

STUDIES IN THE PAULINE THEOLOGY.

XI. THE BODY OF CHRIST.

(1) THE love of God the Father through the grace of Christ the Saviour and the Lord in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is received and is responded to by man in faith, hope, and love. Over against Pharisaic Judaism Paul maintained the thesis that man is justified, not by the works of the law, but by *faith*; over against Judaism in the Church he asserted that man is justified by *faith alone*. Works as a condition of salvation are neither alternative nor complementary to faith. What he understands by the *righteousness of God* which faith accepts we have already seen, now we must consider the nature of faith itself. It does mean trust in God's grace as revealed in Christ, an acceptance of the forgiveness of sin that has come to man in His Cross. It might thus appear to be only "a passive acquiescence in a vicarious righteousness." The weakness of evangelicalism has at certain periods of its history been that this was the current conception of faith. *Antinomianism*, moral laxity or even licence, has been the consequence, wherever faith has been emptied of moral content, and has been impoverished to mean assent to a plan of salvation, acceptance of the safety and the comfort the assurance of God's forgiveness gives without any corresponding and resulting moral change. Even at the Reformation and in Protestant dogmatics generally there has been the danger of such a view. What saves Paul's conception from such a peril is that he conceives faith as a personal relation to a personal Saviour. It is not a doctrine on the one hand, or assent thereto on the other hand which saves; it is man's dependence on, communion with, and submission to Christ as Saviour. The whole personality of man is exercised in faith; mind, heart, and will alike

claim, enjoy, and use what God in Christ offers. Man's inmost life is therein expressed. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness" (Rom. x. 10). When the inward man is strengthened with power through the Spirit of the Son of God, Christ dwells in the heart by faith, and man is rooted and grounded in love (Eph. iii. 16, 17). Faith *energises* in love (Gal. v. 6). There is a "work of faith" as well as a "labour of love," and an "endurance of hope" (1 Thess. i. 3); and the "work of faith" is companion to the "good pleasure of goodness" (2 Thess. i. 11). What the Gospel demands is "obedience of faith" (Rom. xvi. 26). The guilt of the Jews was that they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God which faith receives (x. 3). Disbelief is due to pleasure in unrighteousness (2 Thess. iii. 12). Faith begins in the centre of the personality, the heart (Rom. x. 10); it reaches out to the circumference of the whole life, for in the Christian man "what is not of faith is sin" (xiv. 23). It is the whole personality of Christ which this faith receives, the Risen Lord as well as the Crucified Saviour, for it is both crucifixion and resurrection with them; it is such a union that life itself is nothing else than Christ (Phil. i. 21).

(2) In apparent contradiction to this representation of faith as the union of the whole man to the whole Christ, so that the human is taken up into, without being lost in, the divine, is the prominence given to hope in Paul's letters. If the Christian lives in Christ, because he has been crucified and has risen with Christ, surely he has all he can desire or expect. It is not only at the close of his Christian experience that Paul so identifies his life with Christ's. The declaration of Philipians i. 21, "To me to live is Christ," has its counterpart in Galatians ii. 20: "I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me." Such a faith must surely be sufficient; yet Paul affirms: "For by hope were we saved" (Rom.

viii. 24). This statement is not sufficiently explained by the fact that Paul cherished the common apostolic expectation of the Second Coming of Christ. He never abandoned that expectation, although he became less certain of his survival in the flesh to witness that great day ; for him that expectation meant the full deliverance of the believer from sin's penalty in death through the resurrection, and also the victory of Christ Himself over all His foes. For many believers to-day the spiritual presence of Christ, as Paul so intensely experienced it, and the gradual progress of the kingdom of God on earth, which is suggested by some of the parables of Jesus, but of which neither Paul nor any of the other apostles had any conception, have entirely supplanted this apostolic expectation. Not so with Paul. There is no evidence whatever that he ever thought of the spiritual Presence as a fulfilment of the promise of the Second Advent in power and glory. Much as that spiritual Presence was to him, it did not give him all he hoped for in Christ ; for does he not say, " Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord," and " we are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be at home with the Lord " (2 Cor. v. 6, 8) ? It is for this reason that even though for him to live was Christ, to die was gain. A clearer vision, a closer communion, a fuller service was what he looked for. He felt very keenly the pains, sorrows, losses, and mysteries of this earthly life. For him the creation was " subjected to vanity," and waited to be " delivered from the bondage of corruption." This earth was not for him the treasure-house or the pleasure-ground it is for so many ; for what he witnessed was " the whole creation groaning and travailing in pain together " (Rom. viii. 18-22), and even the believer groaned within himself, waiting for his adoption, the redemption of his body (v. 23). It is difficult for us to realise how great a problem human mortality was to Paul, and how bright a hope the

assurance of resurrection. It is with reference to this deliverance from death that believers are described as the children who have not yet entered into the full possession of their inheritance. They are now heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, now suffering with Him in order afterward to be glorified (*vv.* 16, 17). Thus Paul's faith was necessarily completed by his hope ; for the perfect Christian good still lay in the future.

