

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

PAUL'S CONCEPTION OF CHRISTIANITY.

I. THE SOURCES.

Two important questions may be asked concerning Paul's Christian theology: where did he get it? and, whence do we obtain our knowledge of it? It is with the latter of these questions that we are now to be occupied. By "sources" is here meant the literary materials available for becoming acquainted with the great Gentile Apostle's characteristic way of thinking on the leading themes connected with the Christian faith.

If we wanted to know, as far as is possible, all that Paul thought on any topic relating to the faith, we should have to regard all his extant epistles as our sources, and our first task would be to ascertain to the best of our ability how many of the separate writings ascribed to him in the New Testament are authentic. If, on the other hand, our aim be, as it is, to determine the nature of the distinctively Pauline type of Christianity, to make ourselves acquainted with what Paul called his gospel,¹ or what, in modern phrase, we call *Paulinism*, it is really not necessary to do more than study carefully four of the reputedly Pauline Epistles, those viz. to the Galatian, Corinthian and Roman churches respectively. This limitation of the field to be studied, while reducing the subject to manageable dimensions, may be justified by other considerations possessing more weight than can attach to reasons of personal convenience.

Among these considerations a foremost place is due to the fact that the four epistles referred to are generally recognised

¹ Romans xvi. 25.

by Biblical critics of all schools as indubitably genuine.¹ Apart altogether from personal convictions, even though one may have little or no doubt as to the authenticity of any one of the thirteen letters,² it is due to the actual state of critical opinion that in a scientific attempt to ascertain the nature of Paul's Christian teaching, primary importance should be attached to the Epistles which command a general, if not quite universal, consensus of critical approval. Other epistles may legitimately be cited by any writer on Paulinism who has no doubt as to their genuineness, but even in that case, if he is to pursue a strictly scientific method, only in the second place. It will be understood of course that in a homiletic use of Scripture this distinction between primary and secondary may be disregarded.

The four Epistles in question have the advantage of being more or less controversial in their nature. This is, it must be owned, not advantageous in all respects. A polemical origin is in some ways prejudicial to the quality and value of a writing. Controversy readily leads to the placing of an undue emphasis on some aspects of truth to the neglect of others not in themselves unimportant. It involves an unwelcome descent from the serene region of intuition to the lower and stormier region of argumentation. The rôle of the prophet or seer is replaced by that of the theological doctor. On both accounts the quality of temporariness is

¹ There is a school of critics possessing hardihood enough to call in question the genuineness of even these Epistles. Its best known representative is Rudolf Steck, who has expounded his views in a work recently published on the Epistle to the Galatians (*Der Galaterbrief nach seiner Aechtheit untersucht*, 1888). The assumption which underlies his criticism is that the sharp opposition to Judaistic Christianity revealed in the Epistle did not really exist in Paul's time, but came much later as the result of a gradual development which reached its culminating point about the time of Marcion. On this new criticism, which I cannot bring myself to take seriously, see some remarks of Lipsius in the introduction to his Commentary on Galatians, etc., in the *Hand-Commentar zum Neuen Testament*. This school of New Testament criticism corresponds in character to that of Vernes and Havet in the Old Testament, who make the prophets post-exilian.

² Of course the *Epistle to the Hebrews* is left out of account.

apt, in some measure, to characterise all controversial writings. When the occasion is past the one-sidedness to which it gave rise ceases to satisfy. Arguments which told at the time when the controversy raged lose their cogency, though the truths they were employed to defend possess perennial importance. Yet, on the other hand, the literature of a great debate, which formed a crisis in the religious history of the world, must possess an exceptional and imperishable worth. The thoughts of men at such a time are clear, for they define themselves against those of opponents. We have a twofold clue to their meaning, their own words, and the views of those against whom they contend. Then the deepest thoughts of men's minds are brought to light at such a crisis. Conflict sets their hearts on fire, and stimulates to the uttermost their intellectual powers; they say therefore what is dear to them as life, and they say all in the most energetic manner.

