

## THE ETHICAL TEACHING OF ST. PAUL.

### (1) THE SOURCES.

WHEN we speak of the "sources" of St. Paul's ethical teaching we may mean one of two things: Where did he get it? or, Whence do we obtain our knowledge of it? It is with the former question we are now to be occupied. For the Pauline ethic, even more than the Pauline doctrine, stands in a certain lineal succession and bears upon it the traces of its descent. The morality of the New Testament did not come into the world a wholly new thing with no discoverable relations to the past. Certainly it is not to be explained merely as a natural development of the past; yet neither can it be understood apart from it. The late Dean Church, in a well-known volume,<sup>1</sup> has traced the gradual unfolding of the Christian character, from its first rudimentary beginnings, to its culmination in Jesus Christ; and the reader of the New Testament who does not, as he reads, take such a backward glance can never hope rightly to appreciate in all its significance the ethical teaching of St. Paul. The central fact for the student of the Apostle's life and teaching is, of course, that he was, in the fullest and deepest sense of a badly used word, a *Christian*. But St. Paul was not only a Christian: he was a Jew, a man of Tarsus, a citizen of Rome. He lived at the confluence of three civilizations—Judæa, Greece and Rome—and each of them has left its own distinct traces upon his thinking. It is a due appreciation of these manifold influences which centred in the mind and heart of St. Paul that we seek in this opening paper. Great caution will be necessary, and our results must sometimes be inconclusive. It is always a difficult task to discriminate among the several forces which go to the making of a great personality, but the task is rendered tenfold more difficult when, as in the case of St. Paul, we have but the scantiest

<sup>1</sup> *The Discipline of the Christian Character.*

knowledge of the most critical years of life. Always mindful of this caution we may proceed to trace the ethical teaching of St. Paul to a fourfold source :

- (1) Graeco-Roman influences.
- (2) The Teaching of the Old Testament.
- (3) The Life and Words of Jesus.
- (4) The working of St. Paul's own powerful mind on the morally fruitful idea of the believer's union with Christ.

Our inquiry therefore will begin at the circumference and move inwards towards the centre.

## I.

It is the first division of the subject which presents the greatest difficulty. That the Graeco-Roman world did exert a very real influence on the mind of St. Paul few will deny<sup>1</sup>; but students are greatly divided as to the exact measure of that influence. Let us begin with a brief summary of the relevant facts.

(1) St. Paul was a Jew, but a Hellenistic not a Palestinian Jew. For many years before the Christian era the Hellenizing of the world which lay around the eastern Mediterranean had been going on apace. So great was the influence of Greek language, Greek literature, and Greek ideas, that it had made itself felt even within the well guarded home of Judaism itself. Gamaliel, the liberal-minded Rabbi at whose feet the youthful Saul of Tarsus was taught, was a student of Greek letters. "Even in Palestine itself," says Canon Hicks, "there were Hellenists who not only read their Scriptures in Greek but who prayed also in Greek."<sup>2</sup> Still less possible was it for the Jews of the Dispersion to escape the spell of the new ideas.

<sup>1</sup> Sabatier does, however: "The influence of Greece upon the development of his mind seems to have amounted to nothing" (*The Apostle Paul*, p. 47).

<sup>2</sup> *Studia Biblica et Ecclesiastica*, vol. iv., "St. Paul and Hellenism," an

Seek as they might to avoid their contaminating touch, they became, however unconsciously to themselves, wholly distinct in temper and outlook from their more orthodox brethren of Palestine. The chief centre of Jewish Hellenism at the beginning of the Christian era was Alexandria, with Philo as its guiding spirit, and it is at least possible that St. Paul may have been familiar with the works of his older contemporary.<sup>1</sup> Much more probable is the Apostle's knowledge of the Apocryphal Book of Wisdom which emanated from the same school.<sup>2</sup> Beyond all question, and most significant of all, is the fact that to him, as to all his brethren of the Dispersion, the Old Testament—his "Bible"—was a Greek book. St. Paul was, without doubt, familiar with the original Hebrew; Gamaliel's tuition would ensure that; nevertheless, it is from the Greek translation of the Old Testament (which again we owe to Alexandria) that most of his many quotations are taken.

(2) Further, St. Paul, besides being a Hellenistic Jew, was a Jew of Tarsus, a city whose eminence in the world of letters during the Apostle's boyhood is well known. "It had been a Greek self-governing city since B.C. 170, and the enthusiasm with which it had taken up Greek education and civilization had made it one of the three great university cities of the Mediterranean world. Strabo

essay which contains in brief compass the best statement of St. Paul's indebtedness to Greece with which the writer is acquainted.

