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**The Epistle of
Paul to the
Philippians,
Practically
Explained**

Augustus Neander



The Scriptural Expositions of Dr. Augustus Neander: I. The Epistle of Paul to the Philippians, Practically Explained.

Author(s): Neander, Augustus (1789-1850)

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Description: Augustus Neander began his religious studies in speculative theory, but his changing interests led him to the study of church history. As he became more invested in his historical studies, he embarked on a mission to put together a substantial work of practical commentaries on a selection of books from the Bible. His *Epistle of Paul to the Philippians, Practically Explained* is one part of this larger project. In his commentary on Paul's epistle, Neander shows us the circumstances under which Paul wrote his letter. The church of Philippi was the first church that Paul founded while in Macedonia. Neander discusses the nature of Paul's imprisonment in Rome and the affect this had on his relationship with the Philippian church. Through his systematic commentary, Neander is able to help readers discover new meaning in the message of Paul's epistle.

Emmalon Davis
CCEL Staff Writer

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THE
EPISTLE OF PAUL
TO THE
PHILIPPIANS,
PRACTICALLY EXPLAINED,
BY
DR. AUGUSTUS NEANDER.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN
BY
MRS. H. C. CONANT.

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INTRODUCTION

IN offering the following work of Neander to the American public, some brief explanation of its character seems to be necessary. Many, who have only heard of the author as one of the most profound scholars and thinkers of the age, might otherwise be deterred from reading it, by the supposition that it was merely a work of learned criticism. Such, however, is far from being the case. It was the beginning of a series of popular practical commentaries, intended to embrace the more important portions of the Bible. Next to the Epistle of James, which was completed, and a translation of which we expect shortly to present to the public, were to follow the Epistles of John, then the Gospels, the Psalms, &c., as rapidly as the public duties of the author would allow. The surpassing excellence of the beginning makes us deeply lament the loss to the church, through the recent death of the great and good Neander, of so rich an addition to its means of understanding the Scriptures, and one so happily adapted to the wants of common Christians. This, however, does not impair the value of the separate parts, each division being complete in itself; and we cannot but rejoice that, as he was not permitted fully to carry out his plan, he should have executed a part so appropriate as the closing labor of his life. Had he foreseen that these were to be his last words of counsel to his brethren in Christ, he could nowhere have found freer scope for all he wished to say for their instruction, comforting, and edification, than in a commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians. One might almost believe, such a fulness of pious feeling pours through its pages, that he had some such presage. Whether this were so or not, doubtless He to whom all events are known guided him in the selection; and we may receive it as the dying legacy of one of the greatest Christian teachers with which God has ever blessed his church. May its instructions sink deep into the heart of the church, and bring forth fruit to the honor and glory of God!

In reading this commentary, one cannot but be forcibly struck with the strong affinity between the character of Paul and that of his expounder. Different as were their outward circumstances and course of life, Neander seems to have had, in his own nature and spiritual sympathies, a perfect key to those of the Apostle. Hence it is that he has surpassed all others in giving the spirit of this Epistle. The grandeur of Paul's spiritual conceptions, his personal aspirations, his inward conflicts, his magnanimity, tenderness, and humility, his all-absorbing love for Christ and for man, are delineated with a life and power which only a kindred soul in the writer could have inspired. His very manner bears the same stamp of resemblance. Impatient of the niceties of minute criticism, he breaks through the mere outward form, the shell of words and phrases, into the very heart of the Epistle; and develops its contents, not by a petty weighing of particles, but by one broad, extended view of the whole scope of the Apostle's design and meaning. This he illustrates from Paul's history and character, his present circumstances and those of the infant churches; and the whole glows with the light



and warmth of a deep personal experience of the Gospel. Thus, though the work is rich in the results of a learning as profound as it was various, the earnest and intelligent, but unlearned reader, can pursue his way unimpeded by any obtrusive lumber of scholarship. It is indeed a beautiful illustration of what his friend and colleague, the evangelical Strauss, says of him in his funeral discourse: "He did not despise human knowledge; he sought for it with unwearied diligence; he was a master in it; but he laid all the surprising treasures of his learning at the foot of the cross." To edify the members of Christ's body was with him a greater object, than to make a vain parade of his own superiority; as to be one with Christ was to himself, personally, an immeasurably greater object than all human learning or honor.

One characteristic of the work, which adds greatly to its practical value, has also a special interest as showing the author's character under a new aspect;—we mean the comprehensive and accurate knowledge it exhibits of men and their relations. It shows that he was no mere recluse scholar, buried in the past, with no eyes nor ears for the living world around him. It is indeed a problem, how a man who so seldom went beyond his study and his lecture room, whose own relations to society were so few, and his associations almost exclusively among the learned, could have gained so much acquaintance with human nature, and with the various forms and phases of Christian experience. The solution is to be found in the fact, that Neander had a heart as well as intellect; a heart gifted by nature with the largest human sympathies, and from early life penetrated by the spirit of Christian benevolence. Man his brother, man whom God had created and for whom Christ had died, was to him an object of unspeakable interest, and nothing was unimportant which affected his character and prospects. Hence, from the little that he mingled with men he learned much of man; and he applies the inspired instructions with a discrimination and point, which show that no generic differences in human character had escaped him. It is a matter of no little interest, to know what views of man were received from this study by a mind like Neander's. It is plain that he cherished no high-wrought notions of the natural goodness and perfectibility of the race. Yet he did not turn from the weak and erring being with philosophic contempt, or thank God that he was not as other men are. His was the earnest, penetrating scrutiny of a Christian philanthropist, seeking to know his brother's wants in order that Christian love might supply them. Though he was no believer in inherent human goodness, he was a firm believer in the efficacy of the great remedy for man's moral diseases. Hence the clearer perception of his ruined and lost state, only awoke more strongly the love which yearned to bring relief. The spirit of Neander's life and writings furnish sufficient proof, if proof were still wanting, that the clear recognition of man's entire moral perversion is the basis for all true love of humanity. His practical wisdom, as well as the tenderness of his heart, are beautifully exhibited in his treatment of the yet immature believer. The germ of divine life, planted in a human heart, is an object which engages all his interest. The causes which

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may obstruct its free development, as found in the various forms of self-deception, in the power of early prejudice, and not less in the over-hasty zeal or unchristian harshness of brethren, are touched with admirable skill. If his lessons of rigid self-scrutiny, trying as by fire every thought and motive of our own hearts, and of a fraternal charity, quick to discern and acknowledge and tenderly to cherish the faintest signs of grace in others, were carried into practice by every disciple of Christ, who can doubt the speedy increase of spiritual life, of unity, and of moral power in the church!

Another not less interesting point is the simply scriptural character of his theology, of the exhibition here given of the essential doctrines of the Gospel. Christ, the Crucified and the Risen, as the one foundation of the church, the living root from whom proceeds all spiritual life and growth; man as a sinful and lost being, depending for regeneration and sanctification on the influences of the Holy Spirit; the utter insufficiency of human works as the ground of salvation; a holy life as the necessary fruit of holy love; these, no man since Paul has more eloquently enforced than Neander. In developing Paul's theology, deep religious experience supplied to him that light, for the lack of which so many have misunderstood and perverted the meaning of the great Apostle. The natural man, and the spiritual man, designate with him radical distinctions of character. The tendencies of the natural man, however beautiful his social and even religious virtues to human view, are yet, as springing from self and ending in self, radically wrong; the tendencies of the spiritual man, as springing from God and ending in God, are radically right. But the spiritual man, and the perfect man, are not with him interchangeable terms. The Christian life is an unceasing conflict with inward depravity; that we persevere in this conflict to the end, the only reliable proof that we belong to Christ. The Christian's standard of character is perfection, is Christ; his ever increasing sense of unlikeness to this faultless model, the strongest evidence that he is becoming more and more assimilated to it. This sense of unlikeness, while it humbles and stimulates, does not disquiet the believer; for his confidence and his affections are placed on a nobler object than self, were it in a state of absolute perfection. The incarnate Word, the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person, once humbled in humanity, now reigning in divine glory, is the centre of all his aspirations and hopes, the life of his life, his all in all. An affecting proof of Neander's personal consciousness of these truths, was given on the evening of his last year's birth-day. His pupils having, as is customary in German universities on such occasions, honored their beloved teacher with a torch-light procession and a eulogistic address, he replied by a pathetic confession of human weakness, and spoke of himself as a sinner needing forgiveness through the blood of Christ. The whole course of his inward and outward religious life corresponded fully to this expression. "As to be a Christian," says Strauss, "nothing but a Christian saved by grace, was all his desire in his inward experience, so in his calling he desired only to be a servant of Christ." The love of Christ to his people, as developed in the past history of the church, was his most interesting

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subject of contemplation. In his hands, Church History became not a mere record of the mistakes of the human spirit, but primarily, a record of the miracles of the love of Jesus. And often, says his friend, his voice trembled and his whole heart gushed forth, when narrating individual experiences of grace, exemplifying the love of Christ. What a beautiful illustration of his own favorite maxim, "It is the heart that makes the Theologian!" The modesty of his Theology is not less marked than its scriptural character. Our knowledge of God and divine things, though all-sufficient for our present need, in his view is necessarily fragmentary and imperfect; "to be cast aside when we are raised to the full vision of the life above, as the conceptions of childhood are cast aside, by the mature man." How habitually this conviction was present to his mind, is pleasingly illustrated by the circumstance, that when called on for an autograph to accompany his engraved portrait, he wrote for the purpose the words: "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face."



The closing scenes in the life of this eminent servant of Christ, seem like the reflection of that conflict which he so admirably depicts in the heart of Paul, between the longing to depart and be with Christ, and the desire still to live that he may labor for the salvation of his brethren. To labor for Christ was, as with Paul, his life on earth. Apart from this work, life had no value, no significance. While he lived he must labor; and even after the hand of death had touched his long diseased body, he still strove to compel its services in his appointed calling in God's kingdom. This calling was one which enlisted all the energies and affections of his soul. To be the instructor of youth in the Holy Scriptures, and the historian of the Church, was a high destiny; and his devotion to it had all the ardor of a ruling passion. His history he had now brought down to the period of the Reformation; and with a mind unimpaired by age or disease, and glowing with his theme, he was about entering on the development of that central epoch of modern Christianity, when the summons came to lay aside the earthly for the heavenly. How his heart clung to his life-work, is affectingly shown in the sketch of his last hours by his attached friend and pupil Rauh. We give the substance of the account.



He was at his desk in his lecture room, on Monday, when the attack came upon him. Inured to pain, and accustomed to master it by his powerful will? he persevered in completing the exercise; though the broken tones of his voice, at times almost inaudible from debility, forced upon his affectionate auditors the conviction expressed in the touching language of one of their number: "This is the last lecture of our Neander!" He reached home in a state of great exhaustion. But after some slight refreshment, he immediately resumed his usual afternoon employments. For three successive hours, though often interrupted by increasing weakness, he dictated on his Church History. Late in the afternoon, the symptoms of dangerous illness becoming more and more marked, his anxious sister insisted that he should

give himself rest. But he could not be persuaded to quit his work. "Nay, let me go on!" he exclaimed: "can every day-laborer work as much as he will, and would you deny it to me!" At length he was obliged to yield, and allow himself to be conveyed to bed. The next morning he was forced, by the increased violence of his malady, to consent that his usual lecture should be deferred; "but," as he expressly added, "only for to-day!" From this time it was an incessant struggle for supremacy between the mind and the body. In the afternoon, he called imperatively for his reader;¹ and blamed his over-anxious friends for having sent him away, and thus interrupted his progress in a work with which he was engaged, Ritter's Palestine. He then listened to the reading of the newspaper by another pupil, with earnest attention; selected what he wished to hear, and commented on this and that of its contents, till at length a heavy slumber overpowered him. The next day also, the daily paper being read to him as usual, the mention of some occurrence in the Church drew from him an exclamation of humorous contempt at the modish spirit of the day; an expressive shrug indicated his dissatisfaction at another. This day he experienced a little relief, from the refreshment of a more quiet night, which encouraged his desponding friends. But on Friday evening the last ray of hope was extinguished. Paralysis, the result of his exhausting disease, seized upon the kidneys. The fatal hiccough set in, and allowed not a moment's sleep. This scene of distress continued four hours, without mitigation. Groans were forced from him by the extremity of his anguish; and he was heard praying in a weak and plaintive tone, which drew tears from every eye, "Oh God! that I might sleep!" But the energy of his spirit was not yet quenched. The next afternoon, though in an agony of pain, the longing to be again at work in his great calling seemed to awaken in full force. He insisted that he would no longer be confined in bed; and with a feverish impatience, never seen in him before, ordered a servant to bring his clothes that he might rise. A pupil who was at hand vainly tried to soothe him. Even his sister's entreaties were of no avail, till she said to him: "Remember, dear Augustus, your own words to, me, when I resisted the physician's orders,—'It is all from God, and we must yield cheerfully to his will!'" "True," he gently replied in an altered tone; "it all comes from God, and we must thank him for it!" Through all the variations of his sickness, his wonted tender consideration for his friends did not forsake him, He would not allow his pupils to neglect their duties in order to attend upon him; watched lest his sister should not take needful rest, and received every slight service with the most touching gratitude. Even when scarcely able to speak, from pain and weakness, he would make the utmost effort to express his thankfulness. One little characteristic trait deserves to be mentioned. His large



1 An affection of the eyes, which had increased almost to blindness, had for some two years rendered such assistance necessary.

income, always devoted more to others than himself, was yet insufficient for his multiplied charities, so that he was often perplexed and distressed when he found a new object of compassion which he had not the means of relieving. He practised the most rigid economy in his own personal expenses, that he might have more for others. Every luxury was in his view a robbery of the poor. So fixed were his habits in this respect, that when a little champagne was offered him during this last sickness, he promptly refused it with the expression, "O that is a foolish indulgence!"



The final scene is one most characteristic of the man, as well as one of the most striking ever witnessed in the chamber of death. A wine bath had been prepared for him, as a last resort. Refreshed and strengthened by it, he was borne from the darkened room where he had lain hitherto into his study, that cheerful little apartment opening to the sun, which had been so long the workshop and the paradise of the man of thought. Here for nearly twenty years' he had studied and written. From this spot had gone forth those great works which have delighted and instructed Christendom. With thirsty glances he drank in the full golden sunlight, of which he was always so fond.² A spoonful of choice wine being offered him, he did not reject it,—“a significant omen,” says Rauh, “that the old order of things approached its end.” Ere long he murmured dreamily, as if at the close of a long fatiguing walk with his sister, “I am weary; let us now make ready to go home!” Just then the rich sunset glow, pouring through the window, lighted up the shelves from which looked down upon him the masters of thought, with whom for so many years he had held silent but high and endearing communion. Raising himself by a sudden effort from his pillow, he commenced a regular lecture upon New Testament exegesis. Soon a new image passed before his restless fancy. Imagining himself at the weekly meeting of his beloved *Seminarium*, surrounded by his fondly attached theological pupils, he called for the reading of a dissertation, shortly before assigned, on the material and formal principle of the Reformation. He then dictated the titles of the different courses of lectures to be delivered by him during the next session; among them, “The Gospel of John, from its true historical point of view.” His last thoughts amid the struggles of death, were, devoted to the great labor of his life. Beginning at the very passage of his Church History where sickness had arrested his progress, he resumed the thread of thought, and in spite of interruptions, continued to dictate in regular periods for some time. At the close of each sentence he paused, as if his amanuensis were taking down his words, and asked, “Are you. ready?” Having closed a division of his subject, he inquired



2 In this also, “a child of the light,” as he sportively called himself (ὀπαδὸς τοῦ ἡλίου) a few days before. “This I have,”—said he on that occasion,—“in common with the emperor Julian; but that,” he added, “Strauss must not know!”

the time. Being told that it was half past nine, the patient sufferer repeated once more: "I am weary; I will now go to sleep!" Having by the aid of friendly hands stretched himself in bed for his last slumber, he whispered in a tone of inexpressible tenderness, which sent a strange thrill through every heart: "Good night!" It was his last word. He immediately fell into a sleep, which continued four hours; when his great spirit, in the quiet of a Sabbath morning, passed gently into the land of peace.—What a commentary on his own exhortation so lately uttered; that "the Christian should ever remember that here all is fragmentary, nothing reaches completion; that even service in the cause of Christ on earth, is but the beginning of an activity destined for eternity; that we must therefore not be so absorbed, even in labors consecrated to God, as to be unprepared to obey, at any moment, the summons to the higher life and service of Heaven!" He was so prepared, that when his ear caught the summons, he could drop the great labor of his life unfinished, lay himself down quietly upon his bed, and with a child-like "Good Night" to those whom he left behind, *slumber over* (as the German beautifully expresses it) into that higher life of heaven.



