

of the congregation. They acted simply as presidents, sanctioning the proceedings, and commending the newly chosen elders to the Lord with prayer. The same course was followed in the choice, first of Barsabbas and Matthias, then of the Seven.

F. RENDALL.

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XII.

*GENERAL REVIEW OF ST. PAUL'S EPISTLES.*

THE Epistles of Paul were the completion and confirmation of his missionary work. It sometimes happened that his stay in a place where he had founded a Church was brought to an abrupt end before he had been able to complete the whole course of teaching which he proposed to give. Hence, when any difficulty arose, and was referred to him by such a Church, he endeavoured to supply the need of further teaching by a letter. In this way the two Epistles to the Thessalonians came to be written. Or it might be that his doctrine or his personal character was impugned in one of the Churches that he had founded, and he was constrained to take up his pen in defence of the truth, lest its very foundations should be shaken. This is the key to the Epistle to the Galatians and the two Epistles to the Corinthians. At other times some personal matter led him to write either to a particular Church or to a particular member, as when he sent his thanks to the Philippians for their loving ministrations to his need, or when he desired to commend Onesimus to the kindness of Philemon. Sometimes at the request of a third person, the Apostle addressed letters to Churches which he had neither founded nor visited; such were the Epistles to the Colossians and Ephesians, and that to the Romans.

Do we possess all the Epistles written by St. Paul? It has been argued that it must be so, since God would never have permitted any writings inspired by His Spirit to be lost. But why may not an inspired writing have had a purely temporary and local value, so that those who compiled the canon may not have thought it necessary to perpetuate it? It appears to us clear that in 1 Cor. v. 9-11 there is a reference to a letter which has not come down to us, and that such is the case also with that other epistle of which Paul speaks in detail in 2 Cor. ii. 1-4; vii. 8-12. If we are not prepared to refer the words in 2 Thess. iii. 17, "The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle, so I write," to some unknown letters yet to be written (which would seem a rather forced interpretation), we must conclude that he had already written some which have not been preserved.

As to other Epistles of Paul's still extant, and not included in the New Testament canon, such as an Epistle to the Corinthians discovered in Aramaic, another addressed to the Laodiceans (which has even crept into some Bibles of the middle ages); or the supposed correspondence between Paul and Seneca, of which Jerome and St. Augustine speak, and the genuineness of which has recently found advocates; all these are only poor compilations of words taken from the authentic Epistles of St. Paul, and altogether destitute of that impress of originality which marks all the true writings of the Apostle. The first of these spurious writings is based upon 1 Cor. v. 9; the second on Col. iv. 16, which really refers to what we call the Epistle to the Ephesians. The correspondence with Seneca was suggested by the mention (Acts xviii. 12) of the arrival in Corinth, during Paul's sojourn there, of the Proconsul Gallio, brother of Seneca, and by the account of the Apostle's citation to appear before him.

Of the fourteen Epistles contained in our canonical collection, one only—that to the Hebrews—appears to us not to bear either in form or substance the marks of Pauline authorship. This is also the only Epistle with regard to which the tradition of the primitive Church is doubtful. The genuineness of the other thirteen Epistles seems to us assured on the ground both of internal evidence and of concurrent tradition.

In studying each of these Epistles separately, we have tried to determine the time and place of their writing. Under this head we divide them into four groups: The first group comprising the two Epistles to the Thessalonians written during the journey on which Paul founded the Churches of Greece (A.D. 52-54); the second, comprising the Epistle to the Galatians, the two Epistles to the Corinthians, and that to the Romans, which were written during Paul's stay at Ephesus, and his visit to the Churches of Greece (A.D. 54-59); the third, comprising the Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians, and lastly, that to the Philippians, which dates from Paul's Roman captivity (A.D. 62-64); the fourth group, consisting of what are called the three Pastoral Epistles, and belonging to the period which followed the Apostle's liberation and immediately preceded his death (A.D. 64-66).

