

passion Jesus met and answered her, and as she clung prostrate to His dear feet He lingered for a time although the open heavens, the glory, and the throne were awaiting Him, to tell her of that deathless Union of humanity with Deity, whereby all those who love Him are His brethren, sons of His Father and His God.

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*THE TEACHING OF PAUL IN TERMS OF THE  
PRESENT DAY.*

XXVI (*continued*).<sup>1</sup>

It would, however, be going very far beyond what Paul would have allowed: it would, in fact, amount to a statement which he would have totally condemned: if one were to assert (as some do) that Paul regarded Christ as the "better self" of the individual man, and that in this world man is realising his higher self in the Christian life. Nothing can be more certain than that to Paul Christ is the real God beyond us and outside of us, but manifesting Himself to and seizing upon the man whom He has chosen. In the process of the true life, Christ is the moving power in the man whom He has seized. Of course, in this process, man realises his own higher self, that is to say, he attains to the true purpose of his life, and to the nature which God intended him to realise. But all the time that divine figure remains above him and beyond him, drawing him on, though also moving within him and possessing him. Thus Christ is, in a metaphorical sense, the "better self" of the individual man; but He is far more than that; and the part that is left unsaid in this term "better self" is by far the more important part of the whole.

<sup>1</sup> Omitted by mistake in its proper place, in the end of § XXVI., where it should come after "consummated," the last word of the third sentence from the end of that Section.

## XXVII. INFLUENCE OF CONTEMPORARY CUSTOM ON PAUL.

There is another difficulty in understanding Paul's teaching besides the figurative nature of the language in which he was compelled to appeal to the understanding of pagans and Jews in the first century. Not merely was he obliged to suit his expression to their powers of comprehension. His own comprehension was perhaps in certain respects imperfect. He was to some extent bound in the fetters of his time and guided in its way of contemplating the world. He was not free from the beliefs and even the superstitions of his age. How far they influenced his mind and thought is far from certain : in the present writer's opinion they exercised far less influence on him than some modern writers think, and less even than would appear from the occasional expressions which occur in his letters. We might quote in sufficient number examples of phrases or statements, which are a riddle to exercise the ingenuity of commentators, and which are probably the expression of some belief or superstition current in Jewish circles at that time ; but these are of small importance in studying the teaching of Paul. They are commonly mere incidental phrases. They hardly ever touch even remotely the essentials of his doctrine. They might all be left on one side without taking away anything from his teaching. Yet they are quoted by some writers, and dwelt upon at considerable length, as if Paul could be best understood through them and could not be correctly understood except through them.

Regarding these as wholly unimportant in their bearing on his doctrine, we need not linger on them ; and they are here mentioned only to guard against the error of over-valuing them. They are of interest only in estimating the character of Paul as a man. He was caught in the net of his own age : in the non-essentials he sometimes, or often, remains impeded and encumbered by the tone and ideas

of his age ; but his teaching is for every age, and in all important respects rises clear and free above his own time and above all limitations and imperfections due to his circumstances, and soars into the empyrean of eternal truth. It is essentially true to say of him, as Ben Jonson said of Shakespeare,

He was not of an age, but for all time.

Some, or perhaps many, of Paul's references to angels are influenced by popular superstition. Moreover, the instructions of a practical kind which he sometimes gives regarding the conduct of women are peculiarly liable to be affected by current popular ideas : there is no department of life in which a man's views are so apt to be coloured by early circumstances and training and by current social ideas as this. Where both angels and women are found in any passage, Paul is doubly liable to be fettered by current ideas and superstitions.

Thus, for example, when Paul orders women to wear veils always, he says, " if a woman is not veiled, let her also be shorn " : an unveiled woman is as bad as a woman with her head close-cut or shaved. Now, the disgrace of having the hair cut is a purely external matter : the loss or the cutting may be due to accident or to precaution against disease : it involves only the loss of a natural adornment, and may naturally be regretted and mourned on that ground. After all, however, this is only a matter of social estimation, not of moral quality ; yet Paul, in using this comparison, assumes that it has a moral and religious character. The wearing of long hair is not an ethical duty, but only expedient, socially and æsthetically. Accordingly the attempt of Paul to exalt the wearing of the veil into a religious duty is discredited by the comparison which he uses for the purpose of clinching his argument. The one and the other duty stand on the same level. Neither is morally binding.