Before closing, the translator would beg of those conversant with the author's manner in the original, as favorable a judgment of her work as justice will allow. They can best appreciate the difficulty of the task. It has been her aim, not merely to give a faithful rendering of the author's ideas, in an easy English style, but to reproduce them, so far as possible, in their original form and mould. The elephantine march of his style suits, as no other could, to the great burden of his thoughts; which, moreover, are so combined and massed together, that not only would the manner be lost by much breaking up of his sentences, but the connection and relation of the different parts be seriously impaired.



H. C. C.

ROCHESTER, N. Y.

Sept. 1851.



**EPISTLE OF PAUL
TO
THE PHILIPPIANS.**

IF the Spirit of God has revealed to holy men of old the word of truth, that they might proclaim it for the salvation of mankind; if God has revealed himself through their lives, their discourses, their writings, as the depositaries of his Spirit; this is not to be regarded merely as an isolated fact belonging solely to the past. To us as living members of the body of Christ, as partakers in that fellowship of his Spirit, which unites the instant of the present with the whole progressive development since the first outpouring of the same Spirit by the glorified Son of man, to us, this should be no external, no foreign thing. The past must become to us the present. We need no further revelations. On the contrary, it must be to us as if the Lord had himself at this moment spoken to us, inasmuch as he has given us the instruction required for all the higher necessities of the present; as if he had himself said to us all which it concerns us to know, in order to find consolation under present sufferings, the means of certain victory in all conflicts, the clue to guide us out of all the perplexities of a distracted age safely to our goal. For the attainment of this object, we must carefully investigate the precise historical conditions and relations under which these depositaries of the Divine Spirit spoke and acted. We must transfer ourselves into that past time, so as to live, as it were, in the midst of the circumstances under which these holy men acted, and in reference to which they spoke. The objects of divine wisdom in its guidance of the Church, we perceive in this, viz., that divine truth has been revealed to us, not in a law of the letter, not in a digested summary of specific articles of faith, but in this historical embodiment, in this application to individual cases, to specific historical circumstances and social relations, imparted through the instrumentality of individual men, who lived as depositaries of divine truth among their fellow-men; who, in the common intercourse of human life, testified of and revealed the divine, speaking and acting as men, each in his own peculiar human manner, though hallowed indeed by the Spirit of God. Thus was divine truth to be brought humanly near to us. Thus to our own spiritual activity, under the guiding and quickening influence of the Spirit of God, without whom nothing divine can be received or understood, was to be left the work of investigating the divine in its connection with the human; from the particular to deduce the universal; and again, by an application of this to the peculiar circumstances of the age and society in which we live, to reconvert it into the particular for ourselves; to detect in that which was said or done by the organs of Christ's Spirit, under the peculiar circumstances of the past, whatever is applicable for our use to the circumstances and relations of the present. Whilst, therefore, an humble dependence on that Divine Spirit, who alone leads into all truth, and unlocks the depths of his word, is an indispensable con-

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dition to the right understanding and application of the Divine Word in its human embodiment; so also is a careful attention to all the human relations. The word of God allows no slothful hearers; it demands all the powers of the mind and soul. Only thus can its treasures be brought to light. If we fail of discovering these treasures, and lament over the want of light to illumine the darkness of the present state, it is because we have not met the required conditions. We have none to reproach but ourselves. We may here apply those weighty words of our Lord, adapted no less to stimulate and encourage diligent inquiry, than for warning and rebuke: "He that hath, to him shall be given."

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In an especial manner is this true of the Letters of the Apostles. In these we should find far more to instruct, edify, and guide us in all the relations of life, if we thus weighed the import of every word. May the Spirit of the Lord enlighten and guide us, that we may in this manner understand, and learn to apply, one of the noblest epistles of the Apostle Paul, written as no other could write, and presenting to our eyes the living image of the Apostle to the Gentiles!

First, then, we must bring before our view the peculiar circumstances and relations, under which Paul wrote this epistle. Zeal for the salvation of the heathen world had drawn, upon him the extremest persecution of the enraged Jews, who grudged to the Gentiles an equal participation and equal privileges with themselves, in the kingdom of God. To this was owing his apprehension at Jerusalem, his long imprisonment in Cesarea Stratonis, and finally, through his appeal to Cæsar, his captivity at Rome. The issue of his fate was still uncertain. In his imprisonment, he was far less occupied with anxiety for his own life, than for the welfare of the churches, scattered through various regions, who through the dangers which beset their Apostolic teacher might become unsettled in their faith, deprived, as they were, of his personal guidance in this dark and troubled period. Through his pupils and associates in the preaching of the gospel, who now formed the living link between him and these churches, and through his letters, must the want be supplied. Among these churches was that of Philippi in Macedonia. It was the first church which Paul had founded in that country. Its members had been witnesses of the ignominy and suffering endured by Paul, on account of the gospel, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. They had witnessed the example he gave of boldness in the faith, of devotion to the Lord, of triumphant enthusiasm in his service, his joyfulness in suffering, and the wonderful deliverances wrought for him by the Lord. This had served, in a special manner, to give greater depth and ardor to their love for him, who was ready to sacrifice all that he might bring them: the glad tidings of salvation. They followed the example of their faithful teacher. As yet, indeed, Christianity had not drawn upon itself the attention of the Roman civil power; nor had it become an object of persecution through the state laws, as from its opposition to the national religion must soon be the case, under a civil constitution with which this was intimately interwoven.

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Accordingly no general persecution had arisen, and the churches in most regions enjoyed peace. In this respect, however, Macedonia formed an exception. Here, from the very first, the malignant hatred of the Jews, who were scattered in great numbers through the commercial cities, had been excited against the preachers of the gospel, and all who embraced it; and they had not wanted means for producing discord between the believers and their fellow-citizens and associates among the heathen. Although no civil laws as yet existed against Christianity, still there were means by which the heathen could, in many ways, disquiet and injure its new converts, distinguished by their life and conversation in so striking a manner from themselves. In the history of modern missions the same thing is repeated, in the intercourse between the new converts and their former heathen associates. The church at Philippi remained steadfast under all these persecutions. Their faith and love had been approved thereby. Neither could they be unsettled in their faith, by the persecutions which had now befallen their Apostolic teacher. They were conscious of that higher fellowship with him under all his conflicts and sufferings. His sufferings, and the dangers which hung over him, but added new fuel to their love and sympathy. To manifest this to him they had sent one of their own number, Epaphroditus, who might also bring back to them more exact information of his circumstances. We know that although the right had been given to the Apostles, by the Lord, to depend for their temporal necessities upon those for whose spiritual welfare they labored, yet Paul never availed himself of this privilege. As the attracting and recovering grace of the Lord had been exhibited towards him in so peculiar a manner; as it had transformed him from the bitterest persecutor into the preacher of the gospel; he felt himself constrained to do more than others, called by Christ in the ordinary way, and gradually fitted for his service, and to forbear the exercise of a right to which he was equally entitled with them. Thrust, as it were, by force into the work, he would, by more abundant labor, endurance, privation, manifest his unconstrained love for his appointed calling.—(1 Cor. ix. 17-19.) It is to be accounted his gift, growing out of his peculiar nature sanctified by the Holy Spirit, that he was able to number himself among those whom Christ pronounces blessed, for having forborne marriage for the kingdom of God's sake. Not that he would call them blessed on account of the state of celibacy, in and for itself; as if Paul could claim any advantage over Peter, who in a marriage consecrated by the Lord, labored for the advancement of the same cause; but on account of the spirit which led them to abstain from marriage, that love which would offer up all to the kingdom of God. It was this which animated Paul, and impelled him to contemplate as a duty whatever might, under his special circumstances, serve for the advancement of his work, and to undertake it with joyful zeal. It was for this also, that amidst the labors of preaching, he sustained himself with his own hands as a tent-maker. He experienced in himself the truth of the Lord's words, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." In order to avoid every appearance of self-seeking, and to take from the opposers among the Jews and Judaizing Christians every occasion of suspicion,

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he himself assumed the whole charge of his temporal support. Still the church at Philippi were moved, by their heartfelt love to him, to anticipate his wants; and knowing how difficult he must often find it to earn a maintenance, they had several times sent sums of money for his necessities. Paul, though he sought no gift, yet, in view of the feeling which prompted it, could not reject the free-will-offering of love. This church had now once more manifested in this way their active sympathy for Paul, by sending to him Epaphroditus. This circumstance, and what he learned through their messenger of the condition of the Philippian church, occasioned the writing of this epistle. Its object was to express to the church at Philippi his gratitude and love; to relieve their anxiety respecting his own situation; to give them a view of his Christian state and temper in the midst of his conflicts and dangers; and to bestow upon them the counsels and encouragements suited to their peculiar circumstances.

We must now, therefore, direct our view to Paul's situation in his imprisonment at Rome; to his demeanor in his captivity, as the mirror of the state of his soul, so far as we can learn it from this letter; and to his counsels to the Philippian church, in reference to their peculiar relations, as furnishing suggestions applicable in numerous ways to similar circumstances.

Looking first then at Paul's situation, we shall perceive that this was adapted to produce great variations of feeling. He had given his public testimony for the Lord Jesus, and had made his own defence. This defence had produced the general impression, that it was not as a disturber of the public peace that this imprisonment had befallen him, nor for any other crime; but only as the preacher of a religion hated by the Jews.³ Against this new faith, as we have already remarked, there existed as yet no state law. If now Paul could triumphantly establish his innocence in this respect, it would seem that his safety was secured. But the Roman civil laws ever regarded an individual as in some degree criminal, who should seduce the citizens and subjects of the empire to apostasy from the state religion; and should attempt to make proselytes to a new faith, which, if not condemned by an express law, was yet in its nature opposed to the religion of the state, and was not of the number recognized by it as tolerated religions. Paul's case was, therefore, by no means so simple a one. Many difficult questions were involved in it. At times, the impression made by his public defence would awaken in him the expectation of a happy deliverance, and that he might be permitted to visit the churches founded early in his ministry, and among these the church at Philippi. Again, the prospect of death was before his mind. What then? Do we find his soul divided between fear and hope, despondency and joy, dependent upon the external impression of these changeful circumstances, as is wont to be the case with others in like situations? No; one deep undertone of cheerful tranquillity, of surrender to the will of the Lord, pervades

3 Chap. i. 13.

the whole epistle. We see the man, whose confidence rests on an immovable foundation unaffected by change of circumstances, a foundation which no waves or storms can shake. He is certain that, in one way or another, the Lord will conduct him through these conflicts triumphantly to a glorious end.⁴ With joyful confidence, he approaches the termination of a life singly consecrated to one holy service. He is conscious of not having labored in vain, as a faithful preacher of the truth, which he sees bringing forth fruit in the churches. These, as for instance the church at Philippi, are the living memorial of his devoted labors for the Lord, as he himself expresses it in this epistle; the witness that he has preached the word of the Lord in purity; his glory before the Lord when, at the day of judgment, that shall be by Him brought to light which was here concealed; when much, which here seemed to be somewhat, shall be exposed in its nothingness; and when much, that was misjudged and condemned by the world, shall be acknowledged by the Lord as his own. How nobly does this spirit of Paul express itself in the words of this epistle, where he exclaims:⁵ “And even if I be offered⁶ upon the sacrifice and priestly service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all; in like manner should ye also joy and rejoice with me.” We must endeavor to make clear the full import of these weighty words.—The Lord Christ is the one Mediator, between God and the sinful human race redeemed by him. Through him all, who believe on him and enter into fellowship with him, are taken out of the ungodly world and consecrated as a holy community to God. Thus do they all become one priestly generation. There is no longer the distinction of Priests and Laity. All are become, through him and in fellowship with him, what he himself is,—Priests before the God of Jesus Christ who is also their God, before his Father who is also their Father. Their whole life is a priestly calling; as Paul represents it, [Rom. xii. 1](#), “a reasonable service,” that is, a spiritual worship proceeding from the rational nature, the soul. Herein the whole spiritual life manifests itself as a God-devoted, to God presented self-sacrifice; every inward and outward act as done in fellowship with Christ, as performed in his name, pervaded by his Spirit, enstamped with his image, a thank-offering and a praise-offering of the redeemed, well pleasing in the sight of God. This being true of all the acts of each Christian in his proper vocation, Paul regards as his own priestly calling the Apostolic work; as his own acceptable offering to God, the faith planted by him among the Gentiles and the Christian life of the converted heathen world. It is in this sense he speaks, in these words to his Philippian brethren, of “the sacrifice and priestly service of their faith” as his offering to God. It was customary, moreover, to pour out wine upon the altar, a so-called libation, as a seal of the offering. Paul, foreseeing that his own blood might be poured out in his priestly office of proclaiming the Gospel among the heathen, that he

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4 Chap. i. 19, 20.