These remarks have their full application to the four Epistles which we may conveniently distinguish as the *controversial* group among the Pauline writings. The issue involved is clear: we have no difficulty in knowing what were the views of those against whose evil influence the Apostle sought to fortify the churches to which he wrote. In other Epistles, such as that to the Colossians, we can only guess what were the unwholesome tendencies the writer desired to counteract. The issue is also vital. The controversy concerns nothing less than the nature and destination of Christianity. Here therefore, if anywhere, we may expect to learn what Paul deems central and essential in the Christian faith, to get to the very bottom of his mind and heart as a believer in Jesus; and all the more that the foes he fights are not only the men of his own house, but the very impersonation of his former self. They advocate what he once held, they represent religious tendencies which formerly made him a determined enemy of Christianity, and

a relentless persecutor of all who bore the Christian name. With what passion, yes, and with what pathos, he must throw himself into such a quarrel! We may expect to find in what he writes bearing thereon not merely much fresh original thought trenchantly expressed, but here and there autobiographical hints, involuntary self-revelations, the man unveiled alongside of the theologian. It will be our own fault if in our hands these writings become dry scholastic productions.

Even in reference to what is specific or peculiar in later Epistles we may find a sufficient indication of Paul's view in the controversial group. So for example in the case of what are called the *prison* Epistles, whose special characteristic is the prominence given to Christology, on which account they are sometimes distinguished as the *Christological* group.¹ There is quite enough Christology in the four great controversial Epistles to show us what Paul thought concerning the great object of the Christian's faith and reverence. The Christological Epistles contain interesting and valuable statements concerning the Lord Jesus which repay earnest study, but the Christ-idea of these Epistles embraces little, if anything, essential in advance of what can be gathered from the relative texts in the controversial Epistles. The person of Christ is more prominently the theme of the former as compared with the latter, but the doctrine taught is not higher, though it is applied in new directions.

Besides these two groups of Epistles, there are other two containing respectively the earliest and the latest of Paul's reputed writings preserved in the New Testament, the one consisting of the two Epistles to the church of Thessalonica, the other of the two to Timothy and the one to Titus, called from their leading subject-matter the *pastoral*

¹ This group includes the Epistles to the Ephesian, Philippian and Colossian churches; also the Epistle to Philemon, which, however, possesses no doctrinal significance.

Epistles. Neither of these groups yields a contribution of importance to *Paulinism*, if we use that term to denote not what Paul wrote casually on any subject whatever connected with the Christian faith, but the distinctively Pauline system of thought on essential aspects of the faith. In the former are to be found no definite specific formulations of belief, but only general and elementary statements of truth ; while the latter, in so far as they refer to matters of faith, but repeat familiar Pauline ideas as commonplaces, their proper occasion and speciality being to supply directions with reference to ecclesiastical organization.

These four groups of letters, written at different times, the earliest separated from the latest by a period of some sixteen years, naturally suggest a question which may here be briefly touched on. Was there any growth in Paul's mind in relation to Christianity, or must we conceive of his system of Christian thought as the same at all stages of his history, poured out at the first in one gush, so to speak, and setting thereafter into an unchangeable rigid form? On this question opinion is greatly divided. Sabatier *e.g.* earnestly contends for growth, and makes it his business to prove and exhibit it by analysis of the different groups of Epistles, beginning with the Epistles to the Thessalonians called the *mission* group, and supposed to show the apostle's way of thinking before the great controversy arose, and passing in succession through the controversial and the Christological groups to the pastoral.¹ Pfeiderer, on the other hand, inclines to the other alternative.² The difference between these two authors, however, does not consist in this that the one affirms and the

¹ *Vide* his *L'Apôtre Paul*, translated into English and published by Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton ; a most suggestive and helpful book, whatever one may think of his theory as to the development of doctrine in the mind of the apostle.

