

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

which it was originally addressed. If a mistake was made in the first copy and the original then destroyed, they had no means of getting behind the copy to correct the mistake. Many modern Biblical critics seem to have substituted for all other infallibilities this infallible canon, that external evidence is reliable, and is conservative in its tendency, while internal evidence is misleading and revolutionary. There is no such short cut to truth to save us the trouble of using the power of discrimination which God has given to man. There is good and bad internal evidence, and there is good and bad external evidence. In this case I believe that the result of the internal evidence will be revolutionary only in appearance, but in reality will be thoroughly conservative in its tendency; for it replaces discrepancies by harmonies, and it vindicates St. Paul from the imputation of inconsistencies which he never committed, but which are fathered on him by commentators in their attempt to save the traditional theory.

J. H. KENNEDY.

*A HISTORICAL COMMENTARY ON THE EPISTLE
TO THE GALATIANS.*

LI. VOLUNTARY LIBERALITY TO TEACHERS (VI. 6-10).

THIS paragraph continues the subject of the last: Paul is still engaged with the dangers to which the Galatian Churches are exposed through their proneness to certain faults. He now urges them to treat with wise liberality their religious teachers, to persevere and not to lose heart in beneficence generally, to take advantage of every opportunity of doing good to all with whom they are brought into contact, but more especially to their Christian brethren, "the members of the household of the faith."

This is only a further exposition of what is involved in

the "Whole Law for the Christian, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." That "Whole Law" was quoted in v. 14; and the remaining verses have been devoted to explaining its consequences and its meaning to the Galatians in their special situation and with their special temperament.

The duty of every congregation to support liberally the ministers of the Word is mentioned, not merely to the Galatians here, but also to the Corinthians (1 *Cor.* ix. 11; 2 *Cor.* xi. 7 f.), to the Philippians (iv. 10 f.), to the Thesalonians (1 *Thess.* ii. 6, 9), to the Asian Churches (1 *Tim.* v. 17, 18). Paul kept it before the attention of the Churches of all the four Provinces—Achaia, Macedonia, Asia, and Galatia.

The duty was one that was quite novel in ancient society. It was something that no convert from Paganism had been accustomed to.

There was no system of instruction in the Pagan religions. The favour of the gods was gained by acts of ritual, not by moral conduct. Every prayer for help was a deliberate bargain; the worshipper promised certain gifts to the god, on condition that the god gave the help implored. The priests had the right to certain dues, a sort of percentage, on all sacrifices and offerings, and these dues were paid in various ways. A fee had to be paid for entrance into the temples;¹ or a part of the victim offered went to the priest; or other methods were practised. In one way or another, the priesthoods of the Pagan gods were so lucrative

¹ *Mercedem pro aditu sacri*, Tertullian, *Apologet.* 13 and commentators. In the Roman world generally, fees were imposed for entering the temple, for approaching the place of sacrifice, for the presentation of gifts or the offering of sacrifice; and the collecting of the fees was farmed out by the State. Sometimes the right to engage in worship and sacrifice without payment of fees was granted to individuals (*immunitas sacrum faciendorum*, *Corp. Inscr. Lat.* vi. 712). A tariff of charges is published, *Corp. Inscr. Lat.* vi. 820, Henzen 6113. This custom is hardly known in republican times, except that Cicero, *Leg.* 10, 25, says *sumptus ad sacra addito deorum aditu arceamus*.

in Asia Minor that they were put regularly up to auction by the State, and knocked down for a term to the highest bidder; and various inscriptions record the exact prices paid for them in some cities.¹ But all these methods take the form of a tariff of dues upon rites which the worshipper performs for his own advantage. There were no instructors, and no voluntary contributions for their support.

Hence the duty of supporting preachers had to be continually impressed upon the attention of all Paul's converts from Paganism. The tendency to fail in it was practically universal; it was connected with a universal fact in contemporary society; perhaps it was not unconnected with a universal characteristic of human nature.