Paul's early associations with Tarsus are responsible in this case. The veiling of women was practised more closely and completely in Tarsus than in any other Greek or Græco-Asiatic city known to Dion Chrysostom; and Paul, who had grown up to regard veiling as a duty incumbent on all women, now presents it as a moral and religious duty to the Corinthians. He declares that women, *qua* women, ought to veil, and that it is an outrage on the nature of women not to do so. One cannot plead that he is merely urging the Corinthians to have regard to current social conventions and customs. It is quite true that one should not lightly outrage such social customs, and always Paul teaches so; but here he presents the obligation to veil in a far more emphatic fashion as an eternal unvarying duty imposed on women by her own nature and by the relation in which she stands to the universe as a whole.

In this matter we must recognise one of the rare instances of the Apostle's occasional inability to rise above the ideas of his own time. Old prepossessions, dominant in his mind from infancy, made him see a moral duty, where in our modern estimation only a social custom was really in account. To the modern European judgment, Paul prefers the lower and poorer view of human and womanly nature to the higher and nobler view. Here he shows himself of an age, and not for all time. How different a conception does he exhibit of women, where he writes with the insight of a prophet to the Galatians (iii. 28) that in the perfected church "there can be no (different rank and standard of estimation for) male and female, for ye are all one in Christ."

To buttress his opinion Paul has recourse to the popular superstition: "for this cause ought the woman to have authority on her head because of the angels." In her relation to the universe as a whole she may come under the

power of, and even be exposed to outrage by, demons or angels, unless she has on her head the authority which protects her from them. It was a popular superstition that women were liable to come under the influence of such angelic beings, who were more powerful in many ways than men : an example of this belief appears in Genesis vi. 2-4. Obedience to the social conventions gave them authority and immunity from the power of demons or angels ; the veil was their strength and their protection ; and the social convention was made more binding on women by the sanction and penalty involved in this belief.

Here we have an example of the first century Tarsian Jewish education, and its strong influence on the man. Yet how small a part of Paul's teaching is this ! how far it is from even touching the essential elements of his doctrine ! how out of harmony it is with himself in another place and another vein of thought.

One must, however, always remember that, to our judgment, Paul's method in reasoning is frequently liable to seem unconvincing to us. He draws his arguments and his illustrations and analogies sometimes from quarters that carry no conviction to our minds, and he trusts to the predilections that lay deep in every Jewish mind at that time.

His quotations from Scripture are often divorced from their context, and used in a sense which is quite out of harmony with their fair meaning in their original position. His analogies are sometimes forced and, in our view, unnatural. It would, however, be a serious blunder to estimate the quality and the insight either of Paul or of Plato by the superficial appearance of their argumentation. The Platonic Socrates is presented to us as discussing with his own contemporaries ; and he overpowers them by arguments that often appear to us extremely unfair and weak. But in both Paul and Plato there lies beneath the surface

of their ratiocination the direct insight into truth. To understand them, we must accept their intuition at its real value, and not at the rank of the argumentation which appeared convincing, more or less, to contemporary taste ; but does not appear so to us.

How far Paul's opinions about women should be regarded as springing from his insight into the divine force that moves the world, we do not venture to judge ; they are out of harmony with ours ; but the fault may well lie with us, and we may be judging under the prepossession of modern custom, which will perhaps prove evanescent and discordant with the plan of the universe and the purpose of God. There can, however, be no question that his argument or analogy drawn from the length of the hair confuses between what is *only* customary or æsthetic and what is ethically binding and universal. On the whole matter we appeal from Paul to Paul himself in Galatians iii. 28.

Other examples might be quoted and discussed at length ; but they are quaint and curious, rather than instructive. They do not touch the greatness of Paul, and it would only tend to distort our views about the real nature of his teaching, if we devoted further attention to this subject. The biographer of Paul will do well to study them more carefully, for they throw light on his personal quality as a human being ; but we are not writing a biography at present.

