PAUL'S CONCEPTION OF CHRISTIANITY.

II. The Epistle to the Galatians.

Like most of the great agents of divine providence, Paul had large experience of waiting. He had to wait a considerable time before an opportunity occurred for entering on the mission to the Gentiles to which from the first he had felt himself called. He got the "wink of opportunity" when, according to the narrative in *Acts*, Barnabas went down to Tarsus to seek Saul, and brought him to Antioch, to take part in the movement that had begun there.[1] He had to wait still longer before he could utter his deepest thoughts concerning the Christian faith. The Gentile mission did not of itself bring the fitting occasion, for, as we have seen, he did not judge it needful or desirable to say all that was in his mind to infant Churches, whether of Jewish or of Gentile origin. He gave them the benefit of his Christian intuitions, in which all was involved for himself though not for them, and kept in reserve the deeper ideas of his theology, content to find in these rest for his own heart, conscience, and reason. At length controversy brought the hour for speaking. His success as a Gentile Apostle raised the inevitable question, Must heathen converts submit to Jewish rites in order to obtain the benefits of salvation and of fellowship with Christians of Hebrew extraction? Paul became the earnest champion of Gentile liberties, but, as was to be expected, many took the opposite view; hence came bitter conflict, and the need for unfolding the latent implications of the common faith

[1] *Acts* xi. 25. *Galatians* i. 21–23 shows that Paul had not been altogether idle up till this time. His first mission was in the regions of Syria and Cilicia, and there is no reason to suppose that his efforts were confined to Jews, at least on principle. But those were the days of small things. Weiss thinks that Paul simply passed through Syria and Cilicia on his way home.

in Jesus. Of this conflict, on the issue of which it was to depend whether Christianity was to have a future, the four great Epistles to the Galatian, Corinthian and Roman Churches are the literary monument.

The trouble began at the conference at Jerusalem, when the question was debated: Must Gentile Christians be circumcised? The settlement then arrived at was not radical or final. It seems to have been tacitly assumed that in the case of Jewish Christians circumcision remained as obligatory as ever, and, while it was agreed that the rite was not to be imposed on heathen converts, the delicate question connected with the social relations between the two sections of the Church appears to have been left in a vague indeterminate state. There was room for misunderstandings and the development of opposite tendencies, in the direction either of reducing the agreement to a minimum by attaching disabilities to the position of an uncircumcised Christian, on the one hand, or, on the other hand, of treating the exemption of Gentile converts from subjection to Jewish rites as involving the principle that circumcision was no longer of any religious importance either for Jewish or for Gentile Christians.[1] The collision between Paul and Peter at Antioch revealed the existence of the two tendencies.[2] The cause of that collision was Peter's refusal, at the instance of men from Jerusalem, to eat with Gentile Christians, after having previously done so without scruple. The position taken up by these men

[1] Holsten too strongly characterises the Jerusalem compact as a separation-union (*Sonderungs-einigung*), based on an inner contradiction of views. Vide *Das Evangelium des Paulus*, p. 24.

[2] Some writers place this collision between the second and third missionary journeys, during the visit of Paul to Antioch referred to in *Acts* xviii. 22, two or three years after the Jerusalem conference. But if the agreement come to was diversely understood as above indicated, the misunderstanding would not take years to show itself. It would appear on the earliest opportunity. Men like the false brethren referred to in *Galatians* ii. 4 would be on the outlook for a chance of making the compact null and void.

seems to have been: Gentiles may become *Christians* without being circumcised, but they may not eat with us Jews as long as they are uncircumcised; they must pay the penalty of their freedom by being treated by us as unclean. This was in effect to adhere to the Jerusalem compact in the letter, and to set it aside in the spirit. Paul felt this, and took occasion to state very plainly to his brother Apostle his view of the situation in a speech in which Paulinism was for the first time definitely formulated. The speech was delivered in public, "before all," and produced momentous consequences. The conservatives became a party bitterly opposed to Paul, and bent on counteracting his influence, apparently organising for that purpose a regular anti-Pauline propagandism, following in the Apostle's footsteps wherever he went, not to convert pagans to Christianity, but to pervert converts to their own Judaistic views of the Christian faith.