² *Vide* his *Der Paulinismus*. Ménégoz (*Le Péché et La Rédemption d'après Saint Paul*, 1882) speaks of these two works by Sabatier and Pfeiderer as best indicating the present state of thought on Paulinism.

other denies the existence of traces of advance, development or modification of view within the range of the Epistles ascribed to Paul. The point of difference is that the one holds that the growth was in Paul's own views and teaching, and the other that the growth was not in Paul, but in *Paulinism*, that is in the conception of Christianity which took its origin from Paul, and in its main features was adopted by a section of the church, and in the hands of his followers underwent expansion and modification. The facts founded on in the maintenance of the two rival hypotheses are much the same. They are such as these, that in the Epistle to the Colossians, for example, a somewhat higher view of the Person of Christ is presented than in the four undisputed Epistles, that Christ's work is there regarded from a somewhat novel point of view, that a less purely negative attitude towards the law is therein assumed than that which characterises the controversial Epistles, and that the whole subject of Christianity is contemplated in a metaphysical way *sub specie aeternitatis*, rather than in the historical manner of the earlier Epistles. The use made of the facts is very different. One says: having regard to such facts, it is evident to me that Paul's mind underwent a process of vital growth as years passed, and new circumstances arose to stimulate that ever active powerful intellect to fresh thought on the great theme which engrossed its attention. The other says: having regard to these phenomena, I have no hesitation in affirming that this Epistle to the Colossians is not of Pauline authorship, though I am sure it proceeded from the Pauline school, for the affinities between it and the undoubted writings of Paul are very marked. In presence of such contrariety of opinion, and considering the importance of the issues involved, it is necessary to come to some sort of conclusion as to this question of growth. Now there is no *a priori* objection to the hypothesis of development as applied to Paul's personal apprehension of the significance of Christianity. Growth

in knowledge as in grace is the law of ordinary Christian life, and there is no stringent reason why we should regard Paul as an exception. Inspiration is no such reason. Inspiration was compatible with its possessor knowing in part and prophesying in part, for Paul predicates such partiality of himself.¹ But if inspiration be compatible with knowing in part at the best, it is also compatible with knowing less at one time than at another. We know moreover that it was not God's way to reveal all truth at one time to the agents of revelation. He spoke in many parts and in many modes by the prophets to the fathers. Why should He not follow the same method with the apostles: not communicating to them at once a full understanding of the Christian faith in all its bearings, but simply providing that their insight should keep pace with events, so that they should always be able to give the church such guidance as was required? The mere fact therefore that one of Paul's reputed Epistles contains teaching on any subject in advance of that found in admittedly Pauline Epistles is not of itself any proof that that Epistle is not also Pauline. Questions of genuineness must be settled on independent grounds.²

Thus far as to the *a priori* aspect of the question. But how now as to the matter of fact? Is there any reason to believe *e.g.* that Paul had a much clearer and deeper insight into the nature and destination of Christianity when he wrote the controversial epistles, than at the time of his conversion some twenty years before, or during the earlier years of his missionary activity? The supposition is in itself reasonable

¹ 1 Corinthians xiii. 2.

² Ménégoz admits not only the possibility but the reality of a development in Paul's thought. But he holds that whatever development there was took place before the writing of the Epistle to the Galatians, which, he thinks, came next in the order of time to the Epistles to the Thessalonians. In the other Epistles from *Galatians* onwards, he finds no advance in thought. It cannot be proved, he thinks, that the Christology of *Romans* is behind that of *Colossians*, though Christology is not its speciality, as it is of the latter. *Le Péché et la Rédemption*, pp. 7, 9.

and credible, and the burden of proof may seem to lie on those who deny it. Much depends on the way in which we conceive the conversion and what it involved. For some that event signifies very little, for others it means almost everything characteristic in Pauline Christianity. I shall have occasion to state my own view in another paper, and must not anticipate what I have to say there. Leaving over the psychological aspect of the question till then, I can now only refer to what may be supposed to make for the hypothesis of growth in the extant Pauline literature.

