

literal and exact obedience. We are obliged to search into them for principles by the impossibility of accepting them as rules: and, as we search, we discover that we then do his will, not when we refuse to take a legal oath, but when we cultivate a truthful spirit; not when we turn the other cheek to the smiter, but when we conquer anger and violence with meekness and love; not when we give or lend to every one that asks of us, but when we cherish a generous and benevolent spirit. CARPUS.

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ST. PAUL ON GOING TO LAW.

I COR. vi. 1-7.

ST. PAUL here gives his judgment on the litigiousness of the Corinthians. The Greeks, in general, were fond of going to law. They were not only quarrelsome, but they seemed to derive an excitement pleasant to their frivolous nature in the suspense and uncertainty of cases before the Courts. The converts to Christianity seem not to have discarded this taste, and as a habit of going to law not merely involved great loss of time, but was also dangerous to the feeling of brotherhood which should exist among Christians, St. Paul takes the opportunity to throw in some advice on the subject. He has been telling them they have nothing to do with judging the heathen; he now proceeds to remind them that they ought not to go to law before the heathen. He feared that an unseemly wrangling among Christians might convey to the heathen quite an erroneous impression of the nature of their re-

ligion. There was, to his mind, something incongruous, something monstrous, in brother going to law with brother. What was that brotherhood worth that could not bear a little wrong? How could he continue to speak of Christian love, if Christians were to bite and devour one another? How could he preach the superiority of Christianity to heathenism if Christians had so little common sense, so little *esprit de corps*, so little mutual forbearance, that they must call in a heathen to settle their disputes for them? It seemed to Paul to be a losing of caste for Christians to proclaim their insufficiency to carry on their own affairs without the aid of heathen. It seemed to him a public profession that Christianity was not sufficient for the needs of its adherents.

The reasons which St. Paul adduces to give weight to his rebuke are important.

I. The saints are destined to judge the world, to judge angels; that is to say, to judge persons in separation from earthly interests, to judge unclothed detached spirits, to ascertain what is spiritually good and spiritually evil. Shall they not then be considered fit to judge little worldly matters, matters of £ s. d., matters of property and of bargain? This statement that the saints shall judge the world, is one of those broad widely-suggestive statements with which St. Paul from time to time surprises us, making them casually, as if he had many more equally astounding facts in his knowledge which he might also reveal if he had leisure. It is difficult to grasp the statements which he makes in this style; it is also difficult to link a truth so revealed to

the truths amid which we are now living; it is difficult even to ascertain with precision the bearing and significance of it.

It seems plain, however, that whatever else may be implied in this statement, and in whatever way it is to be fulfilled, St. Paul meant that ultimately, in that final state of things towards which all present things are growing and travelling, the men who are holy shall be at the head of affairs, acknowledged as the fittest to discern between right and wrong; and also that the germ and first principles of this final state of things are already implanted in the world by the Christian religion—two very important truths, certainly, to those who believe them. The precise form of the final judgment and future government of the world we cannot predict; but from this statement a bright ray of light shoots into the darkness, and shews us that the saints, *i. e.*, the servants of Christ, are to have the responsibility of pronouncing judgment on character, and of allotting destiny, reward, or punishment. We shrink from such a thought: not, indeed, that we are slow to pronounce judgment upon our fellow-men, but to do so officially and in connection with definite results seems a responsibility too heavy for merely human judges to sustain. But why men should not judge men hereafter as they do judge them now, we do not see. If we, in this present world, submit ourselves to those who have knowledge of law and ordinary justice, we may well be content to be judged in the world to come by those whose holiness has been matured by personal strife against evil, by sustained efforts to cleanse their souls from bias, from envy,

from haste, from harshness, from all that hinders them from seeing and loving the truth. In this world many qualities have been successively advanced to supremacy and rule,—as force, hereditary right, mental capacity, or even wealth. But none of these is that which is really best and has a right to rule. We could not submit ourselves to any of these and feel that this was a right eternal state. But holiness, or likeness to God, assimilation to his mind, formed by the constant desire to judge of things in this world as He judges, and to love truly all that He loves, this quality is surely worthy to be at the head. In that future kingdom of God in which all things are to have their proper place, and are to be ranked according to their real worth, holiness must come to the supremacy.