We have arrived at this chronological arrangement by the particular study of each letter on its own merits. It remains for us to see whether this grouping is borne out by a review of all the Epistles collectively. Let us first inquire: What is the nature of the subjects treated in each of these groups?

We all know what was the engrossing subject of thought in the primitive Church, what was the object of supreme desire, the source of the liveliest joy, and the most powerful stimulus to Christian faithfulness. It was the promise made by Christ to the Apostles of His glorious return.

He had always refused to fix the date of that event; He had said, "Of that day and of that hour knoweth no man; no, not the Son"; but He had charged His followers to live in the attitude of continual expectation. This charge, as it fell from His lips, had a purely moral significance; but prompted by a very natural impatience, the early Christians took it to mean that the end was at hand, and that the temporal kingdom of Christ would immediately be set up. The Apostles themselves had no exact idea of the interval between the Ascension and the second coming of the Lord, as we gather from Matt. xxiv. and Mark xiii. where the Evangelists closely connect the destruction of Jerusalem, as the first act of judgment, with the return of Christ. The revelation which they had received as to the coming of the Lord related in truth wholly to the fact, not to the date.

Under these circumstances nothing could be more natural than that the principal subject treated in the first group of Pauline letters, should have been that of the return of the Lord at the close of the existing economy. Some misconceptions had thus arisen, and the difficulties were referred to the Apostle. He reminded the Thessalonians of the teachings they had forgotten, and added new and valuable suggestions. In the first Epistle, he takes up the bright glorious aspect of the end of all things—the coming of Christ; in the second, he looks at the dark terrible side of the same event—the era of antichrist, which is to precede the full manifestation of the Lord.

But soon this eager expectation of the early Church, while it does not wholly die away, gives place to more urgent questions of a spiritual nature. What are the essentials of Christianity? what is the Gospel as opposed to the existing religions—Judaism and paganism? These are questions which become of vital moment to the Church as it expands and develops. They form therefore

the theme of the second group of letters. The great fact of salvation is treated in the Epistles to the Galatians and Romans; the nature of the Church and the order which ought to prevail in it is the subject of the first Epistle to the Corinthians; the Christian ministry is the theme of the second Epistle. These three Epistles—the two to the Corinthians and that to the Romans—form a sort of trilogy, exhibiting in logical sequence the salvation offered by the Gospel, the Church which is entrusted with the Gospel, the ministry which is to build up the Church.

In proportion as the Church appropriates salvation, and seeks to realise it, as the gift of God in Jesus Christ, is it necessarily led to ask, Who is this through whom God has been pleased to accomplish so great a work? Questions bearing on the personality of Christ naturally arise in the hearts of believers who are saved by Him. This then is the leading subject of the third group. St. Paul abandons himself to a kind of Christian speculation which he calls *wisdom*. If, as he has shown in an earlier group, the Gospel is folly in the eyes of those who perish, it is none the less the wisdom of God, the revelation of the Divine plan, in the eyes of those who are saved. In the fact of the redemption wrought by Christ and interpreted by the Divine Spirit, the believer apprehends something of the thought present in the mind of the Creator of the universe, and of the sublime destiny of man. He by whom all things were created is also the Reconciler of all, the One who gathers together all things in Himself, that He may deliver them again to the Father in perfect subjection, so that God may be all in all. Christ then is at once Creator and Redeemer, the Alpha—the originating principle of the universe—and the Omega, its end. These are deep things which, as Chrysostom points out, Paul never preached, but they are unfolded in the third group of Epistles.

After having thus explained all that had been revealed

to him as to the fact of salvation and the person of Him by whom it was wrought out, the Apostle, seeing that his end was at hand, naturally turned his attention to the future of the Church on earth. He asks how it is to be maintained, as a society, when deprived of those who called it into being and who guided its infant life. The letters of the third and fourth group consist mainly of the answer to this question. Paul lays down as a condition of the continued life and growth of the Church, that it should be sustained by the ministry of pastors and deacons. He institutes therefore a primary office for maintaining the preaching of gospel truth, and its application to the needs of individuals; and a secondary office for attending to temporal necessities either in the Church or in the world. These two ministries thus represent faith and charity, the two essential elements of the life of the Church and the conditions of its influence in the world. The Apostles live on indeed in their writings, but personally they pass away. The prophets have bequeathed their message to the Church, but they too are no more. The simple preaching of the gospel by evangelists or missionaries outside the Church, and by pastors and teachers within it, this is the ministry that is to be perpetuated till the Lord's return.