5 Chap. ii. 17, 18.

6 Literally, poured out.

might be called to testify to what he preached in the very face of death, and to put the seal of martyrdom upon his life's work, here speaks of the outpouring of his own blood as a libation,—an offering of himself upon the sacrifice. Thus, with joyful confidence, the Apostle advances towards so glorious a consummation of his work. Far from needing solace from others, he could call on the Philippians to rejoice with him. Uncertain whether he was to finish his captivity by the martyr's death, or whether his life would be preserved to labor still for the advancement of the kingdom of God upon the earth, he was prepared for both, submissive in either case to the divine will. The will of the Lord was his will. The result would show, in what way it was the purpose of the Lord to make his life most subservient to His own glory. He was in a strait betwixt two,—longing to depart, out of the conflicts of the earthly life, into the peace of the spirit's heavenly home; from where the Lord is seen only by the eye of faith, to where in blissful nearness he becomes an object of sight. Although Paul was certain even in this his earthly life of union with the Lord, he was far from feeling himself satisfied with what he already enjoyed. Not merely from external conflicts had he learned, that this is not the land of peace promised to the Christian, and sought for by his longing spirit. To those internal conflicts, yet more severe, which the life of faith must ever sustain, he was no stranger. Herein also had his Saviour led the way; he who cried "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death!" and, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" One of his sore trials he calls "a thorn in the flesh;" comparing it to the anguish inflicted by a thorn fixed and rankling in the flesh. It was the painful experience of his own human weakness, in contrast with the revelation of the divine glory, which at times was imparted to him. Thus was he taught to distinguish what is divine and what is human, what belongs to this life and what to the life beyond. Thus too was he to learn, that the land of heavenly peace, after which the renewed spirit sighs, is not to be found on earth. Although Paul, as his life and his epistles testify, had made great advances in personal sanctification, yet he was far from wishing to separate himself from the number of those, who as sinners seek in Christ for justification; far from holding himself to be a sinless saint., He knew well that he had still to maintain the conflict with sin, and that he must persevere, in that conflict faithfully to the end, if he would stand before the Lord. We need only to hear his own professions, as when warning the Corinthians against a false security he writes ([1 Cor. ix. 27](#)): "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest, having preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away." By these words he describes his unceasing conflict with himself, lest after having brought others to salvation by the preaching of the word, which through the indwelling divine power works independently of the preacher, and brings forth fruit to eternal life, he should himself be overcome by temptation and fall short of that goal to which he has conducted others. The figure, of which Paul here makes use, is taken from the boxing combats of the ancients. The body is represented as the antagonist with whom the boxer contends; implying a still continued resistance of the body, once the servant of sin, against

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the divine life in the spirit. Paul describes himself as one, who by unremitting effort makes his body, the organ of sanctification entrusted to him, serviceable to himself as the servant of Christ. This conflict with the body of sin, inasmuch as the whole outward life of man manifests itself in the body, designates in general the entire conflict still to be waged by the spiritual against the fleshly man, by the new man against the old;—and this in the case even of a Paul. Thus Paul, instructed by his rigorous self-examination, is far from supposing when he contemplates his own life, that he has already reached the limit of heavenly perfection, or that he could build his confidence thereon as if it were a life of perfected sanctification. “Not as if I had already attained, or were already perfect,” is his own beautiful expression of his conviction, in a passage of this epistle which we shall presently consider. Paul, then, was conscious that the blessings pronounced by the Lord: “Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled!” “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God!” were not as yet completely fulfilled in him, but were still, in a certain sense, a promise looking into the future. Moreover, although Paul had been elevated, in his perception of divine things, above others of his own time and of all time; although he could claim that single higher revelations, over and above that which was to be the subject of general proclamation, had been vouchsafed to him; yet he well knew that all this was but partial and fragmentary, far from that completeness of knowledge before whose light all which is called in this life higher perception, prophecy, the gift of tongues, shall vanish away. He reckons himself among those, whose knowledge of divine things is like objects obscurely reflected in a mirror, where much still remains uncertain; a knowledge which, in relation to that of the eternal world, is as the knowledge of the child, to that of the mature man. He was fully conscious, that when he should be raised to the full vision of the life above, that which he knew of divine things in this life must be cast aside by him, as the mature man casts aside the conceptions of childhood. The twilight of the earthly life of faith did not satisfy the aspirations of his soul, which thirsted after knowledge; and he longed to pass into that pure day of heavenly clearness, where our knowledge of God and divine things will be inward, immediate, a direct perception of that which is present, a knowing as we are known. We see then that, in all these respects, Paul was penetrated with the full consciousness that the hope which has reference to the future, not less than the present exercise of faith, constitutes the life of the Christian. Apart from this undoubting prospect into the future, the whole Christian life seems to him an effort without aim, a chase after a phantom, a deceptive show; as he expresses it [1 Cor. xv. 19](#), “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.” For the life of others is directed towards some aim, higher or lower, of the sensual or spiritual life, which may actually be attained on earth. But the life of the Christian, with all its conflicts, labors, and privations, has reference to an object which has no reality, if it be not found in the eternal life of the future. It is from this point of view that Paul reproaches the proudly secure Corinthians, with having lost the consciousness of this distinc-

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tion between the present and the hereafter, between the conflict of the earthly and the triumph of the eternal life. In their spirit and conduct they seemed as if already in possession of all riches, enjoying full satisfaction, the contentment of all necessities, with no farther warfare from within or from without. With this he contrasts the wholly different image of the Apostle's life (1 Cor. 4: 8). "Ye are," says he, "already become full, ye are already become rich, ye reign without us." They were in spirit and conduct, as if the kingdom of Christ had with them already reached its consummation; and they, as partakers therein, had attained to all riches, to the satisfaction of all their desires. And would this were so, says he; would they had already attained to this participation in the perfected kingdom of Christ; for then, assuredly, the Apostles would not have been excluded therefrom, nor would their circumstances be such as they now are. Thus he holds up before them his own life of conflict, in contrast with their false security, their unauthorized and groundless exultation. (1 Cor. iv. 9-13.)



Thus there was reason sufficient even for Paul, though rejoicing in conflicts for Christ's sake, and finding therein his glory, still to long after that perfect union with the Lord in the life to come. In earlier years, indeed, we find him constantly referring to the contrast between the earthly life of faith, and the consummation not to be enjoyed till the resurrection. But at a later period, especially from the date of his second, epistle to the Corinthians, we remark in him an ever increasing consciousness, that, as a necessary result of the inseparable union of believers with their Lord, both in his sufferings and his exaltation, they also shall on their departure from the earthly existence enter at once on a higher life of vision, into a higher, more undisturbed fellowship with Him. Thus in the fifth chapter of the second epistle to the Corinthians, he in this view represents the abiding in the flesh as an absence from the Lord, that is, from the immediate vision of Christ; while the state which follows, entered through death, through the laying off of the earthly life, is a being at home with the Lord—(2 Cor. v. 8). He expresses the same conviction in this epistle to the Philippians. Christ is his life.⁷ He distinguishes life in this sense from his life in the flesh.⁸ Christ is his true life; he has no life except in him, none apart from him. In him that which alone he calls life, has its being; it has its root in union with Him. And as Christ, having laid aside human infirmity, having risen and ascended to Heaven, now reigns triumphant in the Divine Life, living in the power of God a life exalted above the reach of death; so also is this true of the life of the believer, as being one with His own, yea one with Himself. And hence Paul concludes, that although even now, while abiding in the flesh, he has Christ for his true life; yet death is for him gain, inasmuch as through the laying off of the earthly existence, this true life, which has its being in Christ, shall be freed from the checks, hindrances, and disturbances by which



7 Chap. i. 21.

8 Ver. 22.

it is still clogged, and shall attain to its complete development. He knows, that with his departure from the earthly life, will commence his "Being with Christ"⁹ in that more perfect sense, his presence with Him as an object of immediate vision. Hence this is the goal of his desires.

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But there are two mistakes, against which the example of the Apostle warns us, viz.: the declension, on the one hand, of that longing after the blessedness to come, which, as we have seen, is inseparable from the very nature and essence of the Christian life; and on the other, Such a one-sided morbid predominance of this desire, as to weaken the exercise of patient submission to the will of the Lord. As to the first, we remark, that it is not alone in the enjoyment of earthly gratifications, which we should ever remember are in their nature transitory and but a shadow and pledge of those higher, eternal, heavenly joys, that the Christian may suffer the loss of this heavenward desire. Even his activity, in a calling entrusted to him for the promotion of the kingdom of God, may likewise so absorb him as to obscure the consciousness that he has here no abiding home, that his native country is in Heaven. He labors as if this work upon earth, which is but the beginning of a higher activity destined for eternity, were to be consummated here, as if it were already the work of eternity. Hence the thought that here all remains fragmentary, that nothing reaches completion, nothing attains to its end, withdraws itself from him; and death surprises him in the midst of his labors, consecrated though they be to God, as an unexpected unwelcome guest, who finds him unprepared. He is called away before he has finished his account; and instead of following joyfully the summons to a release from the sufferings of time, his heart clings fast to that earthly scene of labor which he too reluctantly quits, to those happy results of his labors on which he has set too high a value. Here may be applied the admonition of the Lord: "Rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice that your names are written in Heaven." This heavenward longing is ever the salt of the Christian life, amidst all sorrows, all joys; in every season of repose, in every labor. But on the other hand, this very desire, in itself perfectly right, but needing to be restrained by submission to the holy will of God, and by fidelity to the calling appointed us in this earthly life, becomes itself an error when it oversteps these boundaries. Thus arises a one-sided direction of feeling, an impatient haste for the call, which should be waited for with a steadfast unfaltering patience. In this undue, all-engrossing longing after the eternal, the importance of the earthly life and of its duties, connected as they are with the eternal, is forgotten. Earthly joy, and earthly labor, lose the proper value assigned them in the divine arrangement. That which the goodness of God has given us for the moment, as an earnest and a preparation for the higher joys of the future, is impatiently and unthankfully contemned. The consciousness is wanting, which should be ever present with the Christian, that for the redeemed united in fellowship with Christ,

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9 Chap. i. 23.

even here below, the earthly of whatever name, whether it consist in receiving or in doing, whether it be enjoyment or labor, is transformed into the heavenly. The temper of mind, which Paul's words exhibit, holds the just medium between these two extremes. The longing after the life of eternity, after the immediate society of the Lord, continues to be the ground-tone of his soul, which no other can overpower. Through all the pressure of his labors in the service of God, this longing after the heavenly rest is not smothered, is not crowded from his heart. But he is far from an over-hasty impatience, which cannot await the end of the earthly conflict; far also from that more refined selfishness, which cannot endure to strive and labor longer for the salvation of others, and be still deprived of the quiet enjoyment of heavenly blessedness. Though to depart from the earthly life, and to be present with the Lord in a perfect personal union, be the goal of his desires; he is yet ready to deny this desire, the offspring of what is noblest in man, in order to labor still upon the earth and to strive for the salvation of his brethren. If it may serve for the advancement of the work entrusted to him by the Lord, he is willing yet longer to forego the object of his wishes, and to be still a wanderer upon the earth. Love to his brethren, who may need him for their salvation, enables him to present this offering willingly; and thus drawn hither and thither by these two directions of his desires, he remains submissive in either event to the will of the Lord. But one desire remains fixed and unwavering, to which all others must yield, viz.:—That Christ may be glorified through him, be it by life or by death. Let us hear his own noble words:—“As I earnestly expect and hope, that in nothing I shall be put to shame; but that with all boldness, as at all other times so also now, Christ may be glorified in my body, whether it be by life or by death. For Christ is my life, and death is gain. But if my life in the flesh is fruitful for my work,—then I know not which to choose. For I am in a strait betwixt the two; desiring to depart and to be with Christ, for this is far better.”¹⁰ Still he gives that the preference, which may most subserve the welfare of the churches which he has founded; and hence he adds: “But to abide in the flesh is more needful for your sake.” His love to the churches inspires him, at this moment, with the confident expectation (which indeed as he well knew might prove illusive, but which as we have reason to believe, was fulfilled by his release from his first imprisonment at Rome) that God would again restore him to their society, for the strengthening of their faith and the furtherance of their joy. “And having this confidence, I know that I shall remain, and shall continue with you all, for your furtherance and joy in the faith; that your glorying on my account may abound in Christ Jesus (i. e. the exulting joy which Christ should bestow upon them by the restoration of Paul to their society)—through my coming again to you.”

We here observe in Paul the example of submission to the divine will, both in doing and in suffering, in self-sacrifice and self-preservation. Surrendering his own will, he is ready

¹⁰ Chap. i. 20-23.

for whatever God may appoint, be it life or death, as may best promote the work committed to him. Filled with longing after the home of heaven, he yet seeks not death. For the good of the churches he willingly remains on earth. Only in the faithful performance of the duties of his calling is death to him a divine gift, to be joyfully received from the hand of his Heavenly Father. Thus, in life and in death, it is alike the same operation of self-denying love. This example of Paul has primary and immediate reference to the martyr's death, the genuine Christian martyrdom purified from all admixture of fanaticism. But is it not also applicable to death under all circumstances, and in the ordinary course of nature? In that case too, there may be either that spirit of selfish impatience, which, though it ventures not presumptuously to sever the thread of the earthly life, is not willing to endure it longer; or that selfish love to the earthly life, which clings to this with its whole strength, which cannot let it go when the call of God requires. Thus, in both these respects, does Paul's example of a love consecrated to God in self-sacrifice and self-preservation, find an application here. Thus should each Christian become, in respect to living and dying, one with him in spirit, though his calling may not lead to the martyr's death.

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Furthermore, we here observe in Paul that higher degree of self-renunciation, which manifests itself not in the relinquishment of temporal earthly interests, which could have no attraction for a Paul, but in the relinquishment of the higher interests of the immortal spirit. It is a heavenly aspiration, which enkindles the lofty soul of the Apostle. His desires reach beyond the narrow limits and perplexities of the earthly existence after the immediate vision of Christ, in him to find the full satisfaction of all the wants of the higher life. This to his spirit would be the highest good. Yet even this he foregoes. He is ready to relinquish what is dearest to himself, to forego the satisfaction of that heaven-born desire, to abide still longer in the strange country, to labor still upon earth, striving and suffering for the welfare of others. What is best for the churches, for the furtherance of God's kingdom upon the earth, is more to him than what is best for himself. Now this example is not to be restricted to its merely literal application to a precisely similar case, viz.: when one who is penetrated with longing for the heavenly father-land, is yet obliged to bear the load of the earthly life for the welfare of others. It may in its spirit be applied to every case, where the Christian is called on to relinquish a course of life most favorable to his own spiritual interests, a life of tranquil and collected thought consecrated to devotion; and to plunge into a whirl of business, toil, and conflict alien to the higher inclinations of his soul, but where he is appointed to labor because the salvation of others requires it. In this respect also, Paul furnishes for our imitation an example of self-denying love, which shuns no sacrifice for the good of others. How often have Christians, who should be the salt of the earth, by withdrawing themselves from its corruption acted in Contrariety to this example!