(3) With faith and hope Paul allies love, and gives to it the first place. Why he declares love the greatest is a question not hard to answer. Both faith and hope are receptive graces, love is the communicative grace. Because "it is more blessed to give than to receive" love is the greatest. God is love, and love makes man likest God. Faith energises in love ; love is its expression and exercise (*Gal.* v. 6). What need to repeat what Paul has said of the manifold virtues and services love inspires in I Corinthians xiii. ? But even a loftier height is reached in Ephesians iv. 31-v. 2: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and railing, be put away from you, with all malice ; and be ye kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you. Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children ; and walk in love, even as Christ also loved you, and gave himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an odour of a sweet smell." This is surely an echo of Christ's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (*Matt.* v. 48). Just as Jesus presented the precept, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (*Mark* xii. 31), as the summary of human duty, so Paul argues that "love is the fulfilment of the law" because "love worketh no ill to his neighbour" (*Rom.* xiii. 10). This conception of Christian duty is the best ancient Jewish morality vitalised by love, and does not here demand

any detailed discussion. Some of the social problems of the age for the solution of which Paul found it necessary for the guidance of his converts to apply this principle will engage our attention in the next Study.

It is noteworthy that Paul who writes so much about love as the expression of faith only twice expressly mentions love to God. In the one passage he seems to be freely quoting Isaiah lxiv. 4, and renders the characteristic Hebrew phrase "him that waiteth for him" by the more distinctively Christian "them that love him" (1 Cor. ii. 9). In the other he has contrasted the knowledge that puffeth up, and the love that edifieth, and over against the man who is confident of his knowledge, and so displays his ignorance, he sets the man who loveth God, and therefore is known of God (1 Cor. viii. 1-3). The implicit argument of this passage may be thus made explicit. He who has the highest kind of love, love for God, will also have the love for another which builds him up in the Christian faith and life. He who is the object of the highest kind of knowledge—God's, will himself be the subject of the best kind of knowing. Thus love and knowledge at first contrasted are shown to be when at their best inseparable. The writer cannot recall a passage in which love to Christ is expressly mentioned, for the phrase "the love of Christ" in 2 Corinthians v. 14 does undoubtedly mean Christ's love for the Christian; and yet what is described as the constraint of Christ's love is surely equivalent to love for Christ, not a romantic attachment, or a sentimental devotion, but a personal submission. No longer to live unto self, but only unto Christ is nothing else than love. It is the love of God faith receives as grace now, hope awaits as glory hereafter. This love reproduces itself first as grateful love to God in Christ, and then as generous love to all men, especially to those that are of the household of the faith (Gal. vi. 10).

(4) It is from the standpoint of Christian life as faith, hope,

and love, that we must look at Paul's conception of the Christian Church. As faith is living union with Christ Himself, the community of believers in any place, however few in number or feeble in resource, is assured of His presence and power. Accordingly, every local congregation is His Church, equipped with the gifts, and fitted for the duties of His people. Paul in his letters habitually applies the term church to every gathering of Christians for the worship or work of Christ. But as it is the same Saviour and Lord to whom all believers are united by faith, all these Churches have their unity in Him, and so Paul can apply the same term to the whole body of believers, scattered in these local congregations over the Roman Empire. As it is Christ's presence and power that constitutes His Church, so wherever and everywhere He is and works His Church is. It is not strictly correct then to say that Paul uses the term Church in two senses, the local and the catholic or universal, for the same conception of faith as making one with Christ underlies both. The local congregation is not a part of the universal community, for that would be to deny its sufficiency as the Church of Christ; nor is the universal community merely the sum of the local congregations, for that would be to deny the unity of the Church of Christ. Just as God's omnipresence means that God is not only everywhere, but whole in every point of space; so for Christian faith, wherever believers are the Church is, and yet each gathering of believers is the Church. This is not a merely verbal refinement; but the writer believes that only thus can we pierce to the core of the conception of Paul regarding the Church. He did not distinguish the local congregation from the universal community as *a church* and *the church*, as part and whole or as unit and sum; but it is the very same Church that is in every spot, and embraces all believers, because it is the one Christ, who is in all and over all. It is this conception we must assume in Paul's descrip-

tion of the Church as a body in 1 Corinthians xii. It is with the exercise of the spiritual gifts in the Church in Corinth with which he is concerned to begin with ; but towards the close of his argument he mentions as God's gifts to the Church " apostles, prophets, teachers," who were the itinerant ministry of the universal community, and did not confine their labours to a local congregation. The same figure of the body is applicable to both. We can retain Paul's conception of the Church then only as we combine the independence of the local congregation, because sufficient in Christ for the privileges and functions of the Church, with the unity of the universal community as in the one Lord.