<sup>1</sup> See Jowett's essay, "St. Paul and Philo" (*Epistles to the Thessalonians, Galatians, Romans*, vol. i. p. 382).

<sup>2</sup> See the parallel passages in Sanday and Headlam's *Romans*, pp. 51, 267. "If the books for which St. Paul wrote from his last imprisonment were any but sacred books, we may feel a tolerable confidence that the Book of Wisdom was among their number" (Farrar's *Life and Work of St. Paul*, p. 704). See also a series of articles by E. C. S. Gibson on "The Sources of St. Paul's Teaching," *EXPOSITIO*, 2nd series, vol. iv. Beyschlag, however, cannot discover in St. Paul's writings more than "some faint echoes of the Alexandrine Book of Wisdom" (*N.T. Theology*, vol. ii. p. 23). So also G. B. Stevens, *Theology of the N.T.*, p. 333. These conflicting opinions illustrate the difficulty already referred to of arriving at any definite conclusion.

speaks of the Tarsian university as even surpassing in some respects those of Athens and Alexandria." <sup>1</sup> Not only so, but the city was a very stronghold of Stoicism : a long line of illustrious Stoic teachers adorned its annals ; Stoic philosophers sat in its chief seat of authority ; it was the words of a poet of Stoicism and a native of Cilicia (Aratus) that Paul quoted in his address at Athens ; and it was a Stoic teacher (Athenodorus) whose doctrines, we are told, most influenced Tarsus in the time of St. Paul.<sup>2</sup> Now, though we do not know at what age the Apostle left Tarsus for Jerusalem, and though it is in any case extremely improbable that Jewish parents so strict as we know his to have been would allow their son to attend the classes of a heathen University, it is not possible to suppose that a child so alert and open-minded received no impression from influences everywhere at work in the world around him. Moreover, even though early Tarsian impressions were never so slight and were quickly overlaid in Jerusalem and the school of Gamaliel, we must not forget the years spent at Tarsus after the Apostle's conversion and before his first great missionary journey. With the restrictions of childhood rent asunder, and with the growing consciousness of his call to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, is it likely that he would suffer himself to remain in ignorance of the movements of the great world of whose conquest for Christ he was already dreaming ? Could any man have preached as St. Paul did to the philosophers at Athens, or have won his converts for the most part among those who had already been more or less influenced by Greek civilization and culture,<sup>3</sup> who had not first schooled himself in their modes of thought and ideals of life ?

<sup>1</sup> Hastings, *Dict. of the Bible*, art. "Tarsus," by Prof. W. M. Ramsay.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* See also the same writer's *St. Paul the Traveller and Roman Citizen*, p. 354.

<sup>3</sup> "Where the Greek education was unknown, the new religion seems

(3) St. Paul the Jew of Tarsus was likewise a Roman citizen; and this fact also has left its unmistakable stamp upon his life. *Civis Romanus sum*—we see it in the dignity and ease with which the Apostle bore himself among all classes of men, in the respectful and often sympathetic attitude towards him of Roman officials, in conceptions fashioned, or at least coloured, by Roman ideas, and above all, perhaps, in a certain imperial outlook upon life and the work given him by God to accomplish. "We cannot fail to be struck," says Professor Ramsay, "with the strong hold that Roman ideas had on the mind of St. Paul. In theory he recognizes the universality of the Church (Col. iii. 11); but in practice he goes where the Roman empire goes. We therefore feel compelled to suppose that St. Paul had conceived the great idea of Christianity as the religion of the Roman world; and that he thought of the various districts and countries in which he had preached as parts of the grand unity. He had the mind of an organizer; and to him the Christians of his earliest travels were not men of Iconium and of Antioch—they were a part of the Roman world and were addressed by him as such."<sup>1</sup>

Such in brief are the facts; and it will be admitted they have an imposing look. We must take care, however, not to exaggerate their significance. In face of St. Paul's own emphatic and reiterated statements<sup>2</sup> it is vain to claim for

to have made no progress at all. The regions where it spread most rapidly were those where the people were becoming aware of the beauty of Greek letters and the grandeur of Roman\* government, where they were awakening from the stagnation and inertness of an Oriental people, and their minds were stirred and receptive of all new ideas, whether Greek philosophy or Jewish or Christian religion" (Ramsay's *Church in the Roman Empire*, p. 147).