But equally worthy of remark is St. Paul's *inference* from the fact that holiness shall eventually be supreme. His inference is that it ought *now* to be regarded as competent to settle the petty disputes which arise among us. "If we are to judge angels, much more the things that pertain to this life." We can only arrive at any dignity by perseveringly seeking it. If the future kingdom of God is to be a perfect kingdom, it can only be as its subjects carry into it characters which have been strongly tending toward perfection. It is not the future that is to make us, but we who are to make the future. The kingdom of God is within us; if not there, in our own dispositions and likings, it is nowhere. Heaven will be what its inhabitants make it. Earth is not heaven, only

because men decline to make it so. We do not know the forms which society will assume in the world to come, when men will be grouped not by families and blood-relationships and the necessary requirements of physical life, but according to their character and moral value, their spiritual affinities and capacities for usefulness. But though we cannot say exactly how men will be grouped, nor how they will find expression for all that intense emotion and eager activity which in this life creates adventure, war, politics, speculation, inventions of all kinds, we do know that wherever there are men there must be society; there must be men not isolated and solitary, but working together and depending one on the other: and that there will therefore be difficult complications of interest and obscure relations of man to man very similar to those which arise in this world; but that these difficulties will be removed without passion and wrangling and the interference of force. A heaven and an earth there will be; but "a new heaven and a new earth." The outer framework will be very much the same, but the inner spirit and life very different. But it is not the altered place or time that is to produce in us this change of spirit; we are to find it there only if we carry it with us. St. Paul takes for granted that the principles which are to be perfectly and exclusively manifested in the world to come are now cherished by Christians. And as there will be no differences in heaven which cannot be adjusted without appeal to an authority which can silence and reconcile the disputants, so there ought to be, among the heirs of heaven, no going to law now.

St. Paul, therefore, while he contrasts the subjects in which a lawyer-like mind will find employment in this world and the next, reminds us that those who are here trained to understand character, and to discern where right and justice lie, will be in no want of employment in the world to come. The matters which come before our courts, or which are referred privately to lawyers, may often be in themselves very paltry. A vast proportion of legal business is created by changes from which the future life is exempt, changes consequent on death, on marriage, on pecuniary disasters. But underneath such suits as these the keenest of human feelings are at work, and it is often in the power of a lawyer to give a man advice which will save his conscience from a life-long stain, or which will bring comfort into a family instead of heart-burning, and plenty in place of penury. The physician keeps us in life; the minister of Christ tells us on what principles we ought to live: but the lawyer takes our hand at every great practical step in life, and it is his function (and surely there is none higher) to insist on a conscientious use of money, to point out the just claims which others have upon us, to shew us the right and the wrong in all our ordinary affairs, and thus to bring justice and mercy down from heaven and make them familiar to the market-place. And therefore many of the finest characters and best intellects have devoted themselves, and always will devote themselves, to this profession. It may attract many from less lofty motives, but it always will attract those who are concerned to save men from practical folly, and who wish to see the highest principles

brought into direct contact with human affairs. If the legal mind degenerates into a mere memory for technicalities and acuteness in applying forms, nothing can be more contemptible or dangerous to the character : but if it takes to do with real things, and not with forms only, and tries to see what equity requires, and not merely what the letter of the law enjoins, and seeks to forward the well-being of men,—then surely there is no profession in which there is such abundant opportunity of earning the beatitude which says, “Blessed are the peacemakers;” none in which the senses can better be exercised to discern between good and evil; none in which men may better be prepared for the higher requirements of a heavenly society, in which some are made rulers over ten cities.

II. The second confirmation of his rebuke St. Paul brings forward in the fifth verse, “Is there not a wise man among yourselves?” “A wise man” was the technical term for a judge in the Hebrew courts. Among the Jews there was no distinction between Church and State, the Jewish civil rulers being at the same time the ecclesiastical court. The judicial consistories appointed for the determination of the minor causes in each locality, the courts corresponding to the sheriff-courts of Scotland, were composed of the same persons who constituted the eldership of the synagogue. The circumstances under which the first Christians were placed in reference to the heathen courts of justice made it desirable that their civil differences should be settled among themselves, and the custom of the Jewish synagogues supplied a precedent in point. St. Paul seems to have seen no

reason why the elders or other men of influence in the Christian congregations should not have been quite competent to deal with such disputes as were commonly carried before the magistrate.