The two Epistles to the Thessalonians have been supposed to furnish indisputable evidence that, previous to the great controversy, Paul's way of thinking was of a simpler, less developed type than is found in the controversial group. Along with the reports of Pauline discourses in the Book of *Acts*, they have been regarded as a source of knowledge concerning what is called *Primitive Paulinism*, understood to signify not merely what Paul thought it fitting to teach to infant churches founded in the course of his missionary journeys, but his own way of conceiving the Gospel antecedent to the great anti-Judaistic controversy. Now that these Epistles do present to our view what we may call a rudimentary Gospel, interesting to note, and, as will hereafter appear, justifying an important inference, is beyond doubt. But it by no means follows that that rudimentary Gospel represents all what Paul then knew, and that all the great deep thoughts found in the four controversial Epistles lay as yet beneath his mental horizon. To satisfy ourselves of this we have only to reflect when the Epistles in question were written, and what had happened before they were penned. It is not necessary to enquire into exact dates; it is enough to say that the Thessalonian letters presuppose a Thessalonian *church*, and could not have been written before that church was founded, and until it had had some experiences calling for such instruction and counsel as the

letters contain. Turning now to the memoirs of Paul's missionary activity in the Acts, to which critics of all schools attach considerable historical value, what do we find? That Paul's visit to Thessalonica is placed after the Council in Jerusalem, at which the critical question of circumcision was discussed and provisionally settled. That is to say, the cleavage between the Apostle of the Gentiles who appeared at that Council as the enthusiastic champion of Gentile liberties, and those who took a narrow, conservative view of the question at issue, had taken place at least a year or two before the letters to the Thessalonian church could possibly have been written. How keenly alive to the issues at stake Paul was at the time when the Council met, we learn from his own memoranda preserved in his Epistle to the Galatians, where in language thrilling with passion he refers to "false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty, which we have in Christ Jesus."¹ If the Apostle had not thought out his Gospel before, here was a crisis to set him thinking, and to stimulate a very rapid theological development. It may be taken for granted that by the time he wrote his Epistles to the Thessalonians, during his long sojourn in Corinth,² all his most characteristic ideas had taken their place in his system of religious thought. Indeed, there is every reason to believe that he had by that time already given expression to them, if not in writing, at least in vigorous, incisive speech. The encounter with Peter at Antioch referred to in the Epistle to the Galatians is not recorded in the Book of Acts, but its proper historical place, doubtless, falls within the period of Paul's stay in Antioch before setting out on the long mission tour, which had for its eventful result the extension of Christianity from Asia into Europe.³

¹ Galatians ii. 4.

² Such is the general opinion of critics. Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy are named together in the salutations. *Vide* Acts xviii. 5.

³ *Vide* Acts xv. 35, 36.

In that memorable interview, Paul for the first time, so far as we know, gave utterance to his distinctive conception of the Christian faith. In *Galatians* ii. 14-21 we have the Pauline Gospel *in nuce*; not the supposed primitive Paulinism of a yet undeveloped Christian consciousness, but the fully formulated Paulinism of the controversial letters, which contain nothing clearer, more definite, or more characteristic than is to be found in that remarkable utterance. But that speech to Peter was uttered many months before the Thessalonian Epistles were written.¹

If therefore we are to find in these Epistles the faint outlines of a rudimentary Pauline Gospel forming the Christian creed of the Apostle before he understood the implications of the faith, we must disregard the historical notices of *Acts*, and relegate their composition to a period antecedent to the rise of the dispute about circumcision and the meeting of the Jerusalem Conference.² The hypothesis of a primitive Paulinism escapes in that case from the control of fact and the hazard of authoritative contradiction. Not altogether indeed, even on that gratuitous supposition; for, from the statement Paul makes in his Epistle to the Galatians, that he did not meet with any of the apostles till three years after his conversion, it may very reasonably be argued that, even at that early period, his conception of Christianity was well defined. Such an inference harmonises with the aim of the statement. But of this more hereafter.