If we needed any confirmation of the results at which we have already arrived from a study of the particular Epistles, surely we have it in this perfect harmony between the successive requirements of the apostolic Church in the course of its development, and this series of four groups of Epistles which respond so naturally to these needs as they arise.

We shall observe the same natural gradation among these groups, if we study more closely the manner in which particular subjects are treated in them.

Let us look first at the relation of the Church to Judaism.

In the first group, Judaism is entirely outside the Church, and avowedly hostile to it, obstructing, as far as it can, the preaching of the Gospel among the Gentiles. In this way it "fills up its sins alway," as the Apostle says (1 Thess. ii. 16), "and brings wrath upon itself to the uttermost."

In the second group, a new phase presents itself. A Jewish faction, which has found its way into the Church, makes a great effort to bring in Mosaism. In the mother Church at Jerusalem there arises a party, which seeks to avail itself of the expansive power of the Gospel among the Gentiles, in order to make Judaism also a world-wide religion. Missions among the Gentiles are recognised, but on this condition that the newly baptised shall be circumcised, and incorporated with Israel by accepting the Jewish law, which would thus become cosmopolitan. Judaism lays down its hostility and becomes Christian, but only on condition that Christianity shall become Jewish. This is the wolf in the sheep's clothing, the Pharisaic principle of justification by works claiming to be the gospel. In the Epistle to the Galatians, the conflict is declared. In the first Epistle to the Corinthians it seems that one of the leading Churches founded by Paul is on the verge of apostasy, but in the end it is won back by the Apostle. The Epistle to the Romans is like the song of victory after this sharp contest.

The third group shows us Judaism still seeking to make itself master of the Gospel, but under a new guise. It is no longer the mode of justification which is challenged. The question is no longer asked, faith or works? grace or merit? Judaism presents the Mosaic law to believers as a principle of sanctification and illumination far superior to the methods offered by Paul's gospel. The ordinances of Moses are a ladder by which the Church can more speedily climb to a height at which the flesh shall be brought unto subjection and the spirit set free. More than

this, the believers will thus be brought into direct relation with the heavenly spirits, and will attain through them more excellent revelations than those of the simple gospel. This manner of looking at the law naturally derogated from the dignity of Christ as the one Mediator between God and the believing soul, and relegated Him to the second rank, below the angels, His creatures. Paul is constrained, especially in the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, to vindicate the supremacy of Christ, and to show that in fellowship with Him was the source of all perfection and spiritual illumination, of all true holiness and wisdom worthy of the name.

The attitude of Judaism in the first group of Epistles was, as we have shown, purely Jewish. The form of Judaizing heresy which we trace in the second group was Pharisaic in character. In the third group it assumed the form of Essenism. The fourth group brings before us the same errors under a more complicated, subtle, and artificial form. There is a tendency to frivolity, almost to profanity, such as characterises the Judaism of the Kabbala. Judaizing heresy sinks into charlatanism. Pretended revelations are given as to the names and genealogy of angels; absurd ascetic rules are laid down as "counsels of perfection," while daring immorality defaces the actual life. Paul would not condescend to discuss or to refute heresies like these. He simply appeals to the moral sense of the Christians, and charges them to be faithful to it.

Such, in brief review, are the various phases of the relations of Judaism with the Church in the transition time which preceded the fall of Jerusalem. They fully confirm the view taken by us of the scope and sequence of the various Epistles. We are led to the same conclusion, if we examine the development of ecclesiastical functions during the period covered by these thirteen Epistles.