Did Paul then mean that such legal cases as are now tried in our civil courts should be settled by non-professional men? Did he mean that ecclesiastical courts should take out of the hands of the civil magistrate all pleas regarding property, all disputes about commercial transactions? Did he foresee none of the great evils that have arisen wherever Church or State have not respected the province of the other, and was he prepared to put the power of the sword in the hand of ecclesiastics? We think no one can read either his life or his writings without seeing that this was not his meaning. He taught men to submit themselves to the powers that then were, *i. e.*, to the heathen magistrates of Rome; and he himself appealed to Cæsar. He had no notion of subverting the ordinary legal procedure and civil courts, but he would fain have deprived them of much of their practice. He thought it might be expected that Christians would never be so determinedly rancorous or so blindly covetous but that their disputes might be settled by private and friendly advice. He gives no orders about constituting new courts and appointing new statutes and forms of procedure; he has no idea of transferring into the Church all the paraphernalia of civil courts: but he maintains that, if a Christian community be in a healthy state, few quarrels will be referred for settlement to a court of law. Courts of law are necessary evils, which will be less and less patronized



in proportion as Christian feeling and principle prevail.

This rebuke is applicable even to a community like our own, in which the courts of law are not heathen but Christian; and the principle on which the rebuke is based is one that has gradually worked its way into the heart of the community. It is felt, felt now even by nations as well as by individuals, that if a dispute can be settled by arbitration, this is not only cheaper, quicker, and equally satisfactory, but that it is a more generous and Christian way of getting justice done. Those who hold office in the Church may not always happen to be suitable arbitrators; they may not have the technical and special knowledge requisite; but Paul's counsel is acted on if disputes among Christians be somehow adjusted in a friendly way, and without the interference of an external authority. Christian people may need legal advice; they may not know what the right and wrong of a complicated case is; they may be truly at a loss to understand how much is justly theirs and how much their neighbour's; they may often need professional aid to shed light on a transaction: but when two Christians go to law in a spirit of rancour, resolved to make good their own just claims, and to enforce by the authority of law what they cannot compass by right feeling, this only proves that their worldliness is stronger than their Christianity. St. Paul thinks it a scandal and a degradation when Christians need to appeal to law against one another. It is a confession that Christian principle is in their case insufficient by

itself to carry them through the practical difficulties of life.

But some one will say to this, as to every unworldly, truly Christian, and therefore novel and difficult counsel, "It savours of theory and of romance; a man cannot act it out unless he is prepared to be duped and cheated and imposed upon. It is a theory that if carried out must end in beggary." Just as if the world could be regenerated by anything that is not apparently romantic. If a greater good is to be reached, it must be by some way that men have not tried before. The kingdoms of this world will not become the kingdom of Christ by the admission into our conduct of only that which men have tried and found to be practicable and void of all risk, and requiring no devotion or sacrifice. And, therefore, if any one says: "But if there is to be no going to law, if we are not to force a man to give us our own, we must continually be losers:" St. Paul replies, "Well, and what though you be losers? The kingdom you belong to is not meat and drink, but *righteousness*." If a man says, "We must have some redress, some authority to extort the dues that are not freely given; we must strike when we are struck; when a man takes our coat we must summon him, or he will take our cloak next,"—St. Paul replies: "Well, if this *be* the alternative, if you must either push your own claims and insist upon your rights, or suffer by assuming the meekness and gentleness of your Master, why do you *not* rather take wrong? why do you not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? It may be quite true that if you turn the other cheek it also will be

smitten. It may be very likely that a greedy competitor will be so little abashed by your meekness, and so little struck by your magnanimity in giving way to some of his demands, that he will even be encouraged to greater extortions. It is quite probable that if you act as your Master did, you will be as ill off in this world as He was. But is that any reason why you should at once call Him your Master and refuse to obey his precepts and follow his example?" One thing is certain, that so long as men honestly accepted Christ's words in their plain meaning, and followed Him in his own way, making light of worldly loss, Christianity was believed in and rapidly extended. It was seen to be a new moral power among men, and was welcomed as such, until a large part of the world received it: but its victory was its defeat. Once it became the fashion, once it became popular, the heart of it was eaten out. As soon as it became a religion without hardship, it became a religion without vitality.