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* See also *Contemporary Review*, August 1901, "St. Paul and the Roman Law," by W. E. Ball.

<sup>2</sup> It may be well to bring them together: "I am a Jew of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city (Acts xxi. 39) . . . Brought up in this city [Jerusalem], at the feet of Gamaliel, instructed according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God" (xxii. 3);

Tarsus and the Stoics an equality with Jerusalem and Gamaliel as formative influences in his life. There is, indeed, no evidence that St. Paul was deeply read in Greek literature and philosophy. His style, scholars are agreed, bears no trace of classic discipline, and even so enthusiastic a "Hellenist" as Canon Hicks, though he thinks that "St. Paul's ethical teaching has quite a Hellenic ring," admits that there is no reason to suppose that he ever read a page of any Stoic treatise.<sup>1</sup> Even the parallels with Alexandrian thought which have been pointed out do not, perhaps, prove more than that contemporary writings on religion, all of which were under the influence of Judaism, exhibit some resemblances.<sup>2</sup> On the whole, therefore, we conclude that St. Paul, though never a conscious pupil of Hellenic teachers, was yet largely influenced by them. Nothing in the Graeco-Roman world of that day can account for the deepest things in his life and in his gospel, and yet it was mainly to it that he owed that cosmopolitan cast of mind which made possible his large and rich interpretation of the truth which came to him "by revelation of Jesus Christ." Not from Hellenism as its seed, but in it as its soil, there sprung up, in all its rich and manifold beauty, the moral and spiritual teaching of the great Apostle of the Gentiles.

"circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; as touching zeal, persecuting the church; as touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Phil. iii. 5, 6; cp. Acts xxiii. 6, Rom. xi. 1); "I advanced in the Jews' religion beyond many of mine own age among my countrymen, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers" (Gal. i. 14; cf. Acts xxvi. 4, 5).

<sup>1</sup> See the essay quoted above. The long-standing controversy concerning the supposed indebtedness of the great Stoic teacher Seneca to St. Paul may now be regarded as finally disposed of: see Aubertin's *Senèque et Saint Paul*, and Lightfoot's essay, "St. Paul and Seneca," appended to his commentary on Philippians.

<sup>2</sup> Stevens, *Theology of the N.T.*, p. 333.

## II.

When from the influence of Greece and Rome we turn to the teaching of the Old Testament, we stand at once on firmer ground. Scholars like Sabatier and Ramsay, whose judgment concerning the significance of the Tarsian birth and Roman citizenship of St. Paul are utterly diverse, are one in affirming the greatness of the Apostle's indebtedness to Judaism.<sup>1</sup> How great that debt was few probably of his readers to-day realize. Misled in part by the vehemence of his own contrast between the "Gospel" and the "Law," we too often interpret his relation to the Old Testament in terms rather of hostility than indebtedness. Nevertheless, the indebtedness is fundamental. All the "advantage" which a Jew possessed because to him were intrusted "the oracles of God"<sup>2</sup> St. Paul shared to the full, and from the first. Early religious training owes its influence almost as much to the fact that it is early as that it is religious; and St. Paul's was both. "I am a Jew," he said to the multitude in Jerusalem, "born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, instructed according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers." "My manner of life from my youth up," he said on another occasion, "which was from the beginning among mine own nation, and at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; having knowledge of me from the first, if they be willing to testify, how that after the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee."<sup>3</sup> The chief text-book in such a school would be,

<sup>1</sup> "It is not the citizen of Tarsus, but the Pharisee of Jerusalem that accounts for the apostle of the Gentiles" (Sabatier's *St. Paul*, p. 48). "It is obvious that the Jewish side of his nature and education proved infinitely the most important, as his character developed" (Ramsay's *St. Paul the Traveller*, p. 32). "The Jew in him," says Prof. Findlay, "was the foundation of everything that Paul became" (Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, art. "Paul the Apostle").