Though the controversy between Paul and the Judaists originally and immediately referred to the rite of circumcision, it involved wide issues and raised more than one question of grave import. As the conflict went on, three topics assumed in succession the place of greatest prominence: the perpetual obligation of the law, the qualifications for apostleship, and the prerogatives of Israel as an elect people. To set aside circumcision was virtually to annul the whole law, argued Paul's opponents, and Paul admitted the accuracy of their logic, and drew the seemingly impious inference that the Gospel of salvation through faith in Christ involved the entire abrogation of the law as a way to acceptance with God. Thereon the Judaists raised a new question: Who is this man who dares to teach so blasphemous a doctrine against the divinely-given law of Moses? By what authority does he take it upon him to interpret Christianity in this revolutionary sense? He calls himself an apostle: what right has he to the

name? He is not one of the twelve who had been with Jesus, and none but they can authoritatively bear witness to or interpret the mind of the Lord, nor can any one be a true teacher, not to say an apostle, whose doctrine is not in accordance with their testimony. It is easy to see how the logic of their position led the Judaists to make such an assault upon Paul's claim to be an apostle, and how Paul in turn could not shirk the question thus raised, but was equally bound by the logic of his position to show that in calling himself the Apostle of the Gentiles he was not guilty of usurpation, though he was neither one of the twelve nor acting under their authority. But that question disposed of, still another remained: On Paul's view of Christianity in relation to the law, what about the election of Israel? She had long been God's chosen people, enjoying valuable privileges—could that be a true conception of Christianity which involved the virtual denial or cancelling of Israel's election? Here again the Apostle of the Gentiles was put upon his defence, and summoned to the solution of a hard problem—the reconciliation of his Gospel with the past history of the Jewish nation.

These three questions respecting the law, the apostolate, and the election, were all essentially involved in the great controversy, and they were probably all from the outset present more or less distinctly to the thoughts of both parties. Yet one may be said to have been more prominent at one time and another at another, so that the three topics may be regarded as denoting distinct stages in the controversy. The three stages are easily recognisable in the relative literature. For while one or other of the four Epistles may contain passages bearing on all the three topics, more or less clearly, yet they may be classified according as this or that topic is the one chiefly discussed. The Epistle to the Galatians is occupied predominantly with the first of the three themes, the two Epistles to the

Corinthians (to be regarded in this connection as one) with the second, and the Epistle to the Romans, in the matter peculiar to it, with the third. In *Galatians* Paul defends the independence of Christianity against those who would make Christendom subject to Jewish law and custom; in 1 and 2 *Corinthians* he defends his own independence and authority as a God-commissioned Apostle of the Gentiles against those who asserted the exclusive authority of the eleven; in *Romans*, while giving a comprehensive statement of his views on the Gospel, he addresses himself very specially to the solution of the problem how to reconcile his idea of Christianity with the admitted truth that Israel had for many centuries been God's elect people.

In all our references to the four Epistles, it has been assumed that their proper order is that in which they have been named in the foregoing paragraph. That they were actually written in this order is the opinion of the majority of commentators. Some English scholars, however, favour a different order, placing the Epistles to the Corinthians first, and *Galatians* between them and *Romans*. In his valuable commentary on *Galatians*, Bishop Lightfoot has carefully discussed the question, and given weighty reasons in support of this arrangement.[1] His two main arguments are based on the great similarity in thought and expression between *Galatians* and *Romans*, and on the manner in which the Apostle speaks in these two Epistles and 2 *Corinthians* respectively concerning his tribulations; with copious details in the last-mentioned Epistle, with one pointed reference in *Galatians*,[2] very mildly and but seldom in *Romans*. In both cases the facts are as stated; the only point open to dispute is whether the inference be irresistible. The similarity between *Galatians* and *Romans* is explained by the supposition that the latter Epistle was

[1] *Vide* the Introduction, pp. 36–56.
[2] *Galatians* vi. 17.

written shortly after the former, while the echoes of its utterances still lingered in the writer's mind. But this is not the only possible explanation of the phenomenon. It may be accounted for by the hypothesis that the Apostle in both Epistles was drawing upon a stock of Christian thought which in its essential positions, in the arguments on which these rested, and even in verbal expression, was to a large extent stereotyped, and thoroughly familiar to himself, though new to his readers. In that case letters touching on the same topics, no matter what interval of time separated them, would exhibit such resemblances as have been shown to exist in the two Epistles in question. The other set of facts also admits of another explanation besides that given by Bishop Lightfoot. His theory is that the Epistle which says most about apostolic tribulations must have been nearest them in the date of its composition. But the truth is that the prominence given to that topic in 2 *Corinthians* is not due to the recentness of the experiences but to their appositeness to the purpose on hand. As will hereafter appear, the trials he endured formed an important part of Paul's argument in support of his apostleship.