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Let us present still another view in which all Christians have an interest. While Paul stands thus between life and death, whereon is his confidence grounded? He, if any one, was a faithful laborer in the work of the Lord. He was conscious of having labored more than all others in the proclamation of the gospel. But he knew at the same time that this was not his own work, but the grace of God accomplishing all through him; as he himself says: "I have labored more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." When higher considerations demanded his self-justification, against suspicions which might shake the confidence of the churches in him, he could indeed recount what he had done and suffered above others for the cause of the Lord (2 Cor. xi. 22, 23). He could appeal to the memorials of what he had endured in the cause of Christ, in whose fellowship he suffered, and whom he followed in his sufferings; to the marks enstamped in his body by the Lord himself (such as soldiers and servants were accustomed to bear) as proofs that he was Christ's servant. (Gal. vi. 7). Still, when looking towards the close of his earthly course, he reviewed his life so abundant in labors and sufferings for the Lord, as it now spread out before him, he felt that he could not rest his confidence on what he had himself done. All seemed marked with imperfection. He was constrained to forget what he had already accomplished, and to fix his eye upon what still remained for him to do. It was with him a law, to forget what was already done, what lay behind, and to press continually forward towards the prize of the heavenly calling. It may, at first view, seem strange, that Paul expresses himself so doubtfully on the great point, whether he shall attain to the victor's crown of life, shall share in the blessedness of the resurrection. It seems to be in conflict with that divine confidence which breathes through the whole epistle, and which he expresses elsewhere in regard to the object of his hope; as e. g. in 2 Tim. iv. 8: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith." But this conflict belongs to the nature of the Christian life, and is ever recurring in the experience of the believer. Does the Christian look away from himself to his Redeemer, to the delivering grace assured to him, the unchangeable word of promise; the goal towards which, all his efforts tend, seems then an object of perfect certainty. Does he, on the other hand, test his own life by the standard of perfect holiness; his confidence then finds no firm ground. Defects and blemishes present themselves everywhere to his view; and this all the more the farther he has advanced in holiness, the more his sight has been sharpened by the power of the Holy Spirit, to recognize the model of divine holiness in its application to himself, to test by comparison with this pattern his inner and outer life in its nakedness and poverty, to penetrate into the hidden windings of his own heart. Hence Paul expresses himself so doubtfully in reference to what he is in himself, and has himself accomplished. What he has performed seems to him nothing, and he only looks forward to that which remains to be done. He is penetrated with the consciousness, that he is yet far from having attained perfection. But the ground of his confidence is this—that Christ has taken him into fellowship with himself, that Christ has

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apprehended him; and hence he hopes, that as he has been apprehended of Christ, he also shall apprehend the prize set before him by Christ. He knows that Christ, by whom he has been apprehended, will not leave unfinished the work he has himself begun in him; but, if he truly surrenders himself to his hands, will conduct it through all conflicts to a glorious completion. Let us hear his own brief, expressive words: “Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect; but I follow after, if I may apprehend that for which I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.” So important does Paul deem it to set forth, in the clearest light, this truth drawn from his own self-consciousness and from his Christian experience, and to bring it home to the Christian as a warning against self-satisfaction, self-righteousness, and spiritual pride! Hence he adds yet again: “My brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended. But this one thing I do; forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto the things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” Paul was conscious in himself of the utter insufficiency of man’s own righteousness, not merely of that to which the vital principle is yet wanting, that which precedes regeneration and exists independently of Christianity; but of that also which possesses already in faith the true element of sanctification, without having as yet brought this to complete development and realization. Hence, the only immovable ground of his confidence is Christ, by whom he has been apprehended; and whom he, surrendering himself wholly to his hands, seeks ever more to apprehend and to appropriate as his own. Looking away from himself to Christ, his assurance is complete; looking back upon himself, he must doubt and waver; and thus he is driven to look away from himself, and to cling more and more firmly to Christ, from whose love nothing can separate him. It is the righteousness of God in Christ which alone avails for him, and is all-sufficient for him; as expressed in the words of this epistle, “The righteousness which is of God by faith.” To him Christ is all. All centres in this one point, that we enter into his fellowship and make it more and more our own; that we follow him by bearing the cross, thus following him as crucified for us; that in fellowship with him we die to sin, to self, and to the world; following him in the entire renunciation of selfish and earthly interests, not shunning to partake in the fellowship of his sufferings; and following him also as the Risen One, experiencing in ourselves the power of his resurrection—the resurrection to an imperishable and divine life above sin, death, and nature, proceeding from him to us, inasmuch as he has apprehended us and we apprehend him. So Paul expresses it, in a passage which we must more particularly consider hereafter: “That I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.” We have already explained how the Apostle could here express himself with so much apparent doubtfulness, consistently with his divine assurance of faith.

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It was the greatest joy of the Apostle, that his imprisonment must necessarily serve for the furtherance of the Gospel; since it was becoming more and more known, that no guilt of any kind could be imputed to him, that it was but his zeal for the faith which he preached that had drawn upon him all his sufferings. A cause, to which a man like Paul felt constrained to offer up everything, could not fail to command attention.. To this was added the impression necessarily made upon those, who were witnesses of the enthusiasm with which he testified in behalf of the Gospel, of his steadfastness, and of his whole course of life. The knowledge of this had spread, as he intimates, by means of the soldiers from the imperial guard (the *castris praetorianis*) who held watch by turn in his dwelling, among their comrades and from these still more widely. Other Christians were stimulated by Paul's example to preach the Gospel with similar zeal, and to bear their testimony with like fearlessness. Thus increased the proclamation of the truth.

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But Paul himself makes a great distinction among these preachers of the Gospel. Thus, when expressing his joy at the increasing promulgation of the Gospel, he says, "Some indeed preach Christ from envy and strife; but others also from goodwill: the one out of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the Gospel." The latter, he means to say, connect with their love to the Gospel also love to himself. They know that they can cause him no greater joy, than by laboring that the Gospel may be promoted by his imprisonment; for they well know that this is the one object of his life, and that he himself regards it as the divinely appointed end of all that he is to do and to suffer in life. "But the others," he proceeds to say, "out of party spirit, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds." The first is clear. But who are those who sought, by the preaching of the Gospel, to add affliction to Paul's imprisonment, and whom he charges with insincerity? We must here take into view what he afterwards says in reference to this distinction, viz. that by the one class Christ was preached in truth, by the other only in appearance. Are we to suppose that these men, without personal love to the Gospel, without personal conviction of its truth, preached Christ for no other reason than to add, to the hardship of Paul's situation, and to bring him into greater danger by the wider extension of the Gospel in Rome; thus rendering him, as the origin of it all, more obnoxious to the Roman civil power? It appears at once how unnatural, and intrinsically improbable, is such a supposition. If they could thus bring Paul into greater peril, they would by so doing plunge themselves into equal danger. Can it be imagined that one would play so hazardous a game, simply from hatred to another? He who at that time did not himself believe in the Gospel, must be enlisted against it; and would certainly not have given himself up to the business of preaching it, merely as the means to another end. We must seek, then, another explanation of this difficulty. When it is said of an individual that he preaches the Gospel only in appearance, this need not be understood as necessarily meaning that he has no concern whatever in regard to the subject of his preaching; that he has no personal interest in it, no conviction of its truth, that he makes use of it only

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as a means to another end. It may mean that he preaches it, not in its purity and completeness, but mingled with foreign elements; that although an interest in it cannot be denied him, yet this is not perfect and unalloyed. In this sense it might be said of such an one, that he does not preach the Gospel sincerely. Paul might therefore express himself thus, in regard to persons who testified of the Gospel of Christ from real conviction; yet did not preach the whole, unmixed, pure Gospel in its completeness, but an adulterated, mutilated Gospel. And when, moreover, he says of such, that they were actuated by party zeal and hatred against him, desiring to add new affliction to his sufferings; it is not necessary to understand by this, that their witness for the Gospel was mere pretence, a form of hypocrisy to which the circumstances of the time afforded no occasion and no ground; but that their ruling motive in preaching was not pure love to the Lord. that it was their aim, consciously or unconsciously to themselves, by their manner of preaching to give offence to Paul, and to raise up for themselves a party against him.

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If now we look farther into the history of the development of Christianity in this its earliest period, and investigate more minutely, in the history of the Apostolic church, the peculiar relations and opposing influences under which Paul's labors were prosecuted, we shall soon be in a position to determine with greater exactness what we have here remarked in general. We know that Paul had to contend with opposers, to whom all that has here been said is applicable. There were those who did indeed acknowledge and preach Jesus as the Messiah, but a Messiah in the Jewish sense; who acknowledged him, not as that which he has revealed himself to be, the only ground of salvation for man; who in connection with the one article of faith, that Jesus was the Messiah promised in the Old Testament, still adhered to the Jewish legal position; who understood nothing of the new creation of which Christ was the author, and to whom faith in Jesus as the Messiah was only a new patch upon the old garment of Judaism. These were the opposers, with whom we so often find Paul contending in his Epistles. Of such he might justly say, that they preached the Gospel not purely and sincerely, but only in appearance; for they were indeed far more concerned for Judaism than for Christianity, and their converts became rather Jews than Christians. Of such he might also say, that they sought to form a party against him, and to add affliction to his bonds; for these persons everywhere seem chiefly animated by jealousy of Paul, through whom the Gospel was preached to the heathen world as freed from all dependence upon Judaism, and standing upon its own foundation. They oppose themselves to him on all occasions, contest his Apostolic dignity, seek to encroach on his sphere of labor, to draw over the people from him to themselves, from that pure and complete Gospel to their own mutilated one. And it need not surprise us to meet such even in Rome; for Paul's Epistle to the church at Rome, written some years previous to his imprisonment there, shows us in this church, consisting chiefly of Gentile converts, a small party of such judaizing Christians

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who were in conflict with the rest. It was a matter of course, then, that when the pure Gospel in the sense of Paul was preached by the one party, the other, provoked to rivalry, should rise up in opposition and seek to give currency to their own corrupted form of the Gospel.



We must now endeavor to understand fully Paul's position towards these opposers. Rightly understood, it will furnish an important rule for our own application in many cases. In the first place, it is clear that these men were personal enemies of Paul; and that in their efforts to promote the Gospel, their object was to frustrate the labors of the Apostle, and to form a party of their own in opposition to him. What self-renunciation must it then have required, to enable Paul to rise so entirely above this personal relation, that forgetting the design against himself he can rejoice with his whole heart that the One Christ, whom it is his sole desire to glorify, is preached, even though it be by his personal enemies! Thus everything pertaining to self gives place to that all-absorbing love to the Lord, and to those for whom He gave his life. How rare are the examples of a love so heaven-like, so purified from all selfishness! One may even be animated by real zeal for the cause of the Lord, and yet that zeal be impaired by personal considerations. If others, who from unfriendly designs against him personally labor to frustrate his efforts, are used as instruments for the promotion of the same holy cause,—he cannot rejoice over it. That this is accomplished not through himself, but through those who are acting against him, weighs more with him than the common interest of Christ's cause; and instead of giving him joy, it becomes a source of vexation, jealousy, and envy. He is not concerned alone that Christ should be preached, but that He should be preached through him; or at least through his followers, through those who in every respect harmonize with him, and acknowledge him as their teacher in Christianity. Least of all can he endure it, when Christ is preached by those who take a hostile attitude towards himself; whose most zealous effort it is to lessen his reputation, to throw suspicion on him as a teacher, to draw men away from him. To this course of conduct, which we so frequently observe among men, the Apostle's self-denying zeal forms the most striking contrast. He acted in accordance with the principle which he himself lays down in [1 Cor. iii. 21](#), showing in what light the preachers of the Gospel should be regarded. "Let no man," says he, "glory in men;" the highest, the only concern is the honor of Christ, and the salvation of believers.



Thus would the case be easily understood, and thus might Paul's conduct serve as a pattern for us, if it were merely a matter of personal variance and not a strife respecting the nature of the doctrine itself. But, as we have already seen, this was by no means the case. It is a false form of doctrine, placing itself in competition with the preaching of Paul and in opposition to it, a mutilated and corrupted Gospel that is here spoken of. Those opposers, it is true, acknowledged Jesus to be the Christ, but not in the sense in which Paul received him. It was not in his full character as the sole ground of salvation, the central point of the

whole Christian life, as he was regarded by Paul. Hence, we might naturally suppose, Paul could not rejoice that Christ was preached through them, since it was not in his pure complete character. And indeed, we see Paul dealing elsewhere quite differently with such persons. How indignantly does he combat them in the Epistle to the Galatians! He does not acknowledge them as preachers of the same Gospel; he declares that there is no other Gospel than that preached by him; that they do but pervert the Gospel of Christ. In opposition to those who would connect with the Gospel the righteousness of the law, he says: "If righteousness come by the Law, then has Christ died in vain" (*Gal. ii. 21*). And in this Epistle also he expresses himself, as we shall see hereafter, with equal severity in regard to this false tendency. How then is Paul's manner of speaking in this passage, to be reconciled with what he says in those other cases? It is only necessary to discriminate carefully the different relations, presupposed by this diversity of judgment and conduct. Paul manifests this warmth of displeasure, only in cases where the Gospel had already gained a foothold among the Gentiles, and where that judaizing tendency threatened to pervert it, by intermingling so much of Judaism as wholly to obscure its peculiar nature. For it could only cause him grief, that the blessing of which a people were already in full possession, should be marred and taken from them. But it was otherwise here, where he speaks in relation to the heathen who as yet knew nothing of Christianity. Those preachers bore witness at least to the fact, that Jesus had appeared to found the kingdom of God in man; they testified of his history, the facts of his life, his resurrection, his ascension to heaven; although they did not themselves comprehend, nor were able to unfold to others, how much was involved in all this. Now Paul could not but rejoice that the common foundation of the Gospel, a knowledge of the person and history of Christ, should be made known to those who as yet had heard nothing of them. This was the first thing; the starting-point from which all the rest must proceed. If this personage, these facts, became once known and could be made objects of attention, here was a basis for still further labors. If Christ, the crucified, the risen, the ascended Christ, could but once be known and acknowledged, those who had gone thus far might, from this starting-point, be led onward to find still more in him; might be assisted to search deeper and deeper into the inexhaustible riches which are in Christ. Paul could therefore rejoice that Christ was preached, even though it was in this defective manner; though the doctrine of Christ were not presented in its purity and completeness. There are, it must be remembered, different degrees in the knowledge of Christ. More or less may be found in him. We must therefore deal with no one as an enemy, because he has at first but little; but must help him on from this point that he may gain more, that he may become conscious of those greater treasures, which he needs but rightly to develop out of that which he has already received; "till," as Paul expresses it in the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, "we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Paul's conduct, in this case, is in accordance

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with the principle indicated by Christ himself. When the disciples met with one, who attributed to Christ's name a power whereby evil spirits might be cast out, they refused to allow the use of that name by one who had not as yet become his professed disciple, and who had not made common cause with them by uniting himself to their company. But Christ rebuked them, in those memorable words: "He who is not against us, is on our part." "Not to be *against* Christ" contained in itself the germ, from which the positive, "to be *for* Christ," might yet be developed. Though he did not as yet know Christ as the Apostles knew him, though he was still ignorant of the true significance and power of this name, and connected many errors with his belief in its efficacy; still it was a germ of faith not to be despised, a germ from which more might develop itself and be developed. It was a point of connection, from which one who had gained so much could be led still farther. It needed only that he should be brought to perceive what was implied in this, what must be presupposed in the strange efficacy of the invocation of Christ's name. Who must He be, from whose name such power proceeds! In what relation must He stand to the kingdom of evil, when his name exercises such sway over evil spirits! It is clear that he who had once acknowledged so much was already in a position, from which, with patience and love, he might be conducted farther and farther in knowledge and faith. From him who as yet was only not an opposer of Christ, who knew and recognized Christ in some single point of view, might be formed by building upon that which he had already attained, a positive disciple of Christ. But he might also, if not thus dealt with, if too much was required of him with his present attainments, be wholly repelled. Not only might he be hindered from farther progress by such harsh treatment, but be unsettled in regard to what he had already gained; and thus the germ of truth, in its yet imperfect development, might be wholly destroyed. Against such a course we are warned by those words of Christ; and with these Paul accords when he rejoices that Christ was preached and acknowledged, even though in an obscured and defective manner.

We have already, before we saw clearly the relation which these opposers held to Paul, and regarding them merely in general as his personal enemies, felt ourselves constrained to acknowledge him as a model of self-denying zeal for the cause of Christ. We are now, after a more full and careful development of this relation, called upon to contemplate this great model under a new light. It implies a love purified from selfishness far above what is common, to be able to recognize and with joy to acknowledge the work of the Lord, when performed through the agency of a personal enemy. But the power of this purified and exalted love reveals itself under still another view, when the truth lying at the basis of even an erroneous representation of the Gospel is recognized and welcomed; when the seed of truth is not rejected and spurned on account of the error, even though this may oppose itself to a purer, more complete, unmitigated conception of the Gospel as preached by ourselves, but is welcomed as one step towards the farther advancement of the Gospel. But how seldom do we find a like example! One who is capable, it may be, of joyfully welcoming the work of

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the Lord when advanced by means of a personal enemy, might yet not be able so far to forget self as to accept with cordial love, and to use for the common cause of the Lord, the truth lying at the bottom of the errors promulgated by his opponent, especially when in direct opposition to the pure truth which he is himself conscious of preaching. How different would it have been in the church, how many divisions might have been avoided, how many who have labored only to oppose each other might have labored together for the spread of the Gospel; how many who have hardened themselves in their errors, and have lost by degrees even so much of divine truth as they had embraced, might from that partial view have been led farther and farther in the knowledge of the truth, and have been gradually made free from the bondage of error; if Christians, instead of demanding everything at once, with the impatient zeal of a love not sufficiently purified from self, had been more observant of the various grades of faith and knowledge, and had nurtured them with a forbearing charity!

