occasioned perhaps by the frequency of banishment in the reign of Domitian; and this is the view taken by some critics at the present day, who can only account for the style and character of the book on the supposition that it was written a considerable time before the

Gospel. The key to the interpretation of the book, they conceive, is to be found in the identification of the reigning king in xvii. 10 with the Emperor Galba, the successor of Nero. The latter is regarded as the head of the beast referred to in xiii. 3, the healing of its wound symbolising the restoration of Nero, who was then supposed to be still alive and in hiding in the East. Confirmation of this is found in xvii. 8, 11, and also in the symbolical "number of the beast" ("the number of a man . . . Six hundred and sixty and six," xiii. 18), which answers in Hebrew letters to the name "Neron Cæsar." But it would be more natural to reckon the number in *Greek* letters (as Irenæus did); and in either case a correspondence to it can be made out in the case of a great many other prominent names. This weakens very much the force of the argument, for "we cannot infer much from the fact that a key fits the lock, if it is a lock in which almost any key will turn."

**Its Character and Contents.**—The Revelation or *Apocalypse* (a Greek word meaning "uncovering") has many of the characteristics of the Book of Daniel. Both books consist largely of prophecy couched in the language of symbolism. This was a mode of expression frequently adopted by Jewish writers towards the close of the Old Testament dispensation, when owing to foreign oppression it would have been dangerous to speak plainly in matters affecting the national interests.

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Beast from the Sea; the Wild Beast from the Land; the Lamb on Mount Sion; the Son of Man on the Cloud (xii.-xiv.)

5. The Seven Vials (xv.-xvi.)

6. The Doom of the Foes of Christ (xvii.-xx.)

7. The Blessed Consummation (xxi.-xxii. 7). The Epilogue (xxii. 8-21)."<sup>1</sup>

The unity of the book is one of its most striking features; and the attempts which have recently been made by some critics to assign it to several different authors have not been attended with success.

It must be acknowledged that the interpretation of the Revelation in detail is still, to a great extent, shrouded in mystery. Even those who feel assured that Nero is the man represented by the number of "the beast" find themselves beset with insuperable difficulties when they come to deal with certain portions of the book, while in other passages their theory would seem to imply that some of the predictions of the Seer were very soon falsified by events. This is a supposition which it is almost as difficult to reconcile with the high estimation in which the *Apocalypse* continued to be held by the early Church, as with its divine inspiration.

The safest and probably the truest interpretation of the book is to regard it as a symbolic representation of great principles rather than as a collection of definite predictions. In other words, it is intended for the edification and comfort of Christ's people, not to give detailed information regarding the future to those who are clever enough to solve its enigmas. "Here, if anywhere, faith and love are the key to knowledge, not knowledge the key to faith and love. It is in the very spirit of the book, not in a spirit hard or narrow or unsympathetic, that it closes with the words 'the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with the saints.'"<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Farrar's *Messages of the Books*, p. 520.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Milligan on the Book of Revelation.

For further evidence regarding the Date and Place of Composition, see the demy 8vo edition of this text-book, pp. 275-6, or Guild Library vol., p. 190.



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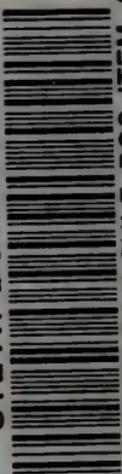
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