St. Paul, then, shews no hesitation about pushing his doctrine to its consequences. He sees that the real cure of wrangling and of fraud and of war is not litigation, nor any outward restraint that can be laid on the wrong-doer, but meekness and unselfishness and unworldliness on the part of those who suffer wrong. The world has laughed at this theory of social regeneration all along; a few men in each generation have believed in it, and have been ridiculed for their belief. At the same time the world itself is aware, or should be aware, that its own remedies have utterly failed. Has war taught nations moderation in their ambition, has it saved

the world from the calamities which it is said would ensue were any one nation to prefer submitting to injustice rather than going to war? Have the outward restraints of law made men more just or less avaricious? There has been time to test the power of law to repress crime, and to compel men to honesty and justice. Can any one say it has been so successful that it must be looked to as the great means of regenerating society, of bringing society into that healthy and ideal state which statesmen work for and for which the people inarticulately sigh? Does not St. James come nearer the mark when he says, "Whence come wars and fightings? Come they not hence, even of the lusts that war in your members?"—*i. e.*, from the restless ambitions and appetites and longings of men who seek their all in this world. And if that is their source, it is to that we must apply the remedy. Law is necessary for restraining the expressions of a vicious nature, but law is insufficient to remove the possibility of these expressions by healing the nature. This can only be done by the diffusion of unworldliness and unselfishness. And it is Christians who are responsible for diffusing this unworldly spirit, and who must diffuse it not by talk and advice, but by practice and example, by themselves shewing what unselfishness is, rebuking covetousness by yielding to its demands, shaming all wrong-doing by refusing to retaliate while they expose its guilt.

While, therefore, it is a mistake to suppose that all the laws which are to rule in the perfected kingdom of God can find immediate and unmodified expression in this present world, it is our part to

find for them an introduction into the world in every case in which it is possible to apply them. Those laws which are to be our sole rule when we are perfect cannot always be immediately applied now. *E. g.*, we all believe that ultimately love will be the only motive, that all service of God and of one another will eventually spring solely from our desire to serve them because we love them. And because this is so, some persons have thought that love should be the only motive now, and that obedience which is procured by fear is useless; that preachers ought to appeal only to the highest parts of man's nature, and not at all to those which are lower; and that parents should never threaten punishment nor enforce obedience. But the testimony of one of the most genial and successful of preachers is that "of all the persons to whom his ministry had been efficacious, *only one* had received the first effectual impressions from the gentle and attractive aspects of religion; all the rest from the awful and alarming ones—the appeals to fear." Take, again, the testimony of one of the wisest and most successful of our schoolmasters. "I can't rule my boys," he says, "by the law of love. If they were angels or professors, I might; but as they are only boys, I find it necessary to make them fear me first, and then take my chance of their love afterwards. By this plan I find that I generally get both; by reversing the process I should, in most cases, get neither." And God, though slow to anger and not easily provoked, scourgeth every son whom He receiveth, not dealing with us now as He will deal with us when perfect love has cast out its preparative, fear. So, in regard to the matter before us, there must be an aiming

and striving towards the perfect state in which there shall be no going to law, no settling of matters by appeal to anything outside the heart of the persons interested. But while we aim at this, and seek to give it prevalence, we shall also be occasionally forced back upon the severer and more external means of self-defence. The members of Christ's Church are those on whom the burden falls of giving prevalence to these Christian principles. It is incumbent upon them to shew, even at cost to themselves, that there are higher, better, and more enduring principles than law and the customs of trade and the ways of the world. And however difficult it may be *theoretically* to hold the balance between justice and mercy, between worldly sharpness and Christian meekness, we all know that there are some who practically exhibit a large measure of this Christian temper, who prefer to take wrong and to suffer quietly rather than to expose the wickedness of others, or to resent their unjust claims, or to complain of their unfair usage. And whatever the most worldly of us may think of such conduct, however we may smile at it as weak, there is no one of us but also pays his tribute of respect to those who suffer wrong, loss, detraction, with a meek and cheerful patience. And whatever be the lot of such sufferers in a world where men are too busy in pushing their worldly prospects to understand those who are not of this world, we have no doubt in what esteem they will be held and what reward they will receive, in a world where the Lamb is on the throne, and meek self-sacrifice is honestly worshipped as the highest quality whether in God or in man.   MARCUS DODS.