It is therefore quite unjustifiable in the North-Galatian theorists to find in this precept which Paul delivered to the Galatians an indication of their Celtic nature and Celtic blood; and it is quite unfair to quote as an illustration the Gaulish tendency to raid and plunder, or the Gaulish greed for money. It would be more to the point if those theorists were to quote in illustration of this passage the parsimony of King Deiotaros, whose presents were considered by his friend and advocate, Cicero, to be rather mean.² Here we have a distinct analogy between Paul's Galatians and a great North-Galatian king. But parsimony is not by any means confined to a single nation, and is at least as common and characteristic a fault in Asia generally as in the Celtic lands; Armenians and Phœnicians and Jews have been and are as penurious and economical as King Deiotaros or any other Celt.

One of the objects that Paul had most at heart was to train his converts in voluntary liberality, as distinguished

¹ See especially the great inscription of Erythræ of the second century b.c.; it has been often published. See Michel *Recueil d'Inscr. Gr.* 839.

² Cicero *ad Fam.* ix. 12, 2. I do not remember any reference to this passage in the North-Galatian commentators, but should be glad to accept correction on the point.

from payments levied on ritual. He saw what a powerful, educative influence such liberality exerts on the individual, and what a strong unifying influence it might exert between the scattered parts of the Church. The contribution in Antioch for the relief of the sufferers from famine in Judæa (*Acts* xi. 29, xii. 25)—the joint contribution of the "Churches of the Four Provinces" for the benefit of the poor congregation in Jerusalem, poor in comparison with the duties and opportunities open to it¹—were devices at once of a teacher training his pupils, and of a statesman welding countries and peoples into an organic unity.²

There is no bond so strong to hold men together as the common performance of the same duties and acts. The skilful organizers of the Roman Empire, Augustus and his early ministers, devoted themselves to fabricating such bonds by uniting the parts of every Province with each other, and the separate Provinces with their common head—the Emperor—in the performance of the ritual of the universal imperial religion of "Rome and Augustus."

A common ritual is an immense power among men.³ Even the ritual of such a sham as the imperial religion was a great bond of unity in the empire. But Paul, while he was fashioning and elaborating the external forms of organization that should hold together the world in its brotherhood, never made the mistake of trusting to a mere unity of ritual. He saw clearly that, strong as is the common performance of ritual among men, a stronger and more educative power was needed, the common volun-

¹ On these opportunities, especially of showing hospitality to Jewish or Jewish-Christian pilgrims, and thus promoting the sense of brotherhood among the scattered Jewish communities, see *EXPOSITOR*, June, 1899, p. 408 f.

² This has never been so well stated as by Rev. F. Rendal in *EXPOSITOR*, Nov., 1893, p. 321 ff. See also *St. Paul the Trav.*, pp. 287 f., 60 f.

³ Compare, e.g., the power of the Greek Church in holding together within the Turkish Empire races, divided by distance, by want of communication, by diversity of blood and of language (*Church in the Rom. Emp.*, p. 467).

tary performance of duties taken up and carried into effect by the conscious deliberate purpose of individual men and women—not of men alone (so he says to the Galatians more emphatically¹ than to any other people), for in the perfected Divine unity of the Church, as it shall be, not as it is, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female.

It is an important point that Paul requires the beneficence of the Galatians to be extended to all men, and not confined “to them that are of the household of faith,” though the latter have a special claim. Every opportunity is to be seized of benefiting their Pagan neighbours. It would be an interesting thing for all who study the state of society in the Roman Empire to know how far this precept was carried into effect in the Pauline Churches. But evidence is at present miserably defective in regard to such practical matters. The establishment of institutions for the benefit of orphans and exposed children was certainly common in the early Church.²

LII. THE LARGE LETTERS (VI. 11–17).

As in several other cases, Paul ends with a peculiarly direct and personal appeal to his correspondents, summing up afresh the critical points in his letter.

Habitually Paul employed a secretary, to whom he dictated his letters; but his custom was to add a parting message with his own hand as a mark of authenticity: “the salutation of me, Paul, with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle” (2 *Thess.* iii. 17). He sometimes marks this concluding message as his own by the words as well as by the handwriting, as in *Colossians* iv. 18, 1 *Corinthians* xvi. 21. Sometimes he trusts to the

¹ See § XXXIII.