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The principle here expressed and acted on by Paul admits of numerous applications. But to what form of Christian labor is the immediate reference here? To that which most exactly corresponds to Paul's peculiar vocation, that where the first concern is to establish the church upon the one foundation, which is Christ; we mean the missionary work. Here should all, after Paul's example, fix their aim upon this single point, to make Christ everywhere known, to testify only of Him. Here, then, should the strife respecting differences in the form of representation and differences of creed find no place; and amidst all diversities on these points, there should be a union of labor for the one object of proclaiming Christ. Whatever differences may exist on other points, should all be made an offering to his cause. To each one it should be matter of rejoicing that through others also, and even such as in his view have a less perfect knowledge of Christ, He, the great centre of all, is made more and more widely known. We may apply this example of Paul in still another view. There are times in which the church, even where it is already firmly established, is called on to exercise anew a missionary activity; times in which the ideas and tendencies to which Christianity first gave being and currency, though still exerting their influence upon society, yet deny their connection with Christianity, and even array themselves against it. Such are times of wide-wasting apostasy; when the culture, which has grown up under the fostering care of Christianity, rises up in opposition to it,—an opposition which may, however, have been first called forth by the impure mixture of human institutions with Christianity. Such periods occur in the history of all religions, when reason, matured to self-dependence, dis-unites itself from the faith under whose guardianship it has been nurtured. Nor could Christianity escape this fate. It is subject to the same laws and conditions as all things human; and distinguishes itself only in the manner in which, by virtue of its divine nature and character, it rises victorious from all such conflicts. For whilst other religions find in such conflicts their grave, to Christianity they prove but the transition points to a resurrection, in increased purity and glory, in the energy of a renewed youth. In such times; as well as in

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periods of missionary labor, does the principle “that Christ alone be preached” find anew its application. The sole concern then is, that Christ should first of all be brought near to the souls estranged from him, that he may draw them to himself and make them subject to him. Here too, all cannot be achieved at once; but gradually, from the common relation to the one Christ, must the way be opened for a union among souls reclaimed to him from the most diverse forms of error. Here must Paul’s example of magnanimous denial of self be our guide. Here every one, who is animated by the same spirit with the Apostle, must rejoice if “in every way Christ is preached,” even when he cannot but feel that the manner leaves much to be desired.

Still another trait of Paul’s Christian character is presented to us, in his manner of accepting the gifts sent to him by the Philippian church. There is in the natural man a false striving after independence and self-reliance; a pride of self-will, which not seldom decks itself with noble names, the influence of which is to make one ashamed to accept from others gifts of which he stands in need, lest he should humble himself before them. A still worse development of the same radical fault of the natural man is seen, when the gifts indeed are accepted and enjoyed, but there is a disposition to forget them again, to shun the remembrance of them, to acknowledge no indebtedness to others through fear of seeming dependent, of humbling one’s self before them. But the Apostle is penetrated by the consciousness, that all are related to each other as the members of one body, and should abide in this mutual dependence upon one another as members under one head, Christ Jesus. He knows that the growth of the whole body, from the one head which guides animates and connects all the members, can only then be truly promoted, when all the single members are ready, as instruments of the one head, mutually to sustain and forward each other in spiritual and in temporal things, to work together in love and unity. This is beautifully expressed by Paul in the Epistle to the Ephesians (iv. 15, 16): “That we grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” Christ is here presented as the one to whom the whole development must tend; the aim of all is to grow up into true fellowship with him, to receive him wholly into themselves, to become full of him. He is equally the one, from whom the whole growth up into him can alone proceed; from whom issue all the vital energies, the living juices; from whom alone all the members can receive life and direction. Christ so works upon the whole body, that by means of the different members through which his vitalizing influence flows, using each in its appropriate manner, he works through the whole. And hence the growth, proceeding from him and

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tending up to him, can truly prosper only when all the members alike yield themselves to him; and under his guidance, in mutual dependence and mutual influence upon each other, abide together in closest union. The Christian should ever bear in mind, that our various necessities, and the means of supplying them, are distributed in varying modes and proportions through the different members, in order to keep them in a state of mutual dependence and reciprocal influence; so that no one may break loose from his connection with the whole, thinking to maintain an existence by himself, and that mutual necessities may serve continually for the furtherance of mutual love. The Christian will not be ashamed, therefore, of a dependence upon others springing from such a connection; but will recognize it as the law naturally arising from the relation of the members to one another. As he who gives rejoices in having received from God means which he may use for the aid of the other members; regarding it as a loan for this purpose from their common Lord, as a medium for the manifestation of that love which the Spirit of God has poured into the hearts of believers, that being the mark by which the disciples of the Lord, the members of his body, are to be known: so he that receives rejoices far less in the brief temporal service of the gift, than in the heavenly temper expressed in the bestowal,—in the love, that vital principle of the church, which manifests itself therein. He knows that it is for the highest good of the giver himself; who thus, by deeds of love, sows in the earthly life what he shall reap in life eternal; who thus manifests in his works the spirit which makes him meet for life eternal. So Paul represents the Christian relation, in his own manner of accepting the gifts of the Philippian church, when he says: “I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length your care for me hath flourished again,”—rejoiced, that now after long-endured privation, they are placed once more in a condition to fulfil the wish they had ever felt, to care for his temporal wants;—“because ye have ever cared for me, but ye lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in respect of want.” And in conclusion he says: “Not because I desire a gift, but I desire fruit”—the fruit which springs for them out of such manifestations of love—“which may abound to your account”—may be laid up for life eternal.

Again: Paul here gives us a model of the genuine Christian character, in his demeanor in respect to external things. The Christian, in the power of the Lord through which he is able to do all things, proves his independence of the world, and his supremacy over it, by his ability to endure joyfully all the privations which the Lord lays upon him, in the circumstances of his lot, in what is required of him by his calling. His soul, filled with the divine life, cannot be bowed down by earthly want. Subjected to privation, he so much the more feels and proves his inward mastery of the world. But the Christian is far also from that self-imposed mortification of the flesh, in an imaginary spirituality, which nevertheless only serves for the satisfaction of the fleshly mind; for in the Holy Scriptures, all which does not proceed from the divine Spirit, all which comes from our own will, therefore every form of

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vanity and spiritual pride is ascribed to the flesh. (*Coloss. ii. 23.*¹¹) He is far from imposing upon himself privations, in order thereby to merit anything before God or man, though submitting joyfully to those which God lays upon him; but accepts with humble gratitude whatever God may bestow upon him above what is required for his absolute wants. The Christian's greatness is ever built upon humility. His independence of the world, his supremacy over it, consists in just this, that in every condition of want or abundance he is the same, neither depressed by want nor seduced by prosperity into worldliness and vain-glory; that he uses both alike in order to make known that divine life by which he is raised above the world. This is the spirit which Paul here exhibits when he says, that though he needs not the Philippians' gifts of love, he still rejoices in that love which prompted them; and when to this he adds the testimony, that he has accustomed himself to all changes of condition; that he knows how to adapt himself equally to all circumstances, whether of want or abundance, through the power of Him who animates him. "I have learned," says he, "in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in every respect and in all things I am fully instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Such is true Christian fortitude and greatness of soul, whose basis is humility.



11 This passage, incorrectly translated by Luther, stands thus in the original: "which (namely, the principles spoken of in vss. 21 and 22) have indeed a show of wisdom in self-chosen spirituality and humility and mortification of the body, but have no worth, serving only for the satisfying of the flesh." Ex. MSS.

SECTION SECOND.

AFTER having thus carefully considered Paul in his then existing circumstances and temper of mind, let us now turn our attention to the state of the Philippian church, and to what Paul has to say in reference to this, by way of warning and counsel for the future.

We will first take a general view, and from this pass to particulars.

It is customary with Paul to commence his letters, with a recognition of whatever is praiseworthy in the church to which he is writing. In this appears his wisdom as a spiritual guide. The confidence of men is far more easily won, and a hearing secured for whatever one has to say in the way of admonition and rebuke, if it appears that he nowise overlooks or undervalues what is good in them, that he does not willingly find fault, but is ready to acknowledge every real excellence with cordial approbation. Good and bad, moreover, stand frequently in close connection with each other. The good lies at the foundation; but the evil mingles its disturbing influence with the good, and hence it is through the latter that we can best reach and remedy the former. It is in the clear perception of this relation, and in the skilful use of it for the correction of error, that Paul manifests his wisdom. Of this a striking example is furnished in the first epistle to the Corinthians. Thus Paul regards whatever of real value he finds already existing in the churches, not as something produced in them from themselves and by their own agency, but wrought in them by the Spirit of God, that Spirit which has begun to transform them into new men. Hence he feels himself constrained to thank God for that which He has wrought in their hearts and in their lives by his grace, before he offers to Him the prayer, that what He has already wrought in them He will more and more purify, carry it forward, and bring it to perfection. Upon the good which already exists in them he builds the hope, that they will ever continue to advance in goodness, even unto perfection. Not indeed upon the good as a work of man can he rest such a hope. He knows too well the weakness of man, too well how subject is everything human to constant change. But this is the ground of his hope, that in this beginning of the Christian life he sees not the work of man but the work of God. He thus builds his hope upon the truth and faithfulness of God, who will certainly carry forward what He has begun, through all conflicts and trials, safely to its consummation. It is not God's way to do things by halves. Thus too does Paul begin his letter to the Philippians; thanking God for their living fellowship in the gospel from the beginning up to the present hour; and then expressing the confidence, that He who has begun in them the good work will also carry it on to its completion. In this it is indeed always presupposed by Paul, that they likewise will do what belongs to them, by yielding themselves to the power of God which works nothing without man, albeit man without it can work nothing; as in the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Romans (v. 22), he represents the continued manifestation of God's goodness in men as conditioned on



their continuing in His goodness, and thus susceptible of the grace of God. by truly yielding themselves up to its influence. It is on this connection between the divine and the human he founds the exhortation, “to work out their salvation with fear and trembling; for,” he adds, “it is God who worketh in you both the willing and the doing, of his own good pleasure.” It is here assumed that the salvation of man is conditioned upon his own conduct. He is himself to work out his salvation. And yet Paul always represents the salvation of man as something which can be accomplished only through the grace of God, as the work of God in man. But he adds, in this passage, a more exact designation of the temper of heart with which they should work out their salvation, viz., “with fear and trembling.” This would not be appropriate if he were speaking of what lay merely in the hand of man, in which case all would depend upon his own strength. It is because Paul is conscious of the weakness and insufficiency of all human strength, because he presupposes that man can do nothing without God, and must constantly watch over himself, lest through his own fault he lose the aid of divine grace, without which all human efforts are in vain; it is for this reason that he designates this temper of mind as one of fear and trembling, as the feeling of personal accountability and helplessness, of insecurity and instability in ourselves, by which we may be ever admonished to continual watchfulness, and to ever-renewed waiting upon God as the fountain of all our strength. Hence, as the ground of such an admonition, he appeals to this consciousness that we can of ourselves do nothing, that it is God who alone bestows upon us the power to will and to perform what is needful to our salvation; that all, indeed, depends upon his sovereign will. This feeling of dependence, the ground-tone of the Christian life, is ever to be maintained. It is this which must combat the presumption of a vain human self-reliance, which, finding itself deceived in the result, so easily gives place to dejection and despair.

All the admonitions which Paul gives the Philippians in reference to the Christian walk, are comprehended in this one; that they should “walk in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ.” And what is required of them in their position, in the midst of a corrupt world, he points out in [chapter ii. 15-16](#). Inasmuch, he says, as they are called to live as children of God in the midst of a corrupt world, they are called to maintain unsullied, amidst all the defilements of surrounding pollution, that divine life of which, as children of God, they have become participants, and to show forth its glory in contrast with the perverse generation in which they live. The terms “crooked and perverse,” in which Paul describes this wicked generation, have reference to the perversion of the original godlike nature, which can be restored only through the new creation. So also, as children of God, they are to shine as lights, as radiant luminaries in the world of darkness. Whilst all around them is darkness, here alone shall all be light. So indeed does Christ say to those who belong to his kingdom, that they are to be the lights of the world, just as He is the Sun who sends his light into this dark world, its light in the highest and only true sense. Thus what He is, is communicated

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to those who enter into fellowship with him, and they too through him become the light of the world. This light shines in the holy walk of Christians, and thereby do they testify of Him who is light itself, and in whom is no darkness; thereby do they glorify him and lead others to acknowledge and honor him; as Christ himself has said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they seeing your good works may glorify your Father which is in Heaven.” They are to testify of that which is life, to show forth the true life in this world of death.¹² Everything which men, in accordance with the revelation of the law written in their consciences through the impulses of their moral nature, are accustomed to account moral and virtuous, belongs also to the peculiar stamp of this new divine life, in which the children of God manifest themselves as such. All must find its fulfilment here; only that is done away which proceeds from the disturbing influence of sin; as Christ says, that he “came not to destroy but to fulfil.” Hence it is the conclusion of Paul’s exhortation,¹³ that their minds be directed only to “what is true”—(true and good being in the biblical sense one and the same, the truth here appears as that which penetrates and gives direction to the whole life; all has its root in the truth, the true is the divine)—to “what is becoming, what is upright, what is chaste, what is lovely, what is of good report, whatever is virtue and whatever is praise.” Thus it is implied by Paul, that the divine life must manifest itself in an amiable form before men; and he appeals to what they had learned from his instructions, and had witnessed in the example of his own life. Although, as we have seen above, he was far from holding his life to be entirely pure and perfect, yet he could with confidence assume the essential correspondence between his life and teachings, and that his conduct did not give the lie to his instructions. And thus he was able, without untruth or self-exaltation, to hold up to the Philippians the example of his own course among them as an admonition to them. Self-exaltation is the less to be attributed to him here, as he was himself fully conscious, that whatever in his own conduct he proposed as their example was only the work of grace, the fruit of the new creation in him. So may the Christian when made aware, by a comparison of his earlier and later life, of having gained the victory over the old nature in any of its sinful tendencies, be fully conscious of this and freely rejoice over it; for this is no self-exaltation. He knows that it is not to his own nature or his own strength that he is indebted for it; that the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ has wrought this in him; and therefore the consciousness of his victory only impels him to praise and to thank Him, through whose power he has attained it. And at the same time, he feels himself constrained to acknowledge how much still remains for him to contend with. and with the Apostle, whose words we have quoted, to forget what is behind and press continually forward.