I adhere therefore to the order previously indicated, which, apart from all historical questions as to dates of composition, best suits the logic of the controversy, and proceed to take a rapid survey of *the Epistle to the Galatians.*

The very first sentence shows that something has occurred to disturb the spirit of the writer. In his letters to the Thessalonians Paul gives himself no title; here, on the other hand, he not only calls himself an Apostle, but takes pains to indicate that for his apostolic standing he is indebted neither primarily nor subordinately to any man or body of men, but to God alone.[1] The same thing may be

[1] *οὐκ ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων οὐδὲ δι' ἀνθρώπου*; not from men (*e.g.* the eleven), as ultimate source, nor by any man as instrument.

said of every true apostle and prophet, but why so peremptory an assertion of independence? Because there are those who assail his independence, and desire to make out that he is either no apostle at all, or one subordinate to the eleven, and therefore bound to conform in opinion and action to their authority; and all this in order to undermine his influence as a teacher of views which the assailants regard with aversion. Fully aware how closely belief in his authority as a teacher is connected with continued adherence to his doctrine, the Apostle commences with this topic, and sets himself in a very thorough earnest way to demonstrate the originality of his Gospel, and his entire freedom as the Apostle of the Gentiles from all dependence on the other Apostles. This, however, is not the leading aim of the Epistle, though it forms the topic of the first two chapters. The main purpose is revealed in the sentence following the salutation and doxology, in which the Apostle suddenly and indignantly exclaims: "I am surprised that ye have so soon turned away from him who called you in the grace of Christ unto another Gospel."[1] The unhappy change alluded to is from a Gospel of salvation by grace to a gospel of salvation by circumcision, and the leading aim of the Apostle is to check the perverse movement, and to bring back the Galatians to their first faith. The section bearing on the apostleship from chap. i. 11 to the end of chap. ii. may be viewed as a long parenthesis, after which the main theme is resumed, and the Galatians are again directly addressed and remonstrated with for allowing themselves to be led away.

This section, though parenthetical, is very important in its bearing on the main design of the Epistle. It consists

[1] *Gal.* i. 6. The expression οὕτως ταχέως is founded on by most interpreters as proving that *Galatians* must have been written before 1 and 2 *Corinthians*, shortly after Paul's second visit to Galatia, at the beginning of his three years' residence in Ephesus.

of three parts, of which the first is intended to show that Paul was not indebted to the other apostles for his knowledge of Christ and of the Gospel (i. 11–24); the second, that he was in no wise controlled by them in regard to his preaching of the Gospel (ii. 1–10); the third, that so far from any of the apostles prescribing to him what he should preach, the fact was that he, on the contrary, had occasion to remonstrate with one of the pillar-apostles, Peter, in regard to unstable, inconsistent conduct fitted to compromise the great principles of the Gospel (ii. 11–21). What he says on the first head amounts to this, that he had neither the inclination nor the opportunity to learn much about Christianity from the apostles. In the second part, he gives an extremely interesting account of important occurrences in connection with the Jerusalem conference, which unfortunately has given rise to much diversity of opinion among critics and interpreters. But amid much that is doubtful one thing is clear. The Apostle most distinctly states that the pillar-apostles with whom he held conference, "added nothing" to him,[1] that is, gave him no additional instructions as to what he should preach, found no fault with his Gospel as frankly explained to them, were content that he should continue preaching as he had preached. They reverently recognised the hand of God in the whole career of this man: in his conversion, in his conception of the nature and destination of Christianity, in his success as a missionary to the Gentiles. They acquiesced in his Gospel of uncircumcision as at least suitable for heathen converts, and wished him all success in preaching it in heathen parts, while they confined their own ministry to the Jewish world, being humbly

[1] *Gal.* ii. 6. *οὐδὲν προσανέθεντο.* The verb in classic Greek means to lay on an additional burden. In later Greek it means to impart to, either to give or to get advice, instruction, or injunction. Here it means that the apostles gave no additional instructions. In chapter i. 16 the same word is employed in the other sense: *οὐ προσανεθέμην*, "I did not consult in order to *get* advice."

conscious of unfitness for work in any other sphere. Such being the attitude of the eleven, their authority could not truthfully be appealed to in support of a reactionary movement which strove to reduce the Jerusalem compact to a minimum, or even to make it a nullity by endeavouring to induce Gentile Christians to submit to circumcision, as the Judaist sectaries seem to have done in Galatia.