(5) If we apply ourselves to the Christian grace of hope in the same way as to the grace of faith in order to discover what light it throws on the conception Paul had of the Church, we shall reach two conclusions. (i.) Does Paul's eager anticipation of the future as alone giving the Christian full possession of his whole inheritance in Christ not explain his indifference to, and neglect of compact organisation ? This is not the place to discuss the varied forms of organisation which were adopted according to local circumstances, as our present purpose is the study of the Pauline theology. This fact must, however, be noted, that, constructive as was Paul's mind in the realm of doctrine, he formed no theory of the government of the Church ; no polity can claim his apostolic authority. He approved and, when necessary, provided some form of organisation, but his interest was elsewhere in the consummation of God's purpose so long expected and so much desired. Although it is necessary for him to write much about the Church, it is not a just criticism of him or any of the apostles to affirm that they supplanted the kingdom by the Church ; for what was their expectation of Christ's Second Advent but the hope of the coming of the kingdom of God ? As an earthly institution the Church was for them

altogether secondary to this heavenly consummation. Order, discipline, government in the Church on earth there must be, and so far as is necessary Paul deals with these matters in his letters. What was to him most valuable in the life of the Church was the inspiration of its members, the manifold gifts in which the one Spirit manifested His presence and power in the Church. This enthusiasm and energy of the Church was sustained not only by the faith fixed on the Risen Lord, but also by the hope cherished of His coming in power and glory.

(ii.) In another direction also may we look for the influence of Christian hope on Paul's conception of the Church. When we distinguish the reality of the Church on earth and its ideal in heaven, the Church as fact in history and as object of faith, and then ascribe the distinction to Paul, we probably just miss an understanding of his thought. In Ephesians there is present to his inner vision *the Church as the body of Christ*, the fulfilment of him that filleth all in all (i. 23), in which not only were the Gentiles who had been far off made nigh, but in which also the middle wall of partition had been broken down between Jew and Gentile, so that in Christ the twain had been made one new man (ii. 12-15), *the Church as a holy temple in the Lord* in whom all believers are builded together for a habitation of God (vv. 21, 22), *the Church as the Bride of Christ* without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and without blemish (v. 27). If we think of what the Churches according to his testimony actually were, we cannot but be surprised at these ideals. That for Paul they were no vain imagination, no mocking illusion, is due to this, that the Christian hope was clear and strong within him. In regard to the Church he looked not at the things seen, but at the things unseen, for to him ever the things seen were temporal, and only the things unseen eternal. While Paul was not only a founder of churches, but knew also how to build them up, he was no ecclesiastic in the sense of being absorbed

in creed or code, polity or ritual. His upward and forward look seized the ideal and future as real and present ; and so even in the imperfect copy on earth he sees the perfect pattern in heaven. The Church is, and not merely will be, Christ's body, His Bride, God's temple, the Spirit's habitation.

(6) The figure of the body and its members which Paul repeatedly applies to the Church has meaning only as the place he assigns to love in Christian life is remembered and recognised. Any attempt to make this ideal a reality by means of a compact organisation is simply a caricature of his picture. The close connexion between 1 Corinthians xii. and xiii. is for most readers destroyed by the chapter division. Love alone can give to the Church that conscious common life which alone explains the constant and intense sympathy of the members of the Church described in the words, " Whether one member suffereth all the members suffer with it, or one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it " (xii. 26). It may be said that the unity of the Church is in the same spirit, the same Lord, and the same God amid the diversities of gifts, ministrations, and workings (4-6) ; but this unity is consciously and voluntarily realised in the individual members only by love. The divine unity can be reproduced only in the human union of affection, sympathy, service. If it is true that where Christ is the Church is, it is as true that where there is no love, there is no Church. Sacrament and hierarchy do not constitute the Church one body, but love exercised in the use of the gifts faith receives for the common good does. Spencer denies that human society is an organism in the sense of having a corporate consciousness ; for Paul the Church was perfectly a living body, because he saw its common consciousness in the love which Christians had for one another, from the motive and after the manner of Christ's love. The unity of the Church is constituted by its common faith in Christ, and the common love of the

members for one another, and through hope this unity is prophetic of the unity of all mankind in Christ ; the divine reconciliation has its full effect in a society in which human antagonisms are reconciled. This Pauline conception of the Church is an ideal which judges the reality of a divided Christendom.