12 As in some MSS. “holding forth the true life.”

13 Chap. iv. 8.

The church at Philippi, as we have already remarked, had been called to endure many forms of persecution. It was necessary that Paul should exhort them to steadfastness under these trials. How then does he express himself? It is important for us to bring this out clearly, for it is applicable to all the conflicts which Christianity has to encounter in all times. They should in no wise suffer themselves to be terrified by their adversaries;¹⁴ “which to them is an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation and that of God. For to you it is given, for the sake of Christ—not only to believe on him—but for his sake to suffer also.” What is the full import of these words? This is best shown by contrast. Had the opposers of the gospel succeeded in terrifying the Philippians, it would thereby have been made manifest how much these opposers could effect, what power they possessed; the weakness of the Philippians would have appeared, and the cause which they served might have seemed an impotent one. Or it might have seemed merely a contest between man and man, their opponents being the stronger and they the weaker party. Their demeanor would have been a testimony, how much was still wanting to them of that divine power which was to manifest its efficacy in believers; how much, therefore, they still lacked of the genuine life of faith. But while they did not suffer themselves to be terrified by those who warred with weapons of the flesh, this was a proof that they were in the service of a divine cause, victorious over all human opposition; that a power of God wrought in them against which no human force could avail. The conflict with their adversaries served but to test and to approve their faith, and their power through faith. It was a proof of the vanity of their opposers’ efforts; even as Christ reckons it as one of the works of the Holy Spirit, to lead men to the conviction that the Prince of this world has been judged, and hence can accomplish nothing farther through his instruments ([Jno. xvi. 11](#)). Thus through them is this power of the Holy Spirit manifested. So far, it was an evidence of the condemnation drawn upon themselves by those who warred in the service of the Prince of this world. But for the Philippians, it was for that very reason a certain proof, a pledge, of their salvation; for the faith which remains steadfast in conflict is indeed assured of salvation. It was the pledge that the power of God, through which they were able to hold themselves unterrified by their adversaries, would also lead them through all conflicts to final salvation; as in the works of God one thing answers to another, one guaranties the other. And thus Paul gives special prominence to the thought, that this is not of man; that it is no illusive human proof, but a factual proof given by God himself. It is one part of this proof, that to them it was given of God to suffer for Christ’s sake. For whoever follows Christ in his sufferings, must needs follow him also in his glorification. Paul had said, “for Christ’s sake;” intending at first only to say, “for Christ’s sake to suffer.” But he would bring out the full meaning of this with a stronger emphasis. He therefore interrupts himself, and says, “not merely to believe on him, but for his sake to



14 Chap. i. 28, 29.

suffer also.” He who believes in Christ is, so far as his faith approves itself to be genuine, certain of the blessedness of heaven. But it is also requisite that this faith approve itself to be genuine, by assuring its possessors against all fear of their adversaries; and by giving them the power to follow Christ in his sufferings, as in general its office is, in all things, to bring them into fellowship with Christ. And therefore, although with faith in Christ, as the root of all else pertaining to the Christian life, all else is given so far as regards the principle whence it springs, the germinating power which produces it; yet to suffer for Christ is more than merely to believe on him, inasmuch as through these sufferings the power of faith makes itself manifest, approves itself to be genuine. For one might suppose himself the possessor of that genuine faith, and yet the result, when he was found to shun a participation in the sufferings of Christ, would prove the contrary. In another view, indeed, suffering is of less account than faith. For there might be a suffering too, which was not true Christian suffering, as not proceeding from the life of faith, that faith which works by love. As Paul says in [1 Cor. xiii. 3](#); “And though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.” The same is true, in general, of the relation of faith to the entire course of Christian life in its outward manifestation, of the relation of faith to good works. It everywhere finds an application, in a greater or less degree, in respect to the relation of the inward to the outward, of the internal feeling to its manifestation in action.

The Christian life is no instinctive, unconscious one. It follows not feeling alone; but demands, everywhere and in all things an intelligent discrimination between what is of God and what is not, in respect to all the relations of life; between what accords to the will of the Lord, to the spirit and nature of Christianity, and what is in contrariety thereto. It cannot subsist, cannot fulfil its mission, without a considerate conscious process of scrutiny and discrimination. As flesh and spirit are still coexisting in the Christian, and are ever in conflict with each other; so the power of discriminating what proceeds from the one or the other, what is in accordance with the one or the other, is continually needed, in order that the Christian may not yield to the suggestions of the flesh, when he thinks he is acting according to the impulses of the spirit. Of such a testing and discriminating process there was especial need, in churches established in the midst of the Pagan or Jewish world; since there, Christianity, contending with existing customs relations and views of life which were the product of another spirit and principle, was now first to bring into existence a new creation, in which Christ should be all in all. Here of course the question must often arise: What does Christianity require? In what respects does the heathen or Jewish point of view stand opposed to it? Wherein may the Christian conform himself to the world, wherein may he not? For this reason Paul, in his practical admonitions to this church, desires for them especially increase in knowledge,¹⁵ in the faculty of perception; that they might test things which differ, the

15 Chap. i. 9.

good and the bad, the true and the false, that thus they might avoid the one and choose the other. Paul assumes that, for this work, the diligent exercise of the faculty of perception is necessary; that such a power of discernment is the fruit of unremitting exercise of the Christian judgment. In like manner in the epistle to the Hebrews (v. 14), it is accounted one of the attributes of the state of Christian maturity, that, through the exercise of the organs of spiritual perception, a readiness had been attained for distinguishing good and evil. But if, on the one hand, there are objects of knowledge and judgment where all depends on the exercise of the understanding, where he who is most practised in thinking possesses also the best judgment, and is most fully guarded against error; yet in regard to the objects which the Apostle has in mind, those pertaining to moral duties, this is by no means the case. In general, we shall often find how much the judgment is here biassed by the direction of the will. The mistakes which lie at the basis of action, and errors in conduct, arise not so much from defect in the thinking faculty, as from selfish inclinations which sway the judgment. And this is particularly the case with Christianity, which assigns wholly new objects as the aim of life. To know what is in harmony with it, Love must be the controlling and directing principle of the whole life. The more entirely one is animated by love, the more will his moral judgment be in harmony with Christianity. A soul, however well practised in thinking, will miss the right, if not thus quickened and the eye of the spirit made single by love. To this we must add, that Christianity is no mere law of the letter, which establishes only single general rules of duty, according to which all single cases of conduct are to be determined; but it is a law of the Spirit, which makes known to each individual his peculiar mission in life, that very one which the Lord has appointed him to fulfil, and what is needed for its fulfilment. No one can prescribe to another, what from his standpoint, under his appointed relations, it is his duty to do; but it is Love, that spirit common to all, which makes known to each in particular what is duty for him, and in reference to this leads him to make the necessary discrimination. To love, therefore, Paul here gives the first place, and ascribes to its quickening presence the knowledge and capacity required for distinguishing the good and the bad, the true and the false; as he himself expresses it, “that your love may more and more abound in all knowledge;” meaning, that *therein* its effect is seen,—that increase of knowledge in the fruit of more abundant love. But as here the theoretical proceeds from the practical, the new direction of the judgment from the new direction of the will, of the moral disposition; so is the theoretical in like manner to react upon the practical, the enlightened judgment upon the conduct. Hence Paul adds, as the object to be thus attained, that they should continue “pure and irreproachable” in their Christian walk, until all shall appear before the Lord; “being filled with the fruit of righteousness, which is by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.” Thus Paul here designates righteousness, not as something to be gradually acquired; but on the contrary, it is presupposed as something inherent in their fellowship with Christ, flowing out to them from him, as produced in them by his Spirit.

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He contemplates the entire Christian life as the fruit of this righteousness; not speaking, as in other passages, of single fruits in single works, but of the whole Christian course in its connected unity as one fruit, and that the fruit which is produced by Jesus Christ. That from him all proceeds, that through him all is accomplished, is the very thing which gives to such a life its peculiar stamp. This it is which is truly well-pleasing unto God, and by which God is truly glorified, even as the whole life of Christ was a glorifying of God in our nature. But it is also clear from what has been said, that though, as a whole, the Christian life is thus represented as a fruit of righteousness produced by Jesus Christ, yet with this are presupposed many different stages of development, many separate results of the reciprocal working of the practical and theoretical, of the moral disposition and the judgment, as necessary to the production of this sum total; just as the fruit of the tree, to follow the image chosen by Paul, does not attain to its full form and maturity at once, but through many preparatory stages in the natural process of development and growth.

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We have already observed Paul's manner of contemplating the church as a whole consisting of various members, whose growth is dependent on the harmonious co-operation of all. But many hindrances stood opposed to this harmonious action; and these could only be overcome gradually by the subduing power of the Christian spirit. Only by degrees, and through the power of that spirit, could this higher unity be formed out of the conflicting elements existing in the church. Some of these originated in national differences, in the modes of thought peculiar to those of Jewish or of pagan parentage. From these arose those opposite leading tendencies, of which we shall speak more particularly hereafter. There was also the difference of rank and wealth, which threatened to impair the spirit of oneness and equality in the Christian body. And, finally, there were differences arising from peculiarities in constitution and mental endowments, all which had been brought by Christianity into its service. Hence the diversities in the operations of the Holy Spirit, animating these different natural gifts; and hence too the diversity of spiritual gifts, and of offices connected with them, in the church. From all these diversities collisions might arise, disturbing the unity and harmony of the church; each might wish to magnify what was peculiar to himself, and thus self-exaltation and disunion follow, occasioning strife among the members. Here then, in order to secure that unity in the church which belongs to its nature, all must be harmonized by the victorious spirit of love. It is clear how important and necessary, under these relations, were Paul's reproofs and admonitions, his warnings against self-exaltation and disunion, his exhortations to humility and harmony. Let us examine this point more particularly. If they would make his joy complete,¹⁶ they must be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind; nothing must be done through party spirit or vain ambition, but in humility each must esteem others better than himself. But how are we to under-

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16 Chap. ii. 2, 3.

stand this? One's judgment of another is not within the control of his own will. How can he esteem his brother higher than himself, if this is not in accordance with the truth; if he cannot but perceive in himself excellencies which are wanting to the other, and defects in the other from which he is himself free? How can it be required of him to do violence to his judgment? Is he to practise deception upon himself? Is humility to be grounded upon falsehood? Most certainly not. If one should endeavor to work himself into such a judgment of others in comparison with himself, or should express such a judgment without really thinking so, this would be mere hypocrisy in a grosser or more refined form. But there is here pre-supposed, as resulting from the full development of the Christian life, a pervading temper of heart, of which such a judgment of one's self in comparison with others is but the necessary and natural expression. The Christian's love will lead him first of all to discern what is good in another, to discover even in his blemishes his peculiar gifts, that in which he is really superior to himself; while, on the other hand, through a self-scrutiny sharpened by the Spirit which quickens him, he detects with rigorous exactness his own faults. And this self-rigor, united with love, will give leniency to his judgment of whatever may obscure the divine life in others. Thus a readiness to take such a position, in respect to others, as is here represented, will not be a mere casual thing with the Christian, something produced in him from without by external influence; but is the spontaneous result of the internal process of Christian development. And this manner of viewing one's self, in relation to others, will appear likewise in his whole conduct in regard to them. The idea is of course excluded that one should make himself the centre of all, referring everything to himself, and thus regarding all others as existing but for him. It is clear how greatly others will in this way rise in his estimation. This spirit of love and humility will manifest itself in his deportment towards others; and hence it is added: "Look not each one upon his own things, but also on the things of others." Let each one be ready to subordinate his own interest to that of others, to deny himself for the welfare of others. Paul says, "also," although the form of the first clause would not lead us to expect such a limitation. But he adds this "also" because it is not his aim wholly to exclude the care for our own interests, but only to oppose the tendency to make this predominant, to allow it to swallow up all else. Of course he here speaks only of human, worldly interests, which one is bound to sacrifice for the best good of others; for in regard to that which is the highest and properly real interest of each one personally, his own soul's welfare, the cultivation of the inner man for the life of eternity, no such contrariety can exist, no such requirement of self-denial can be made. But does this seem to conflict with what we have previously remarked of self-denial in reference even to the higher interests of the spirit? By no means. The true, the highest interest of the spirit, that it should be ever growing in self-denying love, in purification from all selfishness, thereby becoming ever more meet for the kingdom of God and eternal life, this must always



be promoted by such sacrifices, even in reference to what we call the higher interests of the soul, which yet are not its highest interest. In reference to such a temper and course of conduct, Paul now presents, as the type and pattern, Him after whom the whole Christian life in its spirit and conduct should be moulded, Christ himself. “Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, did not eagerly claim equality with God;¹⁷ (so, we think the Greek is more truly expressed than in Luther’s version;) but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Therefore also hath God exalted him over all, and hath given him a name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of beings in heaven and upon the earth and underneath the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.”

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That we may rightly understand the use here made of the example of Christ, as the model after which the Christian life is to be formed, we must first endeavor to bring the model itself clearly and distinctly before our minds. Before the eye of the Apostle stands the image of the whole Christ, the Son of God appearing in the flesh, manifesting himself in human nature. From the human manifestation he rises to the Eternal Word (as John expresses it), that Word which was, before the appearance of the Son of God in time, yea, before the worlds were made; in whom before all time God beheld and imaged himself; as Paul in the Epistle to the Colossians calls him, in this view, the image of the invisible, i. e. of the incomprehensible God. Then, after this upward glance of his spiritual eye, he descends again into the depths of the human life, in which the Eternal Word appears as man. He expresses this in the language of immediate perception, beholding the divine and human as one; not in the form of abstract truth, attained by a mental analysis of the direct object of thought. Thus he contemplates the entrance of the Son of God into the form of humanity as a self-abasement, a self-renunciation, for the salvation of those whose low estate he stooped to share. He whose state of being was divine, who was exalted above all the wants and limitations of the finite and earthly existence, did not eagerly claim this equality with God which he possessed; but, on the contrary, he concealed and disowned it in human abasement, and in the forms of human dependence. And as the whole human life of Christ proceeded from such an act of self-renunciation and self-abasement, so did his whole earthly life correspond to this one act even to his death; the consciousness on the one hand of divine dignity which it was in his power to claim, and on the other the concealment, the renunciation of this, in every form of humiliation and dependence belonging to the earthly life of man. The crowning point appears in his death,—the ignominious and agonizing death of the cross. Paul now proceeds to show what Christ attained by such self-renunciation, thus carried to

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17 In his appearance on earth, as understood by Neander; see page 103, line 3.—Tr.

the utmost limit, by such submissive obedience in the form of a servant; the reward which he received in return, the dignity which was conferred upon him.

Here too is presented the universal law, laid down by Christ himself, that whoso humbles himself, and in proportion as he humbles himself, shall be exalted. Now it is of itself apparent that He who, according to Paul's teaching, was in his own nature elevated above all, the first-born over the whole creation, He through whom and in whom all was created, could not as such be exalted. But, as already intimated, it is the image of the One Christ uniting in himself the divine and human, which is here before the mind of Paul. Of this Christ in humanity it might be predicated, that lie is as man exalted above all,—the glorified Son of man. And this his exaltation subserves no selfish interest. He finds his exaltation in the salvation of fallen beings. This was its end, in this indeed it should consist, that by the universal acknowledgment of Him as Lord and Saviour and subjection to Him as such, God might be glorified in Him and through Him; glorified in the triumphant establishment of his kingdom. What application then is to be made of this example, in the connection in which the Apostle introduces it? As Christ aimed only to subserve the salvation of men, so should Christians be ready to labor thus for the salvation of their brethren. As Christ offered up all for the salvation of men, so should Christians also be ready to offer up all for the salvation of their brethren; to give up everything for others, in order to secure their highest welfare; thus in self-humiliation and self-renunciation following their Lord. So shall the life of the Christian too, from its first spiritual beginning, from the first act of faith, be a continuous self-abasement and self-renunciation. And this being the ground and condition of Christ's exaltation as the Son of man, so shall the same be, for believers who thus follow Christ, the ground and condition of their exaltation, till they come to share the full glory of Him whom they follow. We may compare this with a similar development of the same thought by Paul in [2 Cor. viii. 9](#), where he says of Christ: "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor." To the "being rich" corresponds the "being in divine form," the "being equal with God," in the passage before us; to the "becoming poor," the self-renunciation and self-abasement in the human servant-form, in its full extent as exhibited above. In the passage just quoted, this is used as an exhortation to that benevolence which sacrifices its own, subjects itself to privations, in order to relieve the necessities of others. It is based on the general thought, arising from a contemplation of the life of Christ, that each one should be ready to give up and to renounce all that he has for the highest good of others; the beneficent and condescending spirit of self-denying Christian love, which pervades the whole Christian life in all its acts. And in this general form is the thought conceived in the passage before us. It is this which characterizes Paul as a moral teacher; that with him the specific is in all cases carried back to the highest, deepest, most comprehensive; that his special admonitions, in regard to the Christian life and character, have for their basis the general fundamental ideas of the whole Christian life, all centering in the example of Christ.