<sup>2</sup> Rom. xiii. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Acts xxii. 3; xxvi. 4, 5. See also the other passages quoted above.

of course, the Old Testament, which from his fifth year would rarely be out of the pupil's hands.<sup>1</sup> "The heroes of his young imagination were not Curtius and Horatius, Hercules and Achilles, but Abraham and Joseph, Moses and David, and Ezra. As he looked back upon the past, it was not over the confused annals of Cilicia that he cast his eyes, but he gazed up the clear stream of Jewish history to its sources in Ur of the Chaldees; and, when he thought of the future, the vision which rose on him was the kingdom of the Messiah enthroned in Jerusalem, and ruling the nations with a rod of iron."<sup>2</sup> The results of this early training are visible on every page of St. Paul's Epistles. It has been said that the Apostle "thought in quotations" from the Old Testament, and a reference to the table of quotations at the end of Westcott and Hort's edition of the Greek Testament shows how little exaggerated the statement is. There are in all about 180 references; they are spread over all the Pauline writings, except the short letter to Philemon, and they are drawn from almost every part of the Old Testament.<sup>3</sup>

The importance of the Old Testament, therefore, as a source of St. Paul's ethical teaching is manifest. To be acquainted with it was to be brought into contact with a religion which, alone among Semitic systems of faith, stood for an ethical monotheism. The God of Israel was exalted above all the gods of the heathen because He was "exalted in righteousness." The uniqueness of Hebrew prophecy is a moral uniqueness, the uniqueness of Hebrew religion the stern and inexorable conscience at work in it throughout.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *EXPOSITORY*, 3rd series, vol. iv. p. 326. "St. Paul from a Jewish Point of View," by Dr. S. M. Schiller-Szinessy.

<sup>2</sup> *Stalker's Life of St. Paul*, p. 23.

<sup>3</sup> A convenient summary of the facts may be read in the second of the series of papers on "The Sources of St. Paul's Teaching" referred to above.

<sup>4</sup> See a striking article, "The Ethiopian and the Old Testament," by Dr. G. A. Smith, *Expository Times*, vol. i. p. 233.

Let the significance of one fact be well considered : among the many "companions of the devout life" the book of Psalms still remains supreme ; and if we may judge from the frequency of his quotations from it this was the book which lay nearest to the heart of St. Paul.<sup>1</sup> Nor are we shut up to merely conjectural results in estimating the moral influence of Old Testament religion. Pharisees and Sadducees fill so large a place on the small canvas of the New Testament, that we are sometimes in danger of regarding them as the sole representatives of religion in the time of our Lord. Yet others there were, like Zacchaeus and Elizabeth and Mary and Joseph and Simeon and Anna, true children of the Hebrew faith, the story of whose sweet and gracious lives, like a clinging fragrance, hallows for ever the early pages of the Gospel of St. Luke.

It may, indeed, be urged that St. Paul was a Pharisee, and that if there is one thing which stands out more clearly than another in the four Gospels it is the moral worthlessness of the Pharisees' religion. Yet the names of Nicodemus and Gamaliel are sufficient to show that all Pharisees were not such as those against whom Christ hurled His terrible philippic. Moreover, the Jews of the Dispersion were naturally predisposed by their circumstances to emphasize the moral rather than the ceremonial elements of their religion. Absence from Jerusalem, on the one hand, of necessity weakened their attachment to Old Testament ritual, while on the other the gross immorality of the heathen world threw into yet more striking relief the pure and lofty precepts of Old Testament morality.<sup>2</sup> And, even if these things had not been so, we should still with good reason refuse to believe that a seeker after truth and righteousness, so sincere and strenuous as Saul of Tarsus,

<sup>1</sup> No less than thirty-three different Psalms are quoted by St. Paul.

<sup>2</sup> See Bartlet, *Apostolic Age*, p. xxi. ; Cheetham's *Church History (Early Period)*, p. 10.

was ever guilty of such moral baseness as Jesus brought home to the scribes and Pharisees of Jerusalem. "Every Scripture inspired of God"—the young student in the school of Gamaliel would have said it with a conviction hardly less deep than that of "Paul the aged"—"is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness."

### III.

From the Old Testament we turn to the Gospels, to the life and words of the historical Jesus. And in doing so our first impression will probably be one of surprise that the writings of St. Paul present so few parallels with the story of the four Evangelists, and that the Apostle so rarely deems it necessary to quote the words of Him whom both he and his readers worshipped as Lord. This apparent disregard—in so far as it is real as well as apparent—may be accounted for in two ways. In the first place, the Epistles were addressed to persons who had already been instructed, by St. Paul or others, in the facts of the Christian Gospel, and whose knowledge of them therefore the writer could safely assume. And, secondly, as will be shown more fully in the following section of this paper, "The Apostles do not *quote* Christ; they live in Him, and reproduce His mind in living ways."<sup>1</sup> In point of fact, however, the Pauline Epistles show no such indifference to the history and teaching contained in the Gospels as has sometimes been supposed. How indeed could their author have been indifferent? Was it not to him a matter of the first importance to know everything that could be known concerning the life and words of Him whose willing slave he had now become? Can we not imagine with what