² See Lightfoot, *Colossians and Phil.*, p. 324; *Cities and Bish. of Phrygia*, ii. p. 546.

handwriting alone, and we may confidently take such concluding paragraphs as *Romans* xvi. 25-37, *Ephesians* iv. 23, 24 as the parting messages in Paul's hand, though in many cases it is difficult to detect the point of transition.

In no other case is the point where Paul takes the pen marked so emphatically as here; and in no other case is the parting message so important. Paul returns to the primary subject after having diverged from it in his eagerness to give counsel and advice to the Galatian Churches. He adds with his own hand a brief and pointed *résumé* of the leading thoughts in the letter; and he arrests attention and concentrates it on the *résumé* at once by the opening words: "Look you in what big letters I wrote with my own hand." In § XXXIX., p. 59, I took the wrong meaning from these words.

The tense "I wrote" is an epistolary usage, especially common in Latin, but also found in Greek: the writer puts himself at the point of view of his readers, so that his own action seems to him to lie in the past, as it must be to them when they read it. Paul rarely employs this epistolary tense,¹ but here it is forced on him by the opening word "Look." He imagines himself to be standing beside his correspondents as they are reading his letter, and to be saying to them, "Look you what big letters Paul used here."

It has been inferred by many from this sentence that Paul's ordinary handwriting was very large. But if that were so, it would be unnecessary for him to say both "with my own hand" and "in big letters." Moreover, those who suppose that a trifling detail, such as the shape or size of Paul's ordinary handwriting, could find room in his mind as he wrote this letter, are mistaking his character. The size of the letters must have some important bearing

¹ A case in *Philemon* 19. Lightfoot also quotes the opening of Polycarp's letter to the Philippians.

on the parting message, or it would not have been mentioned. We must here look for the cause, not in any personal trait, but in some principle of ancient life and custom.

Publicity for documents of importance in modern times is attained by multiplication of copies. In ancient times that method was impossible: anything that had to be brought before the notice of the public must be exposed in a prominent position before the eyes of all, engraved on some lasting material such as bronze or marble. When a document was thus exposed in public, attention was often called to some specially important point, especially at the beginning or end, by the use of larger letters.¹

On this familiar analogy Paul calls attention to the following sentences as containing the critical topics of the letter, and being therefore in bold striking lettering. Lightfoot, who adopts this view,² is probably right in taking *ὑμῖν* as an ethical dative, translating "how large, mark you."

Dr. Deissmann's interpretation of the "large letters," as belonging to the region of pure comedy, has been alluded to in § XIV.³ It is rightly rejected by Meyer-Sieffert.

LIII. THE PARTING MESSAGE.

What, then, are the points which are thus placarded, as it were, before the eyes of the Galatians? They may be specified in a rough list as follows:

1. The advocates of circumcision are persons who wish "to make a pretentious display" in "external rites" (without a thought about spiritual realities).

¹ Examples in Meyer-Sieffert. Others may be found in Pompeian advertisements. Many others known to me are of later date.

² He does not, however, mention the epigraphic custom, but treats the device as if it were special to Paul.

³ EXPOSITOR, August, 1898, p. 121.

2. Their object is to avoid persecution for the cross of Christ. There is here no thought of persecution by the Roman State. It is solely persecution by the Jews that is in the apostle's mind. The State, if it punished Christians as such, would be equally ready to punish circumcised and uncircumcised Christians. We are here carried back to a time when persecution of Christians existed only in the form of action originated by Jews, who on various pleas induced either imperial officials or city magistrates to interfere against their personal enemies. This takes us back to a very early stage in history: except in Palestine, such persecution was very unlikely to last much later than the decision of Gallio (*Acts* xviii. 15), which constituted a precedent. In Southern Phrygia and Lycaonia, along the line of the great road between Ephesus and Syria, where Jews were specially numerous and influential, persecution of that kind was most likely to constitute a real danger.

3. The champions of circumcision, so far from being eager that the Gentile converts should keep the whole Law, were themselves far from keeping it completely; but they desired to subject the Galatians to that rite in order that they might "gain credit with the Jews for proselytizing" successfully, and thus increasing the influence, wealth and power of the nation (*vi.* 13).