¹ The bearing of the above-mentioned facts on the question of a primitive Paulinism, supposed to be exhibited in the Epistles to the Thessalonians, is very forcibly brought out by Holsten. Vide *Das Evangelium des Paulus*, Vorwort, p. viii.

² So Ménégoz, who thinks the Epistles to the Thessalonians the most doubtful of all Paul's reputed writings, and that expressly on the ground that the views of the Gospel they present are so unlike what we find in the other Epistles. His idea is, that if they were really Paul's, they must have been written long before the others, at a time when Paul's particular tendency was not yet accentuated, and his system not yet in course of formation. Vide *Le Péché et la Rédemption d'après Saint Paul*, p. 4.

So far, then, as the earliest letters of Paul are concerned, there is no evidence to support the theory of a slow, gradual growth of his system of Christian thought. The phenomena they exhibit can neither prove nor be explained by that theory. But how then are they to be accounted for, as their existence cannot reasonably be denied, that the statements concerning the Gospel are very elementary, being evident to every attentive reader? The most likely suggestion is that the Epistles to the Thessalonian church show us the form in which Paul judged it fitting to present the Gospel to nascent Christian communities, when he had in view merely their immediate religious needs and capacities, and had no occasion to guard them against errors and misconceptions. This view sets Paul's character in an interesting light. It makes him appear a Paulinist, so to speak, against his will. He preached Paulinism, that which was most distinctive in his way of apprehending the faith, under compulsion; when free from the constraint of false and mischievous opinions, he taught the common faith of Christians in simple, untechnical language. This point is worth emphasizing at the commencement of this study, as helping us at once to appreciate the wisdom of the Apostle, and to put the proper value on the developed system of thought contained in his controversial Epistles. Why is it that the earliest Epistles are not to be reckoned among the sources of what we call Paulinism? Not because Paulinism was yet unborn, but because its author kept it in its proper place. Paul distinguished between religion and theology, between faith and knowledge; and while he spoke wisdom to them that were perfect, and theology to them that needed it and could make a good use of it, he practised reserve or self-restraint in speaking to babes in Christ, and in teaching them carefully avoided the use of abstruse ideas and technical terms.

This is the important inference referred to on a previous

page as deducible from the rudimentary Gospel contained in the earliest Epistles. And in view of that inference it becomes important to inform ourselves as to the precise character of Paul's rudimentary or missionary Gospel. It is what he deemed sufficient to salvation, though not to a full comprehension of Christianity. One cannot but desire to know what so great a master reckoned essential; and as his early letters are not available for the study of his developed theology, one may well be excused for lingering at the threshold to glance over their pages before entering on the more arduous task. The controversial Epistles are to be our text-book, but let us look for a little at those simple, child-like Epistles to the Thessalonian church as a kind of Christian Primer. We shall be none the worse qualified for mastering the text-book, and understanding its true meaning, that we carry the lessons of the Primer along with us.

The use of these Epistles as a Primer is justified by the writer's own way of expressing himself as to the purpose of his writing. Careful readers must have noticed the frequent recurrence of such phrases as "ye remember," "ye know." Baur utilises this feature as an argument against the genuineness, asking in effect: To what purpose this repetition of matters admitted to be familiar to the readers, and not of old date, but of quite recent occurrence?¹ The obvious reply is, that the writer wished to impress upon his readers the importance of the things alluded to, his aim in writing being not to give new instruction, but to make a fresh impression by recapitulating old instructions and by recalling to mind facts of didactic significance. Thus when he says, "Knowing, bréthren, beloved of God, your election of God,"² his purpose is, by reminding them of their election to salvation, to suggest a valuable source of comfort and strengthening amid present tribulation. It is as

¹ Vide his *Paulus der Apostel Jesu Christi*, ii. 95.