#### XXVIII. THE HAPPY LOT OF MAN.

In all ages of the world many people, not seeing the real truth, but judging only from superficial and vain fancies, have been filled with the thought that this world is all awry, that "the times are out of joint," that fate is hard and cruel, that the lot of man is nought but misery from the cradle to the grave. Such had been the experience and the general opinion of the pagan world, whose writers were

almost all penetrated (as we have already mentioned) with the thought of human misery, deterioration and hopelessness. Paul writes and speaks always with the knowledge of their opinions and words in his mind ; and his attitude is never rightly comprehended by us until we have this fixed firmly in our minds. To that pagan world, to its statesmen, its philosophers, its writers, its common people, all either plunged in hopelessness about the future or quietly resigned to the conclusion, "let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," Paul came with his message of hope, joy, love, peace, in short "Salvation." In contrast to their ignorance and despair, he is always transported with the lively and true perception of the beauty, the love, the kindness, in one word the grace of God in all His dealings with men. What an abundantly happy lot is that of mankind ! what perfect and indescribably bountiful grace is God's !

The Apostle rises to the loftiest height of enthusiasm, and expresses himself in a kind of lyrical and poetic prose, when he contemplates the saving grace of God, as shown in the plan which He had conceived in the foundation of the world and worked out stage by stage and detail by detail to its completion and perfection in Jesus Christ. Words almost fail him to picture "the exceeding riches of God's grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus," and "the unsearchable riches of Christ."<sup>1</sup> Not merely do we receive from Christ. We are the riches of Christ. To that great honour have we been exalted by the grace of God. The assembly of the saints, the whole body of Christians, the Universal and Catholic Church, constitutes the inheritance of Christ : the purpose of God from the

<sup>1</sup> Ephesians ii. 7, iii. 8 : the thought of the richness and splendour and magnificence of our inheritance in Christ is peculiarly characteristic of Ephesians i. 8, 18, 3, etc.

creation has been to create and complete this structure as the kingdom of God, "the wealth of the glory of Christ's inheritance among the saints." We are necessary to God and to Christ! What an honour and happiness for mankind! The glory of God and the splendour of Christ cannot be made real and established definitely except through the completion of the salvation of man in the congregation of the saints. Our bliss is His glory. Paul heaps up word upon word to blazon before the eyes of the Asian Christians the grandeur of their lot in being made the completion and perfection of the eternal purpose of God, "the riches of the glory of the patrimonial estate of Christ."<sup>1</sup>

We have become so familiarised from infancy with these and similar words that it needs an effort to hold them in thought apart from ourselves and gaze upon their true meaning, so as to realise the glittering and dazzling beauty of that which they describe. We are, however, always thinking and reasoning about the idea which is pictured in these words, as it is being slowly worked out in the Church of God and the civilisation and progress of men. The thought is not strange to us; on the contrary, it is the sum and the kernel, and it contains the germ, of all modern science and modern speculation. Put in modern terms, it is the idea of evolution in history and science. Paul prefers to give it a personal form: the Will of God works itself out in the gradual creation of His Church: every other process is subsidiary to that: the Church as it shall be is the sum and the embodiment of every line of development. The growth of the world and of man towards the higher stage is the working out of the glory of the Creator and of His creation. Paul would not have put it in those words, for he was of the first century, and did not dream of or understand the nature of Science; but none the less

<sup>1</sup> Ephesians i. 18.



that is the real import in modern terms of what he said in such enthusiastic and half-poetic language.

To Paul this idea was not new when he wrote to the "Ephesians." It was not attained to by him for the first time, while he was composing that wonderful letter, in some respects the greatest and most glittering and dazzling of all his letters. It had been reached by him in meditation before he was ready to carry his message to the pagans, and therefore it was his possession before he was finally called upon to lay aside all other duties and plans, pressing as they seemed to be, and to "Depart, for I will send thee far hence to the Graeco-Roman world." That was the command, urgent and imperative and requiring instant obedience, completing and making clear at last to Paul those previous instructions (which had been less lucid to him, because he was not yet ready and able to comprehend them). Such was the vision and the glory which he had seen in the fourteenth year before the winter of A.D. 56-7, accompanied with words unspeakable, "which it is not lawful for a man to utter." To the Christian mind there can be only one such vision, and that is the vision of the glory of God and the marvellous and perfect purpose of God, which in its completion will make manifest His goodness, His unspeakable goodness, His complete and perfect Salvation, His way with man. In that purpose there was much that Paul must not declare to men. He might only contemplate it, and fill his mind with it, and have it as a precious and power-giving possession to himself; and this possession was his greatest glory and his supreme consolation.