4. Paul personally desired no credit except in the cross. He himself regarded circumcision as an external and in itself valueless ceremony. We may gather that he considered the rite to have some symbolical value for the Jews, but absolutely none for the Gentiles: to the latter it was positively hurtful in so far as it tended to withdraw their attention from the real spiritual fact, that a remaking and regeneration of man's nature was essential.

The emphasis which is several times laid on the burdensome nature of the Law, and the inability of the Jews themselves to observe its provisions and requirements, is

one of the most remarkable features in the question that was being fought out within the Christian Church about A.D. 50.

Peter spoke of the Law as "a yoke which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear" (*Acts* xv. 10). Paul assumes in this Epistle as a fundamental fact familiar to the Galatians that no person can fulfil the Law entirely, but that all are liable to the curse pronounced against any one who fails in any point of the Law (iii. 10, compare ii. 14); and it was certainly on this impossibility that Paul's personal deep conviction of his own permanent sinful condition had rested before his conversion.¹

The assumption that this fundamental impossibility was a familiar matter of knowledge to the Galatian Christians² can hardly rest only on a universal admission of such impossibility. It must rest on former teaching; and if so, the teaching must be that of the second journey, when the frank and complete admission made by Peter, and the tacit agreement of the apostolic decree in the practical truth of his admission, were set forth to the Galatians. We cannot doubt that, when Paul delivered this decree to the Galatian congregations to keep (*Acts* xvi. 4), he explained to them fully the circumstances of its enactment, and the meaning which they should attach to it.

Sufficient attention has hardly been given by the commentators to this point. Peter's words to the Council could not have carried much weight unless they had been too obviously true for open dispute: there must have been a belief among the more reasonable Jews, even among those who were personally strict, that the Law was too burdensome for practical life.

¹ See § XXII.

² It must be remembered that this Epistle does not move in the line of new arguments that Paul was right and the Judaizers wrong: its power rests in its being a revivification in the Galatians of their former thoughts and knowledge and experience. See § XIII.

What was the reason for this belief? It must have lain in the new circumstances of the Jews amidst the Roman Empire. A Law, which had been possible in Palestine only for the few most elevated spirits, became too obviously impossible amid the wider society of the empire, when every reasoning Jew perceived the magnificent prospects that were open to his people, if they accommodated themselves in some degree to their situation in the Roman world. Those prospects were both material and spiritual. The Jews as a race have never been blind to prospects of material success for the individual or the nation; and the peace, the order, the security of property, the ease and certainty and regularity of intercourse in the Roman world, with the consequent possibilities of trade and finance on a vast scale, opened up a dazzling prospect of wealth and power. Of old, wherever there was anything approaching to free competition, the Semitic traders of Carthage had beaten Rome in the open market; and the Romans obtained command of the Mediterranean trade only by force of arms. The Jews could now repeat the success of their Carthaginian cousins.

There were also Jews whose vision was filled entirely with the spiritual prospects of the race, the influence that it was exerting, and might in a hundredfold greater degree exercise, on thought and religion, especially among the loftier minds of the Empire. But if they were to exercise properly their legitimate influence in the Roman world, they could not carry out completely the Law with its fully developed ceremonial: they must distinguish in it between that which was spiritually real and that which was mere external and unessential ceremonial.

The question with regard to accommodation to their new situation could not be evaded by the Jews. The Sadducees answered it by perfect readiness to concede anything. The Pharisees originally assumed the impossible attitude of a

firm resolve to concede nothing. Paul's position was that nothing should be conceded that was spiritually real or symbolically valuable, but that mere external and unessential ceremonial should be sacrificed; and he held that this was the attitude of the true Pharisee (Acts xxiii. 6).

LIV. THE CONCLUDING BLESSING AND DENUNCIATION
(VI. 16, 17).

As the letter began in a style unique with Paul, and unlike the ordinary epistolary forms, so it ends. Other letters, as a rule, end with a blessing or benediction. Here the blessing is restricted, and in the restriction a negative is implied: "and as many as shall walk by this rule, peace be on them and mercy"; then are added the more gracious words, "and on the Israel of God" (though even here there lurks a contrast to the Israel after the flesh).