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The church at Philippi needed the Apostle's admonitions and warnings, especially in reference to the obstacles with which Christianity, in its process of development, then had chiefly to contend. This process has in every age its peculiar obstacles to overcome; and it would be easy to show a certain affinity between these opposing influences, although different periods give rise to different forms. But here an important distinction is to be made. There may be spiritual tendencies and teachings, which come into direct conflict with the peculiar essence of Christianity; a case where no reconciliation is possible, but the choice must be for the one or for the other; and where the decision for the pure Christian tendency, must manifest itself in firm adherence to the one and steadfast rejection of the other. Somewhat different is it with those tendencies, which unite with the sincere acknowledgment of Christian truth only a slight remaining influence of former views, and which form in their successive stages the gradual transition to pure Christian truth. This is especially true of the obstacles, with which Christianity had then to contend in its process of development. As it was from Judaism the transition was made to Christianity, so did the first important obstacle to its process of development, arise from the intermixture of views brought from the Jewish standpoint. It is to these views that the distinction above stated must be applied.

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Such a predominance of the Jewish spirit did exist, through which the consciousness of the peculiar nature of Christianity was essentially repressed and stifled. Jesus was indeed outwardly acknowledged as the Messiah; but there was wanting the true import and power of such a conviction. He was made, after the Jewish conception, a carnal Messiah with carnal hopes. As Christ, after the miracle of the loaves, said to those who followed him with false views ([John vi. 26](#)), that it was not because they had seen the miraculous signs,—tokens of the manifestation of the divine in the world of sense, intended to point to a nature in itself divine made known through these tokens,—that not for these did they seek him, but because they had eaten of the loaves and were filled, that only sensual want attached them to him; so in these Jews of whom we are now speaking, there was the same lack of the divine sense, of the feeling of higher, inward, spiritual need. With them too it was only a mere sensual want, which led them to believe on Jesus. And though they differed from the Jews to whom Christ spoke in this respect, that they were not led by this similar fleshly tendency to open opposition against Jesus as the Messiah, but sought on the contrary to be outwardly united to him, yet no important advantage was thus gained. For while the former would not believe on a Jesus, who did not satisfy their physical necessities; the latter, believing in Jesus as the Messiah, yet made him nearly such an one as those had desired, and such as Jesus refused to be. With this one article, of faith in Jesus as the Messiah in the sense here given, they united, as we have already seen, a strict adherence to the entire legal position. Not Jesus the Messiah was to them the sole ground of salvation; but in the observance of the whole Law, and in circumcision, they sought for righteousness and salvation. Not the righteousness

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which comes from within, from faith, was the object of their desire; but a righteousness which comes to man from without.

It is clear that where an opposition of this kind existed, there could be no agreement, no reconciliation. The true Christian spirit alone could make the decision, between a carnal or a spiritual Messiah; between a righteousness grounded on faith in the Redeemer alone, or in the Law and its works; between the transformation effected by the divine life, working from within the reformation of the whole man, or a mere external change in outward conduct; between God's work or man's work, humble acceptance of divine gifts, humble surrender to Jesus as the Saviour, or a carnal Messiah with the admission of the desert of one's own works. It was because the question for the new churches was of just such an unconditional opposition, between what was Christian and what was unchristian, that Paul felt himself obliged to present the case so strongly, and to testify so earnestly against those erroneous views. "Beware of dogs" (the term in the original expressing the shameless effrontery of these opposers of the truth); "beware of evil workers" (those who would supplant the Christian by the Jewish stand-point); "beware of the concision." But how is it that Paul here speaks of circumcision, which he nevertheless regarded as a divine ordinance for a specific period, in so contemptuous a manner? Circumcision was in his estimation a divine seal, by which the theocratic people were separated, as the divinely consecrated race, from the nations abandoned to idolatry and its attendant abominations, for the purpose of conducting to that fellowship with God which should one day embrace all humankind. To him it was, as he says in the Epistle to the Romans, an outward symbol of the new relation to God, into which Abraham entered by virtue of his faith ([Rom. iv. 11](#)); and emblematical of that inward spiritual circumcision, the circumcision of the heart in the spirit, of purification from the excrescences of sin, which alone constitutes a true people of God, through which alone the conception of a people of God can find its realization. But if now, as was the case with those Judaizers, justification and salvation were sought in this outward circumcision, as such; if indeed to faith in Jesus as the Messiah, who in his true character was the author of all righteousness, circumcision was to be added as something higher, as the real source of true righteousness; then was Paul bound to expose, in the most emphatic manner, the utter worthlessness of such an external act in reference to the object to be attained. No words could seem to him too strong to represent the perverseness of such a view as this; which could ascribe that to the external and sensuous, which can only be produced from within, by virtue of what is wrought within upon the spirit, through the imparting of a divine life. Hence he calls circumcision, in opposition to such an over-estimation of it, a concision, a self-mutilation; and in the Epistle to the Galatians, with a similar contemptuous allusion to the abuse of this abrogated rite, he expresses the wish that those who made so much account of circumcision would practise it to what extent they pleased on themselves, provided they



would but leave other Christians in peace. Certainly that which seems to Paul as something so unchristian and perverse, and excites in him so much indignation, must have reference not merely to circumcision, that single peculiarity of Judaism, but to everything external and sensuous regarded as a ground of justification, of sanctification, of salvation; for, as such, it stands in direct opposition to that worship of God in spirit and in truth, which springs solely from the inward act of faith. This contrariety to the true Christian principle is expressed in the succeeding words, "For we are the circumcision." That is, they are not the truly circumcised, but their miscalled circumcision is a mere excision, a self-mutilation. We are those who really deserve this name; we Christians are the truly circumcised; "we," he adds in proof of the assertion, "who serve God in the spirit, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." We must endeavor to develop the meaning of these weighty words. "To serve God in the spirit," forms the direct opposite to a worship of God connected with sensible, external, earthly things, and dependent thereon; a worship which has not its spring in the spirit within; as when one supposes that he can honor God by receiving circumcision or by any external legal works, be they religious or moral, by any single acts whatever of external worship.

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The true worship of God, on the contrary, Paul describes as one which proceeds from the spirit; meaning by this only such as can proceed from the renewing and sanctifying of the human spirit, by nature estranged from God, through the Holy Spirit which Christ alone imparts. Only thus can the spirit of man, being led back to fellowship with God and made a temple of God, become the sanctuary where God is worshipped aright; and then the whole life and conduct of the spirit is one act of divine worship. But as the redemption attained through Christ is here presupposed, as faith in the Redeemer and fellowship with him is the root and fountain of all, Paul therefore connects therewith the "glorying in the Lord;" i. e. glorying in such a manner as excludes all pride of human glory; a glorying in self-abasement; a glorying, to wit, only in Christ and in that which we are in him, which has its ground in him, for which we are indebted to him, and hence (what is but the counterpart of this) not placing our confidence in anything human. Paul presents his own case as an example in this respect to his Philippian brethren,—a proof of the sincerity of his teachings and admonitions. He appeals to the fact that he himself, as a born Jew brought up in the strictest Pharisism, had lived in the exactest observance of the Law and yet had become convinced that all this could contribute nothing towards his cleansing from sin, his justification, sanctification and salvation; on which account he had renounced all this, in order to find all in Christ alone. He says that as respects the righteousness of the Law, he was blameless. This is said not merely of the requirements of the ceremonial law, but also of moral action so far as it meets the eye of man; both being comprehended under the term law. In all this Paul had been blameless. In the sight of men he was without blemish. What he says applies not less to what is called rectitude among men, than to a piety which consists in particular religious

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acts. Although Paul satisfied the claims which men could rightfully make on him, yet it availed him nothing. When, through the light of the Spirit, the true nature of the divine law and true self-knowledge dawned upon his mind, he seemed to himself, with all this blamelessness before men, not less a sinner on that account, wanting that true divine righteousness in which all flows out from God, and all has reference to Him. He is the true end and aim of the whole life; while all that men call rectitude does not rise above the world. Hence he says, implying the insufficiency of all this: "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dregs that I may win Christ." He would say here, that everything which formerly was in his view a distinction,—as descent from the theocratic nation, legal piety, blamelessness in a legal view,—all this now appears to him a disadvantage, so far as he should rest his confidence thereon and be thereby drawn away from Christ. Christ having now become all to him, all else must give place to Christ. All else, high as it may be in itself, must appear loss if it occasion the loss of Christ, whom none can gain but those who seek and desire Him alone; for that very knowledge of Christ, itself sufficing for all, in itself comprehending all, outshines and eclipses all beside. And hence Paul says, that for the sake of Christ he has willingly suffered the loss of all; that he casts all else away as worthless in order that he may win Christ, who supplies to him the place of all. It is his whole concern to be found in Christ,¹⁸ to stand in fellowship with him. And he thus contrasts that divine righteousness, founded in this relation and proceeding from inward faith, with a righteousness which comes from without, proceeding from the works of the law, a merely human attainment secured by human efforts. In his view, all here depends on knowing Christ. This knowledge is, in the Pauline sense, not something merely intellectual, not a mere matter of speculation, not certain specific articles of faith respecting Christ as they are speculatively developed and handed down; but, on the contrary, as shown in the following words, it is a knowledge which takes root in the life, a matter of personal experience, the believer's inward perception of Christ as the Son of God and his Redeemer. Paul then brings forward into special prominence the power of his resurrection, which of course presupposes the announcement of him as the Crucified, his sufferings for the redemption of man from sin. This prominence he gives to the power of Christ's resurrection, as being the factual proof of the redemption effected by him;—as furnishing the evidence, in a glorified personality, of that imperishable divine life imparted to humanity, by virtue of the redemption from sin and consequent death; a life passing over from him to all who through faith stand in fellowship with him,—the beginning in them of a new divine life, to penetrate more and more their entire being, till they shall become wholly assimilated to it in soul and body. And hence he adds, "to know the

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18 Verse 9.

fellowship of his sufferings;”—that is, how we are to follow him in sufferings, in order that we may more and more become partakers of the divine life in fellowship with the Risen One. He then sums up all in this, “to be made like unto him in his death;” to apply to one’s self the image of his death, in order to attain to the fellowship of his resurrection. We must here refer back to what we have already said on this point, in another connection.¹⁹ Thus we have here, in one view, all which pertains to the Christian life, all which constitutes the righteousness of the Christian, in opposition to the requirements of legal piety or mere human rectitude.

The same class of persons is probably meant when, in a subsequent passage,²⁰ after having proposed his own conduct as an example to the Philippians, he warns them with deep sorrow against many who walk far otherwise, and whom he designates as enemies of the cross of Christ. Here, however, the reference to this class of persons cannot be proved with equal certainty. The words “enemies of the cross of Christ” may be applied to many classes of persons. They may be understood of such as, indeed, acknowledge Jesus the Crucified as their Saviour; but who still show by their manner of thinking and acting, even though themselves unconscious of it, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ. It might be of such as take their stand, consciously, as open enemies of the cross of Christ. This might at that period proceed from two different points of view, which indeed are found recurring in every age; viz. from the position of the wisdom-seeking Greeks, of whom Paul says that Jesus the Crucified was to them foolishness, and from that of the sign-seeking Jews, of whom he says that to them Jesus the Crucified was an offence. It may be the unbelief which comes from the pride of wisdom, from the pride of reason, from the pride of culture, or the unbelief of the earthly sensual man. But this open and conscious opposition cannot, as appears from the connection, be the one here meant. It is inconsistent with the manner in which Paul contrasts these enemies of the cross of Christ with himself. Against such open opposers it was not necessary thus to warn his brethren. The class first mentioned must therefore be the one intended. Still the words admit of several applications. This not open but rather Unconscious enmity to the cross of Christ, may be conceived as taking either a practical or more theoretical form; as manifesting itself only in action, or in doctrine as well as in action. As respects the first, this again may be understood in a two-fold manner. It may mean such as are wanting in that humility, which must spring from the belief that we owe all to the cross of Christ, to Jesus who was crucified for us; in whose life the conceit of self-righteousness, by which the cross of Christ is disowned and disallowed, predominates even though

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19 See p. 90.

20 Verse 18.

this may not betray itself in the doctrines which they preach. But it may also mean those who are far from taking upon them their cross, and thus following Jesus the Crucified; whose life, still devoted to flesh and sin, stands in direct contradiction with the cross of Christ, with faith in that Jesus who for this cause was crucified that he might free humanity from sin, so that all who attach themselves to him should now be crucified to sin, to the world, to themselves. The whole carnal, sinful life of such persons, who, as far as in them lay, made void the very object for which Jesus was crucified, might be called enmity to the cross of Christ. We grant that what follows might also be understood, as directed against men of this carnal course of life. Still we are led by the connection, when compared with the preceding context, to refer it rather to an opposition manifesting itself in the doctrines taught as well as in the life, to that very class of Judaizing adversaries indeed, against whom Paul has previously spoken. These he calls enemies of the cross of Christ, because their standpoint is one to which Christ the Crucified is an offence, a stone of stumbling—though in them this manifests itself not openly and consciously, but rather in an unconscious and covert manner; because nothing was more offensive to them than that preaching which required them to ascribe salvation to the Crucified Jesus alone as their Saviour,—to ascribe all to Him alone; because they held to a legal self-righteousness in opposition to the cross of Christ. It follows from what has already been said, that the views and conduct of such persons were in direct contrast to the worship of God in the spirit; their religious service consisting only in external things, their tendency being wholly to the earthly and sensual. Such a religion brought with it no moral transformation, might co-exist with sin, nay, might form a union with it, giving to the service of sin a false security; as often, in the history of Christianity, we have seen these same tendencies gain a footing under cover of its name. He describes them as those whose god is their belly, those who in all things act merely from earthly impulses, to satisfy their sensual wants; a reproach which Paul often casts upon the judaizing proselytists, that they turned their preaching into a means of gain, seeking to extort by it what might serve for their own advantage. He describes them as earthly-minded, which is explained by the foregoing; and all their hopes were such as corresponded to this earthly disposition. They expected in the future world, as they did in the thousand years' reign promised by them, not that divine life of which the true Christian even here partakes under the veil of the earthly; but, on the contrary, they dreamed of an increased enjoyment of mere earthly pleasures. "Whose glory," he says, "is in their shame," i. e., who seek their honor in that which redounds rather to their shame; as indeed everything, which might seem to distinguish them above others, was in fact a derogation of the Christian life, a renunciation of true Christian excellence.