² 1 Thess. i. 4.

if he had said, Think of your election, and what it implies—a sovereign love of God which will not forsake you, a Divine purpose which shall surely be fulfilled. Again, when he says, “Yourselves know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain; but even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the Gospel of God amid much opposition,”¹ he manifestly means: as we did not allow our purpose in coming to Thessalonica to be frustrated by opposition, but resolutely preached the Gospel, refusing to be intimidated, so do ye resolve that persecution shall not make your reception of the Gospel vain, and persevere in faith in spite of all that evil men may do. When once more he reminds them of his way of life among them, alluding to his engaging in manual labour for his own support, to his nurse-like gentleness, to his perfect sincerity, to the purity and exemplariness of his whole behaviour, as things perfectly well known to them all,² he means to suggest that they should make his conduct, of which a vivid image remained in their minds, a pattern for their own. In a word, the Apostle treats the Christians of Thessalonica as children who need to hear the same things over and over again, not so much that they may know them, as that they may duly lay them to heart. And as he evidently does so in the instances cited, it is fair to assume that he does so throughout, and that all his statements, and in particular those referring to the Christian faith and life, are reminiscences and repetitions of what he had been accustomed to teach persons whom he regarded as spiritual children.

Let us then collect, in brief summary, the elements of Gospel truth contained in the few pages of this Christian Primer.

1. The name employed by Paul, as by Jesus Himself, to

¹ 1 ii. 1.

² 1 ii. 5-12.

denote the message of salvation is the Gospel, more definitely the *Gospel of God*, an expression used repeatedly in the first Epistle,¹ but occasionally replaced by such phrases as "our Gospel,"² "the Gospel of Christ,"³ "the Word of God."⁴

2. The substance of the message thus variously named, is the proclamation of a way of escape from "the wrath to come."⁵ Salvation is regarded chiefly from the *eschatological* point of view. Judging from the manner of expression pervading these Epistles, Paul, in addressing heathen audiences, was wont to speak of a coming Day of Judgment, when the Lord Jesus would be revealed from heaven to inflict punishment on them that know not God, and to tell them that by believing on Jesus they should escape the doom of the impenitent, and become partakers of all the joys of the kingdom of God.⁶ It may be noticed in passing that it is just after this fashion that Paul is represented in the Book of Acts as addressing the Athenians on Mars Hill.⁷ This is one of several instances in which the accounts of Paul's preaching given in Acts correspond with the idea of it suggested by the language of these early letters.

3. As the substance of the Gospel is contemplated from an eschatological point of view, so Christ, the author of salvation, is regarded under the same aspect. The great object of Christian trust appears not so much as Jesus the crucified, but rather as Jesus exalted into heaven, and about to come thence again for the destruction of sinners and the salvation of believers. The purchase of salvation by Christ's death falls into the background, and prominence is given to the final accomplishment of salvation by Christ glorified. This characteristic comes out in the description of the Thessalonian Christians as persons who have turned from idols to the living God,

¹ 1 Thess. ii. 2, 8, 9.

² 1 i. 5; 2 ii. 14.

³ 1 iii. 2; 2 i. 8.

⁴ 1 ii. 13.

⁵ 1 i. 10.

⁶ 2 i. 5-9.

⁷ Acts xvii. 30, 31.

and who now "wait for His Son from heaven."¹ Their relation to Christ is one of expectancy. Only once is Christ's death referred to as a means of salvation, and that in the most general terms. "For," writes the apostle in the text referred to, "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him."² Here it is plainly implied that Christ's death took place for our salvation, salvation being here, as always in the two Epistles, regarded from the eschatological view-point; but there is no indication how Christ's death contributed to that end. If we were left with no other means of determining that question than these Epistles, we might conclude that Christ's death was saving, not by itself, but because it was followed by His resurrection. This might not unnaturally appear to be the import of another text referring to the death of Jesus: "If we believe that Jesus died and *rose again*, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him."³ It would not be right, even on the Primer-hypothesis, to infer that Paul had never made any more definite statements than these to the Thessalonian church, seeing that they both manifestly owe their form to the connection of thought in which they occur. The purpose in both cases is to comfort the members of the church in reference to deceased friends, also believers, by assuring them that death before the coming of the Lord would not, as they seem to have imagined, cut them off from a share in the joys of the kingdom. The comfort given is: Christ Himself died, and afterwards rose; and Christians who have died will also rise and partake in the bliss of those who shall be for ever with the Lord. Furthermore, Christ died in our behalf, for the very purpose that we might