In the Epistles to the Thessalonians, "spiritual gifts" are



first spoken of. See 1 Thess. v. 19, where we read of manifestations of the Spirit, and specially of prophesyings. Side by side with this, allusion is made to the existence of certain offices in the Church. In the same chapter (v. 12) we read of "those who labour among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you." But such expressions as these show that Church organisation was still very elementary.

In the Epistles to the Galatians, Corinthians, and Romans, the offices in the Church seem of quite secondary importance; the free gifts, the spontaneous manifestations of the Spirit, are the prevailing power in the life of the Church. The expression in Gal. iii. 5 is remarkable. But it is chiefly at Corinth (1 Cor. xii.-xiv.) that the manifestation of spiritual gifts reaches its highest development. The words used in Rom. xii. 3-8 show that in Rome also there was a preponderance of gifts, but in a far less degree than at Corinth.

In the third group the official functions are clearly in the ascendant. In Eph. iv. 11, 12, after speaking of the Apostles, in whom the gift and the office were united, and of the prophets whose gift alone seems to have been perpetuated, the Apostle only mentions evangelists (missionaries) and pastors, who are both office-bearers in the Church. The title of teachers, however, applied to the pastors, seems to point to the gift of teaching mentioned at Corinth. In the Colossians we find no mention of gifts. Paul only speaks of pastors such as Epaphras and Archippus his successor, and of Nymphas at Laodicea. The Epistle to the Philippians is addressed to the pastors and deacons; there is not the slightest allusion from beginning to end to "spiritual gifts."

Lastly, in the Pastoral Epistles we find mention only of the gift of teaching, which tends more and more to be merged in the office of elder or pastor, as in Eph. iv. 11.

It is to the pastoral office thus endowed that Paul entrusts the future of the Church until the day of Christ.

What more simple and rational if we reflect on it, than this gradual development of Church life, harmonising exactly, as we have seen it does, with the tenor of the thirteen Epistles.

There remains one point more for us to inquire into, How does Paul speak of the coming of Christ?

In the earlier Epistles, whilst disavowing any attempt to fix beforehand the time of that event, he yet expresses himself in such a way as to make us think that he expects to live to witness the second coming. "We that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord." It must be observed, however, that this expression is not so positive in Greek as the translation would lead us to suppose. The exact meaning is, "We, the living, *i.e.* those who are left unto the coming of the Lord." He does not include all the Christians then living, among those who will remain. How, indeed, could Paul have supposed that of all the Christians living at the time when he wrote, not a single one would die before the second coming? And if he could not affirm this of others, neither could he of himself. It must then be admitted that the clause, "those who are left," is restrictive of the foregoing words, "we that are alive," and implies those, at least, who remain. But in any case, the expression used implies the possibility that Paul might himself live to see the event. So also in 1 Cor. xv. 32. "The dead shall be raised, and we shall be changed." Yet in the same Epistle, ch. vi. 14, Paul speaks of himself not among the living who shall be "changed," but among the dead who shall be raised. "God both raised the Lord and will raise up us through His power" (*ἡμᾶς ἐξεγερεῖ*). In Philippians Paul seems divided between the expectation of martyrdom and that of a speedy deliverance; and he asks the Philippians to rejoice if he is permitted to sprinkle with

his blood the sacrifice and service of their faith. Lastly, in the Pastoral Epistles, he anticipates a long continuance of the Church upon earth after the death of the Apostles. For this reason he urges the settlement of pastors over the Churches generally, and of himself he says, "The Lord will save me unto His heavenly kingdom" (2 Tim. iv. 18); which shows that he no longer expected to live to see the second coming. In this respect also, therefore, we see a marked gradation confirming the chronological order of the four groups of Epistles.

We shall not attempt to go into any detailed criticism of St. Paul's style of writing. This would involve an analysis of Paul's own character, for no man ever threw himself so completely into his writings as this Apostle. I shall only allude here to two points: the deep unity underlying the whole of this correspondence, and at the same time the contrasts which abound in it.