He had seen, and he knew, the glory of God; and the glory of God is the completion of His purpose in the perfecting of His Church. This idea lay in his heart. It gave fire and point and life and power to his words, but it must

not be declared fully at any time to men. It could be revealed partially to the saints as they learned to appreciate it for themselves. It was the sort of knowledge which can never be comprehended except by those who have risen to that level and seen for themselves. It cannot be set forth to the ignorant, because it is too sacred, too perfect, and far beyond their understanding: "the word is sharper than a two-edged sword," and a sword is always dangerous to the ignorant, the stupid or the foolish. This knowledge is "the mystery of the Will of God,"<sup>1</sup> a thing still hidden, though in process of being revealed, a rich possession to those who are growing into the knowledge of it.

#### XXIX. THE MYSTERY OF GOD.

At the present stage it will best serve the purpose which is set before the present writer to allude to the meaning of this term "mystery" in Paul's letters. The word has been by some scholars defined as "something once hidden, but now revealed"; and it is regarded as being "always used in the New Testament in the sense of an 'open secret.'"<sup>2</sup> That definition and description is partially, but, as I think, not wholly accurate, and is therefore not quite satisfactory, though it is in practice very useful. It has got hold of the truth, and has got hold of the right end of the truth. But the deeper expression of the truth is that the mystery is "something once hidden, but now in process of being revealed." In a sense, of course, the mystery is revealed once for all and finally in Christ. That thought is rightly in the mind of the writers, who employ that definition. But who knows Christ? We are in process of com-

<sup>1</sup> Ephesians i. 9 f. "to sum up all things in Christ."

<sup>2</sup> I quote from Rev. G. Currie Martin (to whom I am much indebted: writing in Turkey in tents or in trains, one has in hand little except the text of Paul), in his edition of Ephesians, Philippians, etc., in the "Century Bible," a tiny volume convenient for the traveller.

prehending Him, and so comprehending the mystery of "the wealth of the glory of His inheritance among the saints." Life is the process of acquiring this knowledge, which is forced on us, and which, so to say, seizes us and takes possession of us ; the experience of life drives wisdom in some degree into the minds of all men, except in so far as obstinate resistance and determined prepossession by a selfish desire or by an over-conceit of knowledge, keeps out the knowledge. Now, as in the process of righteousness, which is true and real life, "the saints" acquired this knowledge, it became possible for Paul to declare more and more fully "the mystery" to them. This mystery of God's purpose, of course, is declared, in a sense and to some degree, in the first words that Paul addresses to an audience new to him : it is declared in every speech and in every letter more and more perfectly, as the hearers live themselves into a sympathy with and comprehension of the purpose of God. Yet there always remained something, nay much, of the mystery, "words unspeakable, which it is not lawful for a man to utter," hidden in the heart of Paul.

That is always the case with the great teacher, and the great writer. Who has ever had any deep power over the minds and life of men, that declared all he knew ? There must always remain in the speaker's or writer's mind a large store of reserved knowledge. It is the force of that unspoken knowledge that gives driving and penetrating power to his words.

In none of Paul's letters is this knowledge and mystery so fully declared as in Ephesians. In prison, as he says in iii. and iv. 1, he has no thought about his suffering, or his want of power, or about submission to the will of gaolers and guards. All that the law and all that the authority of officials imposes on him he accepts and does. That is right and just : they are placed in authority by the will of

God for the time : they form a stage in the evolution of the Divine will, and for him the duty is to act in such matters according to the constituted law of the Empire. But they have no influence over him. His inheritance, his happiness, his knowledge of God's purpose, his complete and unhesitating confidence that this purpose is fulfilling itself even in "these bonds," all remain far outside of the competence of guards and officials. Whatever they may do, even to the infliction of flogging or death upon him, is his triumph and their failure. He is ready to depart : he is equally ready to continue his work, obeying the Imperial law and obeying the law of God. It may be regarded as quite certain that he would not have escaped from prison, except under direct Divine command. The slave or the prisoner should accept the lot and will of God.