The third division of the long parenthesis respecting the apostleship is the most important of all. It exhibits Paul as teaching one of the pillar-apostles, instead of being taught by them, the true nature of the Gospel; yet not teaching a new gospel, as if Paul's Gospel were different from that of the other apostles, but rather showing to Peter the true import of his own Gospel; the scope, tendency, and logical consequence of his own professed principles. The doctrinal statement it contains is an epitome of Paulinism, given in a few rapid, impassioned sentences, charged at once with the thorough-going logic of a powerful intellect, and the intense emotion of a great manly heart. There is nothing more stirring in the whole range of the Pauline literature, nothing more convincing, than this swift, eloquent sketch of the gospel of uncircumcision, brought in incidentally, in the course of a historical narrative intended to vindicate the Apostle's independence, but serving a far higher purpose also, viz. to vindicate the independence of the Gospel itself as a Gospel of free grace, meant for the salvation of all sinners alike, and able to save all in the most efficient manner without the aid of legal ordinances. As against Peter the memorable utterance makes good three serious charges: that he has been guilty (1) of virtually excommunicating the Gentile Christians by insisting on their complying with Jewish custom as a condition of fellowship,[1] (2) of self-stultification in building again the things he had

[1] *Gal.* ii. 14: πῶς τὰ ἔθνη ἀναγκάζεις Ἰουδαΐζειν. The compulsion lay in Peter's example.

destroyed, (3) of frustrating the grace of God by in effect declaring that it is insufficient for man's salvation, and needs to be supplemented by legal performances. Viewed not polemically but didactically, it briefly indicates all the leading ideas of the Pauline theology in much the same order as in the Epistle to the Romans. Jews by birth and Gentile "sinners" on a level, as unable to save themselves by their works, Jews being sinners not less than Gentiles, though proudly applying the epithet to the latter as if it had no reference to themselves; faith the sole way to justification for both, faith in Jesus Christ crucified; justification by faith and justification by the law mutually exclusive; by faith, therefore, the law abolished, so that the believer in Jesus is no longer bound by it; finally, the Christian life a life of mystic union and communion with Christ, and of devoted love to Christ in response to the love wherewith He loved us, in giving Himself to death for our salvation. It is obviously not solely for historic reasons that the Apostle repeats here this remarkable confession of his faith. He has in view the present instruction of the Church to which he writes, and means, though he does not put it down on paper, "this is what I said to Peter then, and this I say to you now."

We come now to the main part of the Epistle (chaps. iii.–v.). The contents of this part may be summed up by three phrases: 1. *Legalism condemned*, chap. iii.; 2. *Christian liberty asserted*, chaps. iv.–v. 1–6; 3. *Abuse of liberty censured*, chap. v. 13–26.

1. Full of enthusiasm for the creed which he has just expounded, the Apostle passes on to its defence with a natural feeling of surprise and vexation that so unwelcome a duty should be necessary. He cannot understand how a Church to which a crucified Christ had been broadly proclaimed[1] should lapse into legalism. A crucified Christ

[1] *Gal.* iii. 1, προεγράφη, well rendered by Lightfoot "placarded."

meant everything to him, why should He not be everything to them? Who could have bewitched them, for it seemed as if the result could be accounted for only by the fascinating spell of some malign power? Alas the unhappy change is not so difficult to understand as Paul seems to have imagined. There is nothing so natural as this lapse in the case of the average Christian, nothing so common; Christian life habitually maintained up in the pure Alpine region of the Pauline faith is the exception rather than the rule. For few are so consistent in their logic as Paul, so thorough in the application of first principles, so possessed by the love of Christ, and therefore so jealous of every other servitude. Paul's doctrine is, after all, a heroic doctrine, and it needs spiritual heroes to appreciate it and do it justice. Besides, it has to be remembered that while Paul had his experience of legalism before his conversion, for most men it comes after. Few escape taking the spiritual disease at some time or other.