The one theme of all the Epistles is that which Paul calls *my Gospel*. It is the setting forth of the salvation wrought by Christ, with its two distinctive characters—freeness and universality, and its three essential elements—justification, sanctification, and glory. Every word Paul has written tends to commend this perfect salvation, the gift of grace without human merit, offered, therefore, to all alike, without regard to their antecedents. Paul, the former persecutor of the Church, felt truly that he was the normal example of this free salvation; and his life and his letters were alike consecrated to its defence and proclamation. However much the style of Paul may vary in other respects, it has one uniform characteristic—that it is always and everywhere the exact expression and fitting garb of his thought. If the style is laboured, it is only through the desire to faithfully convey the thought of the writer to the readers. There is never any self-seeking or any attempt

at self-glorification in the writings of Paul. "The love of Christ constraineth me," describes the inspiration of his letters no less than of his life.

May I say a word in passing on the traces of Rabbinism which have often been supposed to be traceable in the writings of Paul. As to the form of his argument, I do not pretend to deny the influence of the teaching under which he had been brought up. The questions abruptly addressed to the reader, recall the form of teaching in use between Rabbis and their disciples. The short series of sentences logically following one another, like the terms of a syllogism, remind one of those short explanations called by the Jews *Midrasch*, which give in a few words the epitome of a subject, as in 1 Cor. xv. 56, Rom. x. 14, 15. The quotations of Scripture, which bring the very marrow of the text to bear upon the matter in hand, are unquestionably after the Rabbinical method. But St. Paul does not allow himself to be so carried away by his argument, as to put into the words that which they do not really contain. This charge has been brought against Gal. iii. 16; iv. 24, *et seq.* I have already endeavoured to show that a careful exegesis vindicates Paul from this accusation brought against him by those who only study his writings literally and superficially. The disciple of Gamaliel had undergone too radical a change to retain more of the teaching of his old master than certain modes of thought and expression. I may add that such passages as Gal. iii. 17; 2 Tim. iii. 8, which are simply borrowed from Jewish tradition, cannot be regarded as really characteristic of Paul's own style.

On the other hand, while we trace this unity of subject, form, and intention, what a variety do we find in the products of the Apostle's literary labours! If it is true that a man is great in proportion to the multiplicity and diversity of his gifts, it must be difficult, even from a purely human standpoint, to find in history a writer superior or even equal

to St. Paul. With what depth of view and breadth of feeling, with what aptness, fulness, and variety of application, does he treat the one great theme! It is difficult to conceive how there could be united in one person so much intellectual vigour and penetration, with such warmth of feeling, power of imagination, quickness of intuition, and sound practical judgment. By these manifold endowments Paul is fitted to be all things to all men, and to exercise a many-sided apostleship. He appears as a prophet in the Epistles to the Thessalonians, to whom he unveils the final issues of the present economy. In his Epistle to the Galatians, he is the skilful dialectician, disentangling the webs of error in which they had been craftily caught. To the Corinthians, he writes in his first Epistle as a pastor, resolving with admirable wisdom the practical problems which arose out of the first impact of Christianity with paganism. In the second Epistle to the same Church, he vindicates the authority of his ministry as an Apostle of Christ. In the Epistles to the Romans, Ephesians, and Colossians, he is the consummate teacher, setting forth his gospel to the Churches in which he had not been able to preach himself. In the Pastoral Epistles, he appears as the far-seeing organiser of the Church of the future. To the Philippians, he writes as a tender father to dear children, words of exhortation and loving gratitude. To Philemon, he writes as to a brother from whom he has a brotherly service to ask.

It would be hard to say whether the Paul, whom we learn to know from these thirteen letters, is more remarkable for the unity or the variety of his life-work. In him we see brought out in full relief, all the perfections latent in Him who was Paul's model, or more truly his very life, and of whom he said to his disciples, "Be ye imitators of me, even as I am of Christ."

F. GODET.