To the Corinthian philosophers and clever people he sets forth similar truth in a far more veiled fashion,<sup>1</sup> but still he "speaks wisdom among the perfect. . . . God's wisdom in mystery, even the wisdom that hath been hidden, which God foreordained before the worlds unto our glory." <sup>2</sup> In that passage also he describes the glory, the power, the royal and imperial lot of the Christian ; and he plays with the Stoic paradox of the philosopher-king, rising, however, through irony (as in iv. 8-10) to lofty and mystic expression almost perfectly on a level with the language of Ephesians : "let no one glory in men. For all things are yours : whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come ; all are yours ; and ye are Christ's ; and Christ is God's." Ephesians does not condescend even to play with and to give new meaning to "persuasive words of philosophy . . . the wisdom of men." It stands entirely on the level of the pure Christ-thought, embodied in the new Christian language, which

<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians i.-iv.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem* ii. 6 f.

Paul had already constructed to express this new and loftier thought, a language of the people, using few if any words that were not familiar to the fairly educated Græco-Roman public, yet transforming all the words by the wealth of the thought which was shadowed forth in them.

This thought as set forth in Ephesians was, as we have stated, Pauline from the beginning of his work among the Gentiles. It was this reserve of knowledge that gave force to his opening address to the people of Antioch, and penetrated the whole city before he had completed his second week there (Acts xiii. 12 ff.). The message that he then preached was his own, gained through revelation and meditation: <sup>1</sup> he placarded or blazoned it before them: <sup>2</sup> it gave them marvellous powers, and the inheritance of God; it called them to freedom, it clothed them with Christ.<sup>3</sup> The language of Galatians is simpler than that of Ephesians, but it is informed with the same knowledge and the same power: the knowledge is the power.

### XXX. THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

In Ephesians it is remarkable how completely the glory and the inheritance of "the saints" is identified with knowledge. "Ye can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ."<sup>4</sup> As Mr. Currie Martin says, "It seems natural and fitting that he should remind his readers how great an authority by the grace of God" he possesses; this authority is due to his comprehension of the mystery, i.e., to his knowledge. The verses that follow practically make the seeing of the mystery equivalent to the comprehension of the eternal purpose of God and the cause of confident and bold access to God. Knowledge is power. The saying is trite, as applied to practical life, to business or to

<sup>1</sup> Galatians i. 12, 17, iii. 7.      <sup>2</sup> Galatians iii. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Galatians iii. 5, 29, iv. 7, v. 13, iii. 27.

<sup>4</sup> Ephesians i. 4.

science. The same saying, hackneyed in the modern application, is equally and perfectly suitable in regard to the doctrine of Paul : the knowledge of God is the power of God. That is the meaning of Colossians i. 9 f. : " that ye may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, to walk worthily . . . bearing fruit unto every good work, and increasing by the knowledge of God ;<sup>1</sup> strengthened with all power . . . unto all patience and long-suffering with joy."

It is urgently necessary for our purpose of clearly comprehending the nature of Paulinism, as always and in all matters the expression of the idea of growth towards God, as dynamic and not static, to study his conception of knowledge, the wisdom of God. We shall start best from an earlier Epistle, viz., from 1 Corinthians xiii., and from Professor Harnack's exposition of it, in which he takes a view differing in some respects from ours.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "By" not "*in* the knowledge of God." The rendering "by" is given in the margin of the Revised Version (English).

<sup>2</sup> The perception of this point of view, as that which is characteristic of the Epistle, gives rise to the opinion (widely spread among modern scholars for a time, but now gradually disappearing) that the Epistle was not the work of Paul, but of a successor. Our contention is that this "Ephesian" point of view is essentially and characteristically Pauline, but is more definitely and prominently expressed here.