The Galatian Church caught the evil infection from the Judaist propagandists, and so Paul must argue the matter with them. The heads of his argument lie before us. How it told on the first readers we do not know; to ourselves it may appear of varying value, and occasionally such as to remind us that Paul was once a disciple of the Rabbis. The first proof is not the least convincing, being a direct appeal to experience. How, asks the Apostle, did ye receive the Spirit who wrought in you and through you so mightily; by doing legal works, or by believing the good tidings ye heard from my lips? And if in this way your Christian life began, why forsake it now? If faith was so powerful at first, why should it not be equally powerful all through? Listen not to the men who would enslave you to the law; listen rather to God, who gave you His spirit and wrought miracles among you, before ever you heard a word of circumcision or the Jewish law, thereby show-

ing that these things are no wise necessary or conducive to salvation.

To be noted in this first line of reasoning is the pointed way in which law is opposed to faith, and flesh to spirit. "Received ye the spirit from the works of the law, or from the hearing of faith?" "Having begun in the spirit, are ye now being perfected in the flesh?" We have here two of the great Pauline antitheses.

The Apostle's next appeal is to the history of Abraham,[1] obviously an important topic in an argument with men enamoured of Judaism. If he could make it appear that history was on his side, a great point would be gained. To what extent is he successful? To this extent, at least, that in the patriarch's history acceptableness to God is associated with faith, and the promise embraces in its scope the Gentiles. The story makes the broad impression that men please God not by doing this or that, but by believing in Him, and that whoever believes in God, whether Jew or Gentile, may hope to share in His grace. This length a modern student of Scripture may go, without pretending to find Paul's doctrine of justification by faith, in the technical theological sense, in the book of Genesis.

The next point the Apostle makes is this: while by faith you share the blessing of Abraham, what you get from the law is not blessing but *cursing*.[2] Is it not written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them"? The most notable thing in this section of the argument is the saying concerning the function of Christ in relation to the law's curse. *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us*; the proof that He was made a curse being that He suffered death in the form of crucifixion.[3] This is doubtless one of the great Pauline *logia*;

[1] iii. 6–9. [2] iii. 10–14. [3] iii. 13.

a new utterance but an old thought, dating even in its expression from early years. It is more than the simple statement of a religious faith; it contains the germ of a theological theory; for latent in it is the principle that the Redeemer of men must share their lot in order that they may share His privilege, a principle of which we shall find other exemplifications in Paul's Epistles.

The Apostle proceeds to base an argument on the mere date of the Sinaitic legislation.[1] Given above four hundred years after the promise, and of course not for the purpose of setting it aside, the law must have been intended to perform some function in subordination to the promise. This at once raises the question, what was that function? "What then the law?"[2] Paul's full answer to the question is not given here; we must wait for it till we come to his Epistle to the Romans. What he does say in the present Epistle is a little obscure, owing to the rapid movement of his thought, which rushes on like a mountain torrent. Had we no other information as to his doctrine concerning the law, we might readily take his meaning to be that it was added to *restrain* transgression. It would be nearer the truth to say that he means to suggest that the law was given *in favour* of transgression,[3] to provoke resistance to its behests. This is certainly a very bold idea, but it is none the less likely to be Pauline. The Apostle's whole doctrine of the law is one of the most startlingly original features in his apologetic system of thought, which we might be tempted to regard as an extravagance into which he was driven by the exigencies of controversy. This, however, would be a very mistaken idea. It is, we may be sure, no hastily extemporized theory, but the carefully thought out solution of a problem which pressed

[1] iii. 15–18. [2] iii. 19.

[3] So Lipsius, *Die Paulinische Rechtfertigungslehre*, p. 75 (1853), Menegoz and many others.

heavily on Paul's mind, from the day he arrived at the conclusion that the law, whatever it might be good for, was certainly not the way to the attainment of righteousness.