But there follows a note of denunciation: "From henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear branded on my body the marks of Jesus." In 1 *Corinthians* xvi. 21-24, where there is mingled with the blessing a curse, "if any man loveth not the Lord, let him be accursed," the blessing and the expression of love to all come after the curse, and swallow it up. But here, after a restricted benediction, comes a denunciation, combined with a strong assertion of his authority as the servant of Christ—too emphatic to be forgotten in the brief blessing of the final verse.

What is the reason of this most marked characteristic? Is it merely due to indignation (which the commentators make out to be one of the strongest features in the letter)? Was the writer so angry that even his concluding blessing is marred by a note of denunciation and self-assertion? From v. 13 onwards, he has, apparently, forgotten his indignation, and has impressed on the Galatians in successive paragraphs, from various points of view, the supreme duty of love, the evil of wrath, enmity, strife. Can we suppose

that immediately after this he gives the lie to his own teaching by letting his indignation again get the upper hand, and make itself felt in what are almost the last words of the letter?

It cannot be so. This paragraph is the crowning proof that it is a mistake to read indignation as the chief feature of this letter, and that the interpretation advocated above in § XIV. is true: though "the authoritative tone, of course, is there," yet the emotion that drives him on throughout the letter "is intense and overpowering love and pity for specially beloved children."

But to deal with those children one must always use the note of authority. Here, as everywhere throughout the letter, one recognises, not the proud and sensitive Celtic aristocracy, but the simple, slow, easy-going, obedient, contented, good-tempered, and rather stupid people of the Phrygian country, the ground-stock of the Anatolian plateau.

LV. THE STIGMATA OF JESUS (VI. 17).

The idea that these were marks similar to those inflicted on the Saviour's body at the Crucifixion belongs to the "Dark Ages" of scholarship. The marks are those cut deep on Paul's body by the lictor's rods at Pisidian Antioch¹ and the stones at Lystra, the scars that mark him as the slave of Jesus. This custom to mark slaves by scars—produced by cuts, prevented from closing as they healed, so as to leave broad wounds—is familiar even yet to the observant traveller,² though since slavery was brought to an end in Turkey cases are now few, and will after a few years have ceased to exist.

The same custom existed in the country from ancient

¹ *St. Paul the Trav.*, pp. 107, 304.

² *Mrs. Ramsay, Everyday Life in Turkey*, p. 7.

times. It was practised on the temple slaves from time immemorial;¹ and the Galatian slave owners practised it on their slaves, as Artemidorus mentions, having adopted it from their predecessors in the land.

The idea suggested by Dr. Deissmann, *Bibelstudien*, p. 266 ff., that the marks of Jesus are prophylactic, guarding the bearer of them against trouble and evil, is out of keeping with the spirit of the letter² and with the tone of this passage. Meyer-Sieffert's latest edition discusses and rejects that interpretation (ninth edition, 1899, p. 364).

LVI. RESULT OF THE EPISTLE.

So ends this unique and marvellous letter, which embraces in its six short chapters such a variety of vehement and intense emotions as could probably not be paralleled in any other work. It lays bare and open in the most extraordinary degree the nature both of the writer and of the readers.

And this letter is pronounced by some of our friends in Europe to be an accretion of scraps round and between bits of genuine original Pauline writing. How blind and dead to all sense of literature and to all knowledge of life and human nature must the man be who so judges—a mere pedant confined within the narrow walls and the close atmosphere of a schoolroom and a study!

To argue with such critics—happily, for the credit of modern scholarship, a hardly perceptible remnant—would be as absurd as it would have been for Paul to employ to the Galatians a series of arguments addressed to the intellect. In such cases one must see and feel. Those who cannot see and feel for themselves cannot be reached by

¹ The evidence of Lucian, *de dea Syria*, 59, about the temple slaves at Syrian Hierapolis, may be taken as proof of a general custom.

² See § VIII., EXPOSITION, July, 1898, p. 23.

argument. You must kindle in them life and power. Paul could do that for the Galatians. Who will do it in the present day?