¹ 1 Thess. i. 10.² 1 v. 10.³ 1 iv. 14.

obtain salvation; therefore it does not matter whether we sleep with the dead, or wake with the living at His coming. God's end in His Son's death will not fail; we shall all live together with Him. It may be assumed that over and above this the Apostle in his missionary preaching indicated at least in a general way that Christ's death had reference to *sin*. This assumption has good foundation in the summary which he gives of what he had been accustomed to teach the Corinthian church: "I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures."¹ It may be taken for granted that Paul, like all the other apostles—for he gives it as the common Gospel²—kept in view the points indicated in this summary, not only in Corinth, but wherever he went on his evangelising mission. Still it is remarkable that in these two letters to a young Christian community no express mention is made of the first article in the summary, especially if the design of the writer was to rehearse the leading points of instruction, to recall to the recollection of the readers what he had taught them when he was present with them. It implies this, at least, that the Apostle was not accustomed in his mission-addresses to enter with much fulness or exactness of statement into the doctrine of redemption by Christ's death. And here again there is a correspondence between what we infer from the Epistles, and what we learn from the book of *Acts*. The reports of Paul's mission-addresses in that book correspond closely to the summary of his preaching given by himself in his Epistle to the Corinthians. There

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4.

² 1 Cor. xv. 11. "Whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed."

is, in the first place, careful detailed proof from Scripture of the truth of his leading positions. Then the points chiefly insisted on are just those indicated; Christ's death for sin, and His resurrection. The former, however, curiously enough, is the less prominent, being rather implied than plainly expressed. The words referring to this topic in the first and longest of the missionary speeches by Paul reported in *Acts* are these: "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."¹

4. In the sentence just quoted the word "justified"² occurs. No such word occurs in our two Epistles. But two other words are found, suggestive of cognate ideas, and sufficient to show that Paul's way of presenting the Gospel in mission sermons was the same in *essence* as it appears in the controversial Epistles, the only difference being that in the one we have the religious kernel, in the other the theological form. These words are *Faith* and *Grace*; trite words now, but great words then, and profoundly significant as to the character of the religion of which they were the watchwords. The terms are not used in any sharply defined dogmatic sense, but in a practical popular way. Christians are called believers—"you who believe."³ God is represented as the object of faith.⁴ Faith is not sharply opposed to works, but is

¹ Acts xiii. 38, 39. Hausrath thinks that the type of Paul's preaching is to be found in the Epistle to the Romans—that the apostle writes to that church which he had never visited as he preached to the churches he himself founded. *Vide Neutest. Zeitgeschichte*, ii. 514, 515. This opinion is based on prejudice against *Acts* as a non-reliable source of information as to Paul's preaching, not on a just view of the Epistle to the Romans, which, as we shall see, was a special writing meant to serve a special purpose.

² δικαιωθῆναι, δικαιῶσαι.

³ 1 ii. 13.

⁴ 1 i. 8.

itself a work.¹ The word "grace" occurs less frequently, and chiefly in connection with sanctification. In the superscriptions the Apostle wishes for his readers, already believers, grace and peace, and in the superscription of the second Epistle these are represented as having their source in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The grace thence emanating is viewed as the means by which believers are enabled to glorify the name they bear, and are themselves fitted for future glory.² In both Epistles the writer closes as he begins, with the prayer that Christ's grace may be with his readers, as if that were all that was needful both for holiness and for happiness. It looks as if the writer knew something of the earthly life of Him who dwelt among men "full of grace," whose sermons were "words of grace," whose gracious love drew the sinful and sorrowful to Him, and sent them away into purity and peace.