<sup>1</sup> Denney's *Studies in Theology*, p. 185. The statement as it stands requires modification; for, as we shall see, St. Paul sometimes does quote Christ's words; nevertheless, it points to what is perhaps the most vital fact for the right understanding of the Epistles in their relation to the Gospels.

eagerness of desire he would hoard up every scrap of knowledge that came within his reach? To suppose that after his conversion, with all the opportunities which presented themselves to him, St. Paul should yet have been content to remain in ignorance of what Jesus had said and done is simply not thinkable. Moreover, this *prima facie* view of the matter is abundantly confirmed by a careful examination of the Epistles themselves. It is impossible and needless to repeat here the evidence which has been adequately set forth elsewhere<sup>1</sup>; it must suffice for the present briefly to illustrate St. Paul's indebtedness as an ethical teacher to the moral precepts and example of our Lord.

(1) In a few instances the Apostle makes a direct reference to the words of Christ. Thus, in the address to the Ephesian elders we read, "Ye ought to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He Himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts xx. 35). Again, in his teaching on marriage and divorce (1 Cor. vii.), he makes a clear distinction between a commandment (*ἐπιταγή*) of Christ, and a judgment (*γνώμη*) of his own, given on a matter concerning which Christ has left no specific injunction: "Unto the married I give charge, yea, not I, but the Lord, that the wife depart not from her husband (but and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband); and that the husband leave not his wife"—where the allusion to our Lord's teaching concerning divorce is unmistakable. Other illustrations may be found in 1 Corinthians ix. 14 and 1 Timothy vi. 3.<sup>2</sup>

(2) In other passages, again, though there is no exact quotation, the parallelism is so striking as to suggest at once a reference to the words of Christ. Especially is this

<sup>1</sup> See especially Knowling's *Witness of the Epistles*, Sabatier's *Apostle Paul*, pp. 76-85, and a series of articles on "The Historical Christ of St. Paul," by Dr. George Matheson, *EXPOSITOR*, 2nd series, vols. i., ii.

<sup>2</sup> Sabatier's note on the former of these texts is worthy of quotation:

so in the great ethical chapters Romans xii.–xiv., as the following examples will show :—

Rom. xii. 14: "Bless them that persecute you; bless, and curse not."

Rom. xiii. 7: "Render to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due," etc.

Rom. xiii. 9: "And if there be any other commandment, it is summed up in this word, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

Matt. v. 44: "Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you."

Matt. xxii. 21: "Render therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's."

Matt. xxii. 39, 40: "And a second like unto it is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hangeth the whole law, and the prophets."<sup>1</sup>

(3) But the most noteworthy passages for our present purpose are those which refer to Christ as our example. St. Paul bids the Corinthians be "imitators" of him as he is of Christ (1 Cor. xi. 1); he urges the Philippians to let the mind which was in Christ be also in them (Phil. ii. 5); he prays for the Colossians that they may "walk worthily of the Lord" (Col. i. 11); and he commends the Thessalonians because they had become imitators both of him and of Christ (1 Thess. i. 5). But now does not all this imply—indeed can it be understood without—"an objective and historical model which every believer keeps before his eyes"?<sup>2</sup> Was it not to this model that the Apostle's own eyes were continually turned? When he speaks of "Him who knew no sin" (2 Cor. v. 21), when he exhorts his readers "by the meekness and gentleness of Christ" (2 Cor.

"The apostle wishes to establish the right of evangelists to live by the Gospel. He first gives a rational argument, drawn from the nature of things; then an exegetical argument, taken from a passage in the law: 'Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth the corn'; and finally he completes his proof by quoting a positive command of the Lord: ὁ Κύριος διέταξεν (comp. Matt. x. 10; Luke x. 7). Evidently the word of Jesus comes in at the last as the supreme and decisive authority" (p. 83).

<sup>1</sup> Sanday and Headlam's *Romans*, p. 381.