What was the result of the letter to the Galatians? Was it a success or a failure?

It has been suggested by some North-Galatian Theorists, in explanation of the silence of the historian Luke about their supposed Churches of North Galatia, that the Epistle was a failure, that the Churches of Galatia were lost to Paulinistic Christianity, and that the painful episode was passed over lightly by a historian whose sympathies were so strongly on Paul's side.

That is the only serious and reasonable attempt to explain the silence of Luke as to the North-Galatian Churches. The customary explanation, that the silence is merely one more of the strange gaps that seem to North-Galatian Theorists to be the most remarkable feature in the *Acts*, is really an appeal to unreason. Almost all the supposed gaps are the result of the North-Galatian Theory, directly or indirectly, and have no existence when that theory is discarded; and the rest have been shown to be due to some other misapprehension.¹ The "Gap-Theory" first creates the gaps, and then infers that the historian cannot be judged according to the ordinary rules because his work is full of "gaps." In regard to any other historian of good rank and class, the principle is admitted that an interpretation which rests on the supposition of an unintelligible gap must yield to an explanation which shows order and method and purpose ruling in the work.

But the explanation quoted above is reasonable, and calls for serious consideration. It does not, however, stand the test of careful dispassionate examination.

The confidence that Paul expresses as to the issue, v. 10, is not a hasty and rash trust in his own power. It comes

¹ *St. Paul the Trav., passim.*

out at the close of a careful weighing of the situation, in which Paul looks into the hearts of his old converts, and reaches the full certainty and knowledge that he has them with him. His knowledge of human nature gives him the confidence that he expresses.

Moreover, the history of Christianity in Asia Minor during the immediately following period shows that the victory was won once and for ever. The question never again emerges. A few years later we see what was the state of another Phrygian Church, that of Colossæ, in which Judaic influence was very strong. But it is clear that the Galatian difficulty never affected them. The Epistle to the Colossians is "specially anti-Judaistic,"¹ but there is nothing in it to suggest that they had ever thought of the Mosaic Law as binding on them. That point had been definitely settled; and the Judaistic tendency had taken another and more subtle direction. The Judaic rules and prohibitions did not appear to the Colossians as imperative commands of God which must be obeyed, but as philosophic principles which appealed to their intellect and reason.

But, if the first Pauline Churches that were attacked had accepted and endorsed the principle that the Mosaic Law was binding on them, their example would have been a serious danger to the neighbouring Phrygian Churches of the Lycus valley, and could hardly have failed to secure at least careful attention for the view which they had accepted.

Finally, to regard this letter as unsuccessful is to despair of Paul. The letter, with its commanding and almost autocratic tone—though I feel and confess that these adjectives are too strong, and ignore the emotion, and sympathy, and love which breathe through the words and take much of the sting from them—is one that could be

¹ Hort, *Romans and Ephesians*, p. 192.

justified only by success. If it failed, then it deserved to fail. No man has any right to use such a tone to other men, unless it is the suitable and best tone for their good; and the issue is the only test whether it was suitable and best. Paul's knowledge of human nature in his converts is staked on the success of the letter.

To put the case shortly: Paul was here engaged in his first great contest on the threshold of the country that he was winning for the Church: it was a test case: had he failed in it, he would never have conquered the Roman world. He was successful; and the back of the Judaistic propaganda was broken.

W. M. RAMSAY.

DOCTRINES OF GRACE.

VII.

GOOD WORKS.

ONE may believe that there is a unity between faith and good works, but one cannot shut his eyes to the fact that throughout Holy Scripture there is an apparent conflict. If the Psalms magnify faith in God with all the resources of their passionate poetry, the same Psalms also declare that no one can have access unto the Eternal unless he keeps the law of God with all his heart and with all his strength. The second Isaiah may represent the Messiah as the sin-bearer upon whom are laid the iniquities of us all, but Isaiah of Jerusalem beseeches his people not to put their trust in sacrifice but to wash their hands and make them clean by all godly living. In the Book of Revelation the saints wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb, but at the same time none can enter through the gates into the city except those