(7) The ministry of this Church is not an office conferring rights, but a gift imposing duties. What were the arrangements for the management of the Pauline Churches by elders, or by bishops and deacons, is of quite subordinate significance for the Christian Church, as local custom and temporary necessity were determining elements. What has permanent value is Paul's view of the ministry. In Romans xii. and 1 Corinthians xii. that view is fully stated. The ministry does not belong to any restricted order in the Church, but all the members are called to it according to the gift that has been bestowed on them. Spiritual endowment, and that alone, determines function in the Christian Church, and the only limitation on the use of any gift is the good of the whole community. It is to be noted that these gifts embrace not only the abnormal features of apostolic life, the speaking with tongues, working of miracles, prophecy, or impassioned utterance ; but also the more usual activities of relieving the needs of the poor, teaching, exhorting, giving and ruling. For Paul there was no such distinction as we incline to make between the supernatural charisms and the natural powers ; all for him were alike supernatural as the working of the same Spirit of God. The recognition of the supernatural character of all the gifts did not, however, lead Paul to commend or approve their unrestrained exercise. It is surely a distinct evidence of the moral insight of Paul that he should have insisted as he did that the exercise of each of those gifts was to be altogether controlled by the interests of the whole community, and that even, when so controlled, there was the

more excellent way of love (1 Cor. xii.). In this conception of the Church as a body, each member of which is by the one Spirit endowed for a different function, Paul does anticipate the modern view of society as progressively organic. There is not only more need, but also greater promise of integration, to use the current terms, where there is more differentiation of organs and their corresponding functions. The complexity of an ecclesiastical organisation need not be a danger to the spiritual unity so long as the differentiation is not artificial, but the working of the Spirit of God who worketh all things in all, and the integration is not by human devices, but by the love which uses every gift for the common good. That the abnormal features of the Apostolic Age should be reproduced is by no means to be desired as necessary to the realization of Paul's ideal of ministry. In a society so complex as ours the Church needs, and should exercise, a very varied ministry; if there were the enthusiasm and energy of the Apostolic Church would not faith secure and love exercise as varied gifts?

(8) When we turn from Paul's views on the Church and its ministry to his references to the sacraments, as these have been interpreted by many scholars, we seem to be going down to a lower standpoint. On the one hand he does depreciate baptism in comparison with the preaching of the Gospel. He thanks God that he has himself baptized so few of the Corinthian converts, and declares, "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel" (1 Cor. i. 17). But on the other hand he is reported by Luke as requiring the rebaptism of the twelve disciples of John the Baptist, and as accompanying the ordinance by the laying on of his hands so as to secure for the baptized the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts xix. 1-7). Should it be objected that Luke may be affected in his record by the current beliefs, one must reckon with Paul's statement in Romans vi. 1-4, in which he connects

directly with his baptism the believer's inward change of dying unto sin and rising again unto newness of life to God with Christ. In our interpretation of the passage we must avoid two extremes. On the one hand we cannot dismiss the reference to baptism as casual and so insignificant, and on the other we must not assume that the form of the rite must be immersion, so as to sustain the analogy between baptism and burial. It is with the fact and not the form of baptism that Paul in this passage is concerned. If it were but a passing illustration Paul had intended, would he have introduced it into so serious an argument, and so solemn an appeal? Probably his own baptism had been to him a pregnant experience (Acts ix. 17-19) not only of the recovery of sight and of the possession of the Holy Spirit, but of absolute submission to the truth and grace of Christ. If it had not meant much to the converts he is addressing, would he not have lessened the force of his argument by such a reference? From this fact, however, we are not justified at once in inferring that Paul held views about the efficacy of the ordinance which should now appear to us superstitious. There is no suggestion in the passage that he held that it was the ordinance itself that altered the relation of believers to Christ. It is a conscious and voluntary process of repentance, and faith accompanying the ordinance he has in view, as his appeal to the converts to make their baptisms a constant reality shows. "Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus" (v. 11). For unimaginative and unimpressionable minds there may be a great distinction between a sacrament as a sign and pledge of divine grace and as a vehicle thereof; but in an intense religious experience there is not; for the assurance of divine grace received is the possession of divine grace experienced. It is thus we must understand Paul's reference.