In contrast with these, Paul now presents the wholly heavenward mind of the genuine Christian, his wholly heavenward hope purified from every stain of sense. This divine life, already freed from earth, forms in its aim and tendency the opposite of that world-ensnared

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religiosity, cleaving wholly to the earthly. This earthly mind, Paul would say, must be far from us who are Christians; "for our conversation is in Heaven." His meaning is, that Christians, as to their life, their walk, belong even now to Heaven; in the whole direction of their life existing there already. This he deduces from their relation to Christ, their fellowship with him to whom they are inseparably united, so that where he is there are they also. While here, they are sustained by the consciousness that Christ now lives in Heaven, manifested to believers, though hidden from the world. Thither is their gaze directed, as their longings rise towards a Saviour, who will come again from thence to make them wholly like himself, to fashion them wholly after his own glorious pattern, to transform them wholly into the heavenly. Hence Paul says: "From whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." There is not presented here a resurrection, as a restoration merely of the same earthly body in the same earthly form; but, on the contrary, a glorious transformation, proceeding from the divine, the all-subduing power of Christ; so that believers, free from all the defects of the earthly existence, released from all its barriers, may reflect the full image of the heavenly Christ in their whole glorified personality, in the soul pervaded by the divine life and its now perfectly assimilated glorified organ. This heavenly form of the Christian hope, the fruit of faith in the risen and ascended Jesus, stands opposed not only to that comfortless unbelief, which makes man a perishable creature like to the brutes, and cuts off all hope of what is beyond the earth; but also, as intended in this passage, to that mere carnal hope which transfers the forms of earthly existence into the future life. Both are scions from one root, the tendency of the natural man; who, whether in the form of sensual grossness or of refined culture, can never escape beyond the narrow limits of time and sense; who has no organ whereby to perceive and comprehend the divine and heavenly. It matters not, therefore, in which of these two forms this tendency of the natural man develops itself; whether it entirely denies and rejects what it cannot perceive and comprehend, denies all personal duration beyond the earthly state, because able itself to conceive nothing beyond this earthly form of personality; or whether it degrades to its own sensual standard what it is either unable or indisposed to deny, and wholly carnalizes the hope which it does not reject. In every form of superstition there is something of unbelief, since that upward impulse of the spirit is wanting by which alone it is possible to rise to the superhuman and divine; hence the divine, as such, is in reality denied and the earthly set in its place. And in all the forms of unbelief there is something of superstition. Every form of unbelief has its idols. It seeks in the powers and outward phenomena of the world, what can only be found in God and in powers which are of God. What Paul says of the idolizing of worldly objects is true also of this, that it makes itself subject to the elements of the world. It clings with all the greater force to the earthly, because it is an utter stranger to all which can give true satisfaction to the spirit formed in

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the image of God. It strives all the more eagerly for earthly interests, because it has renounced the higher interests pertaining to the spirit, which are connected with its true home; and hence the earthly interest has swallowed up all other love, and all other desire, by which the God-related spirit is impelled. Christ, risen from the dead and ascended to heaven, whose life is hid in God and with whom in God our life is hidden (Col. iii. 3), to whom as our life we shall be like in glory when He, now hidden from the world, shall reveal himself in glory,—this, the believer's hope, stands in contrast with both these tendencies of the natural man.



We have spoken of the judaistic tendency existing at this stage of the development of Christianity, so far as this stood directly opposed to the pure Gospel and excluded all reconciliation. But there were also in the churches, such as were in a process of progressive development from Judaism, or some kindred stand-point, to the pure Gospel. These, far from being enemies of the cross of Christ, were filled with love to the Crucified Jesus as their Saviour; but they were still subject to many weaknesses in their faith, not being able to release themselves as yet from much which still clung to them of their former, not wholly extirpated Jewish views. Such persons, whom Paul is accustomed to contrast as “the weak” with the strong mature Christian, are often mentioned in his Epistles; those who still had scrupulous fears about partaking of meats offered to idols, and who, in regard to food and to the observance of certain days as holy, were still in bondage to the Jewish ritual. In these points they were unable to break loose at once from the yoke of Judaism. But did these persons then stand in the same relation as those first-mentioned? Should such as had come over to Christianity from another stand-point, the pagan; and who, though exposed to other dangers, could from that point make their way more easily to Christian freedom; or such as had advanced farther in the development of faith, had more nearly reached the maturity of manhood in Christ; should such withdraw fellowship from, and harshly repel these weaker, in many points less enlightened brethren? This would have been contrary to what Paul requires of Christian love, which bears patiently the infirmities of brethren. It would be to set bounds with impatient presumption to the operations of the Holy Spirit, who is able to lead on farther and farther those in whom He has begun to work; to sever at once the thread of development ordained by the wisdom of God, and alone conducting to Christ as from him it proceeded. How we are to regard and treat these subordinate stages of development, these minor differences, is taught by Paul in this epistle,—in few words indeed, but full of instruction. We must now endeavor to obtain a clear conception of their import.



After having, in a passage already explained, presented as the standard for all, that stage of Christian attainment which forgets everything hitherto accomplished; which, beginning with Christian faith, in entire devotedness to Christ strives ever towards the mark of the heavenly calling; he adds, “As many of us now as are perfect, let us be thus minded.” This



is the stage of the mature believer who has attained to full Christian freedom, who presses forward without hindrance in an ever-progressive development. "And if in anything ye are otherwise minded,"—otherwise, i. e. not in harmony with this principle, "God will reveal also this unto you;" will also in that, wherein ye still think otherwise, reveal to you the right, and thus lead you to unity in adherence to this principle and in its application. Paul refers therefore to the great truth, that the Spirit of God which has revealed to them the light of the Gospel, will also carry on and complete this his revelation in them, even to that point of Christian maturity; that He will continually advance them in Christian knowledge; and where they are still in error and divided in opinion, there too will He yet make known to them the one true way. They should therefore not contend with overhasty zeal; as by this course one is easily estranged more and more widely from another, easily hardened in opposing views through obstinate adherence to what has been once adopted. Still less should they mutually condemn one another, but rather seek to preserve that unity of the Christian spirit which is above all these minor differences; while all submitting to the common guide, the Holy Spirit, should entrust themselves and one another mutually to Him, the best Teacher, to be led on continually under his guidance. As this work has in all the same divinely laid foundation, so should the farther development and the progressive purification of the divine work in each, be left to the operation of the Holy Spirit by whom it is first begun in each. There should be no attempt to do violence, by any external influence, to the peculiar development of another, which must follow its own laws grounded in his peculiar personality; or to substitute something forced on him from without, for the free development proceeding from within. This would be nothing else than attempting, by human arts of persuasion, (which yet have no power to penetrate to the inmost spirit, unless they find a point of connection in the existing attainments of the individual man) to accomplish that which can be wrought only by the Holy Spirit, that inward Teacher, whom all follow without constraint and in perfect harmony with their own freedom. It is only the action of the same leaven of divine truth, that can produce the same results in all; of that leaven which by degrees shall penetrate the whole spiritual life, purifying it from every foreign element. And if there is reference here to a revelation by the Holy Spirit, through which the believer is advanced in knowledge, it is based on the truth everywhere expressed or pre-supposed in the Holy Scriptures, that all divine things can become known only in the light of the Holy Spirit: as Paul elsewhere says, "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." But the idea of revelation in this passage nowise excludes the activity of human thought, which still farther develops and works out, according to the laws of human reason, what has been received by divine illumination. This activity of the human spirit is, however, pre-supposed to be one animated and guided by the Holy Spirit, who is the vital principle in the whole spiritual life; and hence all is here referred back to the Holy Spirit as the primary source, inasmuch as all is here the fruit of its illuminating, guiding and quickening influence; and

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all progressive Christian insight, whether immediately or mediately proceeding from the Holy Spirit, is comprehended in the idea of revelation.

We must now more particularly consider that which Paul makes the necessary condition of this result, viz. that all should yield themselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and thus be led on by him in progressive Christian knowledge. But here it is necessary to inquire into the original form of Paul's words. The passage has been corrupted, by introducing into the text marginal explanations erroneously supposed to be the words of Paul. Divine Wisdom has not seen fit to guard against such corruptions in the course of ages, by a series of miracles, or by the authority of a visible church enjoying infallible guidance. But while free course was here given to natural causes, and thus such corruptions might occur through misapprehension, this was to become the stimulus to an independent spirit of inquiry, and to the cultivation also of all those mental faculties whereby we test and discriminate. By such exercise, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, by the culture and application of that capacity to which we give the name of criticism, and which is one of the natural endowments of the human mind, we were to learn to distinguish the true from the false, and by comparison to ascertain the original form of the Apostolic words. Even criticism, under the guiding and quickening influence of the Holy Spirit, belongs to the spiritual gifts of the church. By it we shall be able here to restore the true form of Paul's words; as by continued investigations, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, a harmony of views in this respect may at length be attained throughout the church.

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If like Luther we follow the later reading, we shall translate with him,—“At least so far as we walk after one rule whereto we have attained, and are like-minded.” According to this, unity is here pointed out as that condition of which we have just spoken; it is an exhortation to unity. Such a thought, however, is quite remote from this connection. Unity is not the condition which the connection would lead us to expect; but, on the contrary, is that which results from the course of conduct required of the church by Paul. When all conduct, in reference to minor differences, as Paul according to our explanation has directed, unity will be maintained unimpaired in the church. Moreover, what is said of “the one rule” and of “the walking together in accordance therewith,” of “being like-minded,” does not suit well with the words “whereto we have attained.” All had not as yet attained to the same grade of spiritual discernment. We find here, therefore, a combination of words unsuited to each other; and it is easy to perceive, how from false glosses appended in explanation of the obscure words (obscure when not rightly apprehended in their connection) “if we do but walk after that whereto we have attained” falsely regarded as an exhortation to unity, all the rest may have originated. We shall, therefore, following the oldest manuscripts that have come down to us, regard these as the genuine words of Paul: “if we but walk according to that whereunto we have attained;” i. e. if each one but faithfully applies to his own life the measure of spir-

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itual discernment bestowed upon him. This then is Paul's meaning: the Holy Spirit will reveal to all whatever is still wanting to them in true Christian knowledge, and thus continually promote the union of their spirits, by purging away whatever foreign elements may still impair it; will from still existing differences develop a higher unity, if first of all that Christian fellowship, which rests upon the one common ground of faith, is firmly adhered to, and each one is careful to put in practice with strict fidelity his own measure of Christian knowledge, without contending with others about matters wherein they differ from himself. All progressive revelation of the Spirit, all new light of which man is made partaker, presupposes a faithful application of what has previously been given. Here too apply the words of the Lord, "He that hath, to him shall be given." How many schisms might have been avoided in the church, how many differences might, much for its interest, have been overcome and adjusted, if all had felt the obligation rightly to understand and apply the principle here laid down by Paul! In Paul's Epistles, as everywhere in the Holy Scriptures, precepts, exhortations, and promises go hand in hand. This must be so, from the peculiar nature of the Gospel as distinguished from the Law. For as all promises are connected with some condition without which they cannot be fulfilled, and this leads to precepts and admonitions; so would these be of no avail were not the promise to the believer presupposed, that promise which ensures the power to fulfil what is required of him. Thus Paul begins with the words, "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say rejoice." He, the prisoner of the Lord, looking it may be to a near approaching death, finds reason to promise and to require an ever-abiding joy in the consciousness of fellowship with the Lord; to make joy indeed the ground-tone of the Christian life, to make the whole Christian life a jubilee of redemption. But with this connects itself the requisition for a Christian walk; since that joy in the Lord cannot exist, if the life of the Christian does not correspond to the law of the Lord, does not testify of fellowship with him. And since the Philippians, as we have already seen,²¹ were placed in circumstances in which they might most easily be tempted to anger and retaliation, if the natural man were not held in check by a higher power, Paul especially urges the admonition, "Let your moderation be known unto all men;" and adds, "The Lord is at hand," appealing to the consciousness that He is ever near.²² This consciousness furnishes the motive to such gentleness under provocation. They walk in the sight of the Lord, and dare not give way to passion in the near presence of Him, who endured every wrong with heavenly patience and long-suffering. This consciousness that the Lord is near, will also restrain them from wishing to anticipate

21 See p. 24.

22 This might indeed be understood as referring to time, viz. the nearness of his coming, towards which the Apostles and the apostolic age, overlooking all that intervened, directed their longing desire. But this idea, though appropriate in some points of view, is obviously less suited to the whole connection than the one which we have exhibited in the text.

his justice, to take the work of retribution into their own hands.—But these words also form the transition to what follows,—to the requirement “Be careful for nothing.” Here too we must take into account the miserable state of the oppressed Christians; and yet they were to be careful for nothing, in the consciousness that the Lord is near. Not all human care is forbidden by Paul, who himself, as we have already seen,²³ in this very Epistle lays claim to earnest human efforts. But such entanglement in cares as stands in contradiction with that requirement, “to rejoice always in the Lord,”—this is forbidden by him, from this should the conscious nearness of the Lord restrain the believer. Instead of indulging such care, he directs them rather to raise the soul to God, and all shall become light. The true meaning of these words appears from the contrast which follows: “But, in all things, make your requests known to God in prayer and supplication with thanksgiving.” There is a carefulness which is inconsistent with confiding prayer to God, which excludes the spirit of filial supplication. Such a carefulness Paul forbids. As he had made the whole Christian life a joy in the Lord, so now he makes it also a perpetual prayer. The two stand in intimate connection. Neither can exist without the other. He does not require the suppression of those wants, the sense of which begets anxiety, but that the sense of want should take the form of prayer. Thus will the burdened spirit become lightened, and care of itself will fall away. Yet, although the Christian has wants to spread out before God in prayer, and much to ask of Him for the future, he still finds in every situation enough that calls for thankfulness to God, since all things work together for good to those who love Him. Paul had already enjoined on the Philippians, afflicted as they were, to rejoice always in the Lord; and in this it is assumed that there is nothing unreasonable in the requirement, that they should give thanks to God. The whole Christian life should be a prayer, the prayer of thanksgiving and of supplication, in the consciousness of grace received and the conscious need of renewed grace. Assuming that the Philippians followed these directions, he could impart to them the precious promise which assured their safety in all conflicts: “And the peace of God which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”—What does Paul here say? What is the sense, so far as we can indicate it in brief, of his deep and sublime words? If the Philippians so conduct, then will that peace with God, which they have received from Christ, remain with them; that peace which is the fountain of all other peace; which can exist in the midst of conflict with the world, and can be disturbed by no other power; that peace of which Jesus spake ([John xiv. 27](#)), “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you.” And hence he adds, for those whom he left behind amidst the conflicts of the world, the consoling promise, “Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid.” This peace, as it has God for its author, Paul accordingly describes as a peace which is above all human conception. He who has this peace has more than he himself

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23 See p. 77.

knows, more than he is able to set forth in thoughts and words. It is an overflowing heavenly repose, with which nothing earthly can be compared; which fills the spirit of him, who, having been reclaimed from disunion with the Infinite and the Holy One, is now conscious of being in harmony with Him. The power of this peace, says Paul, will conduct the souls that live in fellowship with Christ, safe and unharmed through all conflicts and assaults from within and from without. From this proceeds the ground-tone of their thoughts and feelings, this is their protection, which avails against all human care. With this may be compared the words of Paul in the Epistle to the Colossians:²⁴ “And the peace of God rule in your hearts!” The peace with God procured to the believer through Christ, the peace which has its life in God, of which they are assured in union with him,—that peace, amid all fluctuation, is the controlling, the determining element in the Christian life.



24 Chap. iii. 15.

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