While failing to give a full statement of the solution in this Epistle the Apostle makes some very instructive suggestions respecting the law's function. For this purpose he employs three comparisons, likening the law first to a gaoler who, after provoking men to transgression, throws them into prison, and keeps them there under lock and key;[1] next to a *pædagogus*, entrusted with the moral supervision of a child;[2] lastly, to the guardians and stewards who have charge of the person and property of the heir to an estate during the time of his minority.[3] All three comparisons have one general object in view, to show how the law might have a real function, yet only a *temporary* one issuing in release from its power. The gaoler's function is real and necessary, but the time comes when the prisoner must be set free. The *pædagogus* in a Greek or Roman family served a useful if humble purpose in the moral nurture of a child of tender years, but in due course the child outgrew his influence. The care of guardians and stewards is most necessary to the well-being of an heir and the preservation of his inheritance, but it ceases, as matter of course, when he comes of age. The figures all serve further to convey a hint as to the comparatively ungenial nature of the law's function; to exhibit it as such, that the subject of it will be glad to escape from it when the time of release arrives. It appears at its worst under the figure of a gaoler; less repulsive under the guise of the *pædagogus*, because the subject is now conceived not as a criminal but as a child, though even his mode of treatment is harsh compared with

[1] iii. 23.

[2] iii. 24. παιδαγωγὸς is untranslatable because the function is unknown among us.

[3] iv. 2. ἐπιτρόπους, having charge of the person; οἰκονόμους, having charge of the property.

that of a parent;[1] least irksome under the final figure, for now the child is grown to be a youth, and the guardians and stewards do not forget what he will be ere long, yet becoming increasingly unwelcome as the future heir advances towards maturity, and longs with growing eagerness for escape from authority into self-control. Under all three aspects, even the mildest, the reign of law is bearable only for a time, creating in the subject an irrepressible desire for *liberty*.

2. Liberty came with Jesus Christ. Of this congenial theme Paul goes on to speak. He introduces the subject in connection with the last of the above-mentioned comparisons, which he regards as the most important of the three, as appears from the formal manner in which he brings it in: "Now I say," etc.[2] He has hinted already at the truth that with Christ the era of liberty or true sonship began,[3] but he is able now to make a more adequate statement of the fact, in connection with the figure of the heir in a state of pupillage, which gives it an effective setting, *and brings out the epoch-making significance of the advent of Jesus in the general religious history of the world.* In terms of that figure he represents the advent as marking the point at which mankind, the son of God, arrived at its majority. Then commenced the era of grace, of liberty, of sonship, of the new humanity in which is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, but all are one in Christ.[4] It is a truly magnificent thought, one of the greatest in the whole range of Paulinism. And one cannot

[1] This is the point emphasised by Lipsius, *Die Paul. Rechtfertigungslehre*, p. 80. The *pædagogus* acts with rigour, not with love. On the other hand, Menegoz thinks that the temporariness of the office is the one thing to be insisted on, *Le Péché et la Redemption*, p. 115. But there is a reference to both aspects.

[2] *Gal.* iv. 1: λέγω δὲ.

[3] iii. 26.

[4] iii. 28.

but feel with what powerful effect Christ's agency in bringing about the great change is spoken of in association with this grand philosophic idea. "*But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that He might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*"[1] Here is another great Pauline *logion*, a fresh contribution to the theology of the cross, applying the principle of solidarity between Redeemer and redeemed in a new direction. The subjects of redemption being under law, the Redeemer also came under law, that by this act of grace He might put an end for ever to the state of legal bondage. It is noteworthy that the Apostle refers not only to Christ's subjection to law, but to his birth. Why is this? Perhaps we should avoid too recondite explanations, and adopt the simple suggestion that the form of subjection to law which he has in his mfnd is *circumcision*, the bone of contention between himself and the Judaist. In that case his thought may be thus paraphrased: Jesus came to be born of woman, and then, being a Jew, to be circumcised, and so to deliver us from bondage to that rite and all that goes along with it. Thus viewed, this great text ascribes redemptive power, not merely to Christ's death, but to His whole state of gracious humiliation.

The objective ideal significance of Christ's coming being that it inaugurated the new era of filial freedom—prison doors opened, children grown to manhood, the heir no longer a minor, it is easy to see what duty is incumbent on the Christian. It is to understand the nature of the new era in which he lives, to enter sympathetically into its spirit, and subjectively to realise its lofty ideal. Obligation lies on him to be free indeed, as a son of God arrived at his majority. That accordingly is what the Apostle next pro-

[1] *Gal.* iv. 4, 5. The idea of adoption will come up for discussion at a later stage.

ceeds to insist on. Appealing once more to the experience of his readers in confirmation of the view of Christianity he has just presented, "Did you not," he asks in effect, "find something in your own hearts which told you that Jesus came to introduce the era of sonship? Was there not a spirit in you which made you call God Father? It was God sending the spirit of His own well-beloved Son into your breasts, that you might be sons in feeling as well as in legal standing. Be faithful then to that spirit whose promptings ye once obeyed. Return not again to bondage, to the weak and beggarly elements, whether of Jewish legalism or of Pagan superstition, from which it was the very purpose of Christ's coming to redeem you."[1] Such is the drift of chapter iv. 6–20, omitting points of minor importance.