5. By what titles does Paul name Jesus in these Primer Epistles? He calls Him *the Son of God*, and *the Lord*. The former title occurs in the text where the Thessalonians are described as having turned to the true God, and as waiting *for His Son* from heaven;³ a connection of thought which gives to the designation much significance. The honour and prerogative of the only true God are jealously guarded against the injury done to them by idolatrous worship, and yet in the same sentence in which this is virtually done Jesus is spoken of as a Son of the living and true God, and as one whose present abode is in heaven. What impression could such language produce on men who had been worshippers of gods many but that Jesus was divine? The other title, "Lord," points in the same direction of a high doctrine respecting the author of the faith. It is Paul's favourite title for Christ in his controversial Epistles, and it may

¹ 1 Thess. i. 3; 2 i. 11.

² 2 i. 12.

³ 1 i. 10.

be regarded as a result of this fact, that the same title is frequently used in the Gospel of Luke (eminently Pauline in spirit) in places where the other Synoptists use the name Jesus. The designation occurs repeatedly in the two Epistles now under consideration, sometimes with the effect of identifying Jesus in the Christian consciousness with God; as *e.g.* in the expression, "the day of the Lord,"¹ corresponding to the expression, "the day of Jehovah," in the Old Testament, and meaning the day when the *παρουσία* of the Lord Jesus Christ shall take place.

6. Mention is made in these Primer Epistles of the Holy Spirit, and in the specifically Pauline sense as the *Sanctifier*. Opportunity will occur hereafter for considering at length Paul's doctrine of the Spirit, and in connection therewith to advert to the distinction between the Spirit as transcendent, and the Spirit as immanent; as the former, the source of charisms or preternatural gifts, as the latter, the source of Christian sanctity. I simply remark here that it is from the immanent, ethical point of view that the Spirit is regarded in these Epistles, at least, chiefly, if not exclusively.² God gives His Holy Spirit to Christians,³ and for the purpose of *sanctification*.⁴ For while salvation, as already stated, is regarded from an eschatological point of view, present sanctification is strongly insisted on as a necessary preparation for the future salvation. "Chosen unto salvation in or by sanctification," is the programme. The Apostle reminds his readers that when he was with them he had charged them to walk worthily of the God who had called them to His kingdom and glory.⁵ He now tells them that

¹ 1 v. 2; 2 ii. 2.

² The other aspect may be implied in the exhortation, "Quench not the Spirit," 1 v. 19.

³ 1 iv. 8.

⁴ 2 ii. 13.

⁵ 1 ii. 12.

God's will is their sanctification, that God had not called them to uncleanness, but to holiness,¹ and that he who practically forgets this is guilty of despising God, who gave the Spirit for this very end.² He sets before them as their great aim the sanctification of the whole man—spirit, soul, and body.³ They must cultivate purity; also unworldliness, so as to be free from all suspicion of covetousness, taking their teacher as their example. They must resolutely fight against every form of evil—drunkenness, impurity, greed, revenge, and all other sins of flesh and spirit, as Christian soldiers fully armed for the conflict, with faith and love for breastplate, and the hope of salvation for helmet.⁴ The interest of the writer in real Christian goodness is intense and unmistakable; and it inspires us with confidence that whatever Paulinism may mean, it will not be found to imply indifference to ethical ideals, and their embodiment in right conduct. We may expect to discover in the literature of Paulinism anything rather than a divorce between religion and morality; if, perchance, at any point the author's conception of Christianity may seem to compromise ethical interests, he will be sure to manifest a most delicate sensitiveness to the slightest appearance of so fatal a fault, and great solicitude to obviate misunderstanding.

Of that literature, consisting of the four great Epistles to the Galatian, Corinthian, and Roman churches, we must next take a rapid survey. But before doing this, it will be advantageous to form as definite a conception as possible of the nature and import of Paul's religious experience.

A. B. BRUCE.

¹ 1 iv. 7.

² 1 iv. 8.

³ 1 v. 23.

⁴ 1 v. 8.