(9) In the account of the Lord's Supper which he had

received he not only preserves the common tradition, but includes the spiritual interpretation, which, as he believed himself to possess the mind of Christ, he did not distinguish from it (1 Cor. xi. 23-34). It is primarily commemoration of Christ's death, but also a proclamation until His Second Advent. That death is remembered and declared as sacrificial, the sacrifice of the new covenant unto forgiveness of sin. There is no suggestion of any transubstantiation or consubstantiation of the wine and the bread. As the context shows, the eating of the bread and the drinking of the cup unworthily is not any failure to discover in the elements the actual body and blood of Jesus; but the neglect and denial of the significance of the *death for all*, so remembered and proclaimed, by excess and class-separation in the membership of the Church. To be "guilty of the body of and the blood of the Lord" is to treat profanely, without due reverence and gratitude, the death for man's salvation; and this is done when the feast of commemoration and remembrance is turned into a common meal disgraced by selfishness and greed. "Not to discern the body" is to fail to understand what the ordinance signifies. A worthy observance would, through the remembrance and declaration of Christ's death, bring a communion with the Living Lord full of blessing. Here as in baptism we must suppose Paul had found a vehicle as well as a sign and pledge of divine grace. There is here nothing inconsistent with a genuinely moral and spiritual standpoint.

When Paul adds, however, "For this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and not a few sleep" (v. 30), he draws a conclusion in which we may hesitate to follow him. That disease and death were the Lord's punishment of the unworthy observance of the Lord's Supper is an interpretation of divine providence from the Jewish rather than the Christian standpoint. We must insist, however, that there

is no reason for assuming that he held the superstitious notion that in the ordinance itself there was a noxious efficacy for the unworthy partakers, as well as a beneficent influence for them who worthily partook. We should not ascribe magical notions to him without much more conclusive evidence than any we now possess. In 1 Corinthians x. 14-22 he describes the Supper as a communion of the blood and the body of Christ ; but the context shows that he does not mean that it is the body and the blood that are literally partaken of. Verse 17 describes the Church itself as one bread and one body because all the members partake of the one bread. This forbids a prosaic literalness of interpretation. Such an interpretation would involve that the sacrifices to idols become the body and the blood of demons. What Paul does affirm is that in the Lord's Supper the believer enters into communion with Christ, his life becomes one with Christ's. His judgment on pagan sacrifices, that they involve such communion of the worshippers with demons, may be explained by the excess and licentiousness that marked not a few religious rites of the heathen ; but he himself asserts this view as one-sided in recognising even in idolatry a seeking after the God who is near each one, which even in its errors God in " times of ignorance overlooked " (Acts xvii. 27-30). The belief in demons and the judgment of idolatry Paul brought with him into his Christian faith from Judaism ; but his experience of Christ's presence with him in the Supper in no way depends on the conclusion regarding pagan sacrifices.

(10) In dealing with Paul's conception of the Church ministry and sacraments it is probably more difficult than in any other subject to maintain a strictly objective standpoint as the personal equation is likely to obtrude. The writer has tried at least to avoid this peril. Possibly, as many modern scholars are insisting, Paul was more thoroughly

a man of his own people and age, with all the limitations which that involved, than Christian theologians generally have been prepared to concede. But that he held not spiritual and moral, but often magical views of the sacraments seems to the writer to require far more conclusive evidence than yet has been furnished. That he was a sacramentarian in the modern sense of the word, the treatment of the Jewish law, and especially of circumcision, in the Epistle to the Galatians makes it quite impossible to believe. How could the man who declared that both circumcision and uncircumcision availed nothing, only faith energising in love, assign superior efficacy for the Christian life to any "weak and beggarly rudiments" (Gal. iv. 9)? It is surely to miss his intention to suppose that his argument is not directed against ritualism generally, but against the combination of Jewish with Christian ritualism. He who laid all emphasis on the sufficiency of faith alone to bring each believer into living union with God in Christ, thus giving the spirit of adoption and freedom of access, was no sacerdotalist. What would he have said of the figment of apostolic succession, who so vehemently claimed that he was an apostle, "not from man, neither through man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father"? We do best to view the Church with Paul from the standpoint of the faith, hope, and love that are in Christ the Lord.

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THE HISTORICAL VALUE OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL.

IV. THE TRIAL OF JESUS.

WE shall now consider the report given by the fourth Evangelist of the Trial of Jesus. According to the Synoptists Jesus was tried before Caiaphas, the high priest, and afterwards before Pilate, and St. Luke mentions a quasi-