With this pathetic appeal the Apostle might well have concluded his argument. But his active mind is full of ideas, and he has yet another train of thought in reserve by which he hopes to commend his doctrine of Christian freedom from the law to the acceptance of his readers. Abraham having done service in establishing the doctrine, his family is now made to perform its part by the allegory of Sarah and Hagar and their sons.[2] Here again the Christian Apostle and Prophet may appear to be clad in the robe of a Rabbi, but let not that be to his prejudice. Take the allegory for what it is worth; as poetry rather than logic, meant not so much to convince the reason as to captivate the imagination. If it served that purpose at a great crisis in the world's religious history, was it not worth while, even if it should be of little value to us? At the very least, it

[1] The words are generally interpreted as having this double reference. Στοιχεῖα means literally the letters of the alphabet ranged in rows, and the idea suggested is that the Jewish and pagan religions were fit only for the childhood of the world, when men were, as it were, only learning their letters.

[2] Chap. iv. 21–31. *Vide* on this Prof. Findlay's most felicitous commentary on the Epistle (*Expositor's Bible*). He hits off the spirit of the passage by the remark: "He will tell his 'children' a story."

has autobiographical interest, for the prose poem bears a date upon it. It comes to us from the period of the retirement in Arabia, and we scent the keen air of the desert as we read it. Let us read and silently enjoy, abstaining from the stupidity of a prosaic detailed interpretation.

One can understand the passionate earnestness with which this man of prophetic, poetic soul, true son of the Jerusalem above, once more appeals to the Galatians to stand fast in their Christ-bought liberty, and not to become reintangled in a yoke of bondage, and warns them that that must be the inevitable effect of their submitting to the rite of circumcision.[1] And how welcome, after the subtle argumentation of the previous chapter, the brief sententious statement of the healthy normal Christian attitude on all such questions as were in debate. "*We* (Christians who know where they are) *in the Spirit from faith wait for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but faith energetic through love.*" This is another of the great Pauline words, having for its import: circumcision *et hoc genus omne*, good for nothing, faith good for everything; good to begin with, and not less good to end with; good to sanctify as well as to justify, because it is a powerful practical force operating through the highest motive, love.[2]

3. On the Apostle's warning against the abuse of liberty (chap. v. 13–26) little need be said, beyond remarking that on this score he exhibits here, as always, a most becoming sensitiveness. He traces the source of abuse to the *flesh* and finds the antidote in walking by the Spirit.[3] He makes no attempt here, as in *Romans*, to show how moral license is excluded by a right view of the relation subsisting between the Christian and Christ, but he compensates for that

[1] Chap. v. 1–4.
[2] More will be said on this text in a future paper.
[3] Chap. v. 16.

lack by drawing up two lists of the works of the flesh and of the Spirit respectively, that the one may repel by its hideousness, and the other draw by its winsomeness. How strange that the facts of human life should supply material for so tremendous a contrast! Stranger still that it should be possible to find materials for the contrast within the religious world! For the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, etc., is set over against the spiritual vices connected with the "carnality of religious contention," not less than against the coarser vices of the irreligious sensualist. It is easy to be a religious partisan, regeneration is not necessary for that; the difficulty is to be a true Christian.

The postscript[1] must not be passed over in silence. After the speech to Peter, it is the most characteristic thing in the Epistle. The letter has been written at white heat, dictated more rapidly than the *amanuensis* can write it down. Paul reads it over, finds he has still something to say, writes it down himself, in large, bold, inelegant characters, unmistakable by any one who has seen his handwriting before. The sentiments are as unmistakably Pauline as the penmanship. Here is no elaborate reasoning, whether of the ex-Rabbi or of the theological doctor, but abrupt, impassioned, prophetic utterances of deepest convictions: the zealots for Judaism, hollow hypocrites; the cross of Christ the sole worthy ground of glorying; circumcision nothing, the new Christian creation in the individual and in the community everything; the men who adopt this for their motto, the true Israel of God, on whom may God's peace ever rest.

A. B. BRUCE.

[1] Chap. vi. 11–17.