<sup>2</sup> Sabatier.

x. 1), when he reminds them that Christ also "pleased not Himself" (Rom. xv. 3), can we doubt that he is going back, just as we do to-day, to "that sweet story of old" which he had learned from the lips of a hundred witnesses? It is not, of course, suggested that St. Paul had access to any Christian document in the form in which it has come down to us; what is claimed is that the resemblances referred to are sufficient to prove the identity, both in substance and spirit, of the Pauline ethic with the teaching of Jesus as it is contained in the Gospels.<sup>1</sup>

#### IV.

Hellenism, Hebraism, the life and example of Jesus—all these, like the intertwined strands of a rope, are to be found in the ethical teaching of St. Paul. But, important as these are, much still remains which cannot be traced to this threefold source. When, in one of his most brilliant and trenchant essays, Professor Huxley declares that "Christianity inherited a good deal from Paganism and Judaism; and that, if the Stoics and the Jews revoked their bequest, the moral property of Christianity would realize very little,"<sup>2</sup> he not only ignores the very real and definite contribution which (as will be shown in the following chapter) Christianity made to the moral ideas of the race, but he wholly omits to take into account the truth which is the living root of all New Testament morality—that, viz., of the believer's union with Christ. He, and others like him, write as if the whole question of the moral superiority of Christianity were to be determined by a little table of parallel columns. In the first column you enter the chief moral precepts of Judaism, in the second those of the Stoics, and in the third those of the New Testament; you strike out what is common to the three, and what then remains

<sup>1</sup> See Sanday and Headlam, p. 382.

<sup>2</sup> "Science and Morals," reprinted in *Essays Ethical and Political*, p. 62.

in the third column is the measure of morality's debt to the New Testament. It is very simple and very misleading. Though, as Bishop Lightfoot has truly said, the Gospel is capable of doctrinal exposition, though it is eminently fertile in moral results, yet its substance is neither a dogmatic system nor an ethical code, but a Person and a Life.<sup>1</sup> And it is the omission of this vital fact from all such comparisons as those referred to above which renders them absolutely worthless and vain. Christianity stands apart from, and above, all systems of religion and philosophy, not by reason of the number and excellence of its moral precepts, great as these are, but by the new life of fellowship with Christ which it proclaims. Such, certainly, was the Gospel as it was apprehended by St. Paul. At his conversion Christ had entered into him, and taken up His abode with him and possessed him so completely, that it was but the language of reality and experience which he used when he declared, "It is no longer I that live, it is Christ that lives in me." He had the mind of Christ; and Christian morality to him was but the application of that mind to the necessities of his own life and time.

Once this great principle is firmly grasped many questions concerning St. Paul's ethical teaching are readily answered. We understand now, as has already been pointed out, why neither he nor the other Apostles thought it necessary more often to make their appeal to the words and authority of Christ: they speak as men in whom Christ dwelt, and through whom Christ still spoke. They did not, as Sabatier well says,<sup>2</sup> think of the teaching of Jesus as a collection of sayings, an external law or written letter, which they had nothing more to do than to quote at every turn. Christ was to them, above all things, a *life-giving spirit*, an

<sup>1</sup> Preface to first edition of commentary on Philippians.

<sup>2</sup> *Apostle Paul*, p. 81.

immanent and fertile principle, producing new fruit at each new season. In this fact also lies the explanation of the comparative fragmentariness which, not without a certain plausibility, may be urged against St. Paul's ethical teaching. If we look upon it as a complete ethical code intended to furnish a ready made precept for every imaginable contingency of human life, it is obviously defective; but if, instead, we regard it as revealing to us a new principle of life, the effectual working of which is illustrated in the life and words of the Apostle, the seriousness of its claims will immediately become manifest. And, lastly, it is by the aid of this same light-giving truth that we may discover in what sense, and within what limits, we are called to be "imitators" of Jesus Christ. The imitation of Christ has been made, and with good reason, one of the great watchwords of the Christian ethic; but the phrase needs interpreting; of late years, especially in a certain class of popular literature, it has been sadly misinterpreted. The New Testament calls no man to a literal copying of the earthly life of Jesus. Imitation in that sense is as impossible as it is undesirable. Does any one suppose that if the Son of Man were among men to-day, in England, in America, in Japan, His life now amid modern social conditions would be just exactly what it was in Palestine 1,900 years ago? "Not to copy after Him, but to let His life take form in us, to receive His spirit, and to make it effective, is the moral task of the Christian."<sup>1</sup> So at least St. Paul understood his calling and ours. In Christ we find our example; in Christ, too, we find our new life. He is Himself the Giver of the life which He reveals and demands. *That Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith*—it is in the answer to that prayer there lies the root of all Christian morality, the promise and potency of every Christian grace.

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<sup>1</sup> Schultz, quoted in Newman Smyth's *Christian Ethics*, p. 78.