

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

XVIII. THE SAINT AS KING.

IN the view of Paul the world lay round man like a sea of storm and vicissitude, in which each human being lived his life staggering onward from one danger to another, no sooner free from one trouble than involved in another. Everything was fleeting, changeable, constantly varying. Yet, in the words which have already been quoted,¹ Paul "sighed as scarcely any other has done beneath the curse of the transiency of all that is earthly." It was true, yet not the whole truth, to say that for the saint the world around was just as evanescent, incalculable, and unintelligible, as it was for the sinner. The salvation which he had already gained did not lie in this human life. Although he was remade, recreated, re-constituted, in Johannine phrase born again, yet human life continued to be as much as ever for him a stormy sea—"afflicted on every side, fightings around, fears in the mind"—apart from all external discomforts, was the more wearing anxiety for his converts and the sympathy with and participation in the troubles of every individual and of every congregation.²

The Stoic ideal of the truly wise man, the true *philosopher*, who was wholly superior to fate and to his surroundings, calm and unruffled amid whatever tempests howled around him, absolutely untroubled by the troubles which overwhelmed others—an ideal which in different expressions was characteristic of later Greek philosophy generally,—Paul did not approve. His heart was only more open to suffer

¹ Quoted in Section IX. from Steffen, *Zft. f. d. N. T. Wissensch.* 1901, ii. p. 124, after Kennedy, *St. Paul's Conception of the Last Things*, p. 6.

² 2 Cor. vii. ; compare xi. 28.

with others, and more intensely sympathetic with their trials, "Who is weak, and I am not weak ? who is caused to stumble, and I burn not ?" The philosophic ideal of passionlessness and *Ataraxia* was infinitely remote from his mind. The relief for which he sighed did not lie in that direction.

There was, however, a peace attainable in another direction. "The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control."¹ The peace which is thus gained lies at the opposite pole from *Ataraxia*. Through infinite sympathy with suffering comes freedom from suffering. One is thus brought face to face with another of the Pauline apparent self-contradictions : by going infinitely far in one direction you find yourself at the opposite pole. Yet this is a truth of nature and of physical law. A poet who believed himself to be absolutely anti-Christian, although his attitude towards the world and the emotions of his heart were made possible only through centuries of Christian teaching, expresses in a striking antithetic form a truth that is similar and illuminative. Good, the more it is divided, is just the more multiplied, so that each subdivision is larger than the original whole. Evil, the more it is divided and participated in by others, becomes less, until it may thus be entirely eliminated from the world. That, says the poet, is the hope of the future, which alone makes life possible for those who comprehend the horror and the deterioration and ruin of the world around us. The thought is not that of Paul ; but it is the expression from a wholly different standpoint of a similar moral principle and an "eternal law." Its antithetic expression aids in the understanding of Paul's expression, yet its carefully balanced antitheses are the very opposite of Paul's style. In Paul the antitheses are not balanced against one another : they are the outcome of different moods and frames of mind, stated

¹ Gal. v. 22.

at different times, and rarely brought intentionally into juxtaposition.

Mind from its object differs most in this :
Evil from good ; misery from happiness ;
The baser from the nobler ; the impure
And frail from what is clear and must endure.
If you divide suffering or dross, you may
Diminish till it is consumed away ;
If you divide pleasure and love and thought,
Each part exceeds the whole ; and we know not
How much, while any yet remains unshared,
Of pleasure may be gained, of sorrow spared.

SHELLEY, "Epipsychidion."

Thus, after all, the Stoic ideal of the wise man is realised through Paulinism, but in a different direction by voyaging over the sea of life to an opposite side. That the Stoic paradox, "the wise man is the king," was not very far distant from Paul's mind is probable. "If by the trespass of one *man* death was king through the one, much more shall they that receive the abundant gift of grace and of righteousness be kings in life through the one Jesus Christ."¹ We have preferred to translate "be king" rather than "reign," as this comes nearer the root idea of the Greek verb, and also because it shows a certain lingering of the Greek philosophic saying in Paul's mind. Paul's thought is Hebrew, essentially and fundamentally, right through from beginning to end ; and yet it has risen through Judaism to a higher level and a nobler stage, so that Hellenism was capable of being ennobled to harmonise with it. Paul's essentially Hebraic religion was expressed by him in forms and language which might be comprehended by the Greek mind ; and he was able to express it in such forms and words, because he had been brought up amid the surroundings of a Hellenised Tarsus and had shared in the society and the education of a Graeco-Roman life.

¹ Romans v. 17.

This is the perfection of missionary teaching, to make intelligible an alien religion to a foreign people, not by diluting it or by transforming it, not by watering it down or by assimilating it to the thought habitual to the foreign mind, but by stating it in the most complete and uncompromising form, yet in such a way that it is possible for the foreign hearer to rise towards it in his habitual line of thinking.

There is a plane to which all perfectly natural and honest thought can be raised. On that plane Pauline teaching is expressed. No truth is inconsistent with such teaching. Paul emphatically states and maintains that in the Gentile thought there was truth, even the highest, indeed the sole kind of truth, viz., truth about the character of God and man's relation to Him: "Gentiles, having not law, are law unto themselves; in that they show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness in accordance, and their reasonings in inmost meditation accusing or else defending,"¹ as they weigh their own action in silent thinking about right and wrong. In such a passage as this Paul had in mind the teaching, and possibly the actual lectures, of Athenodorus of Tarsus and similar philosophic teachers. A philosophy which could teach the little that is quoted from Athenodorus was fundamentally true, and could be developed into hearty sympathy with Paulinism, if only it developed freely and naturally.

I should not hesitate to see in 2 Timothy ii. 12, "If we suffer with Him, we shall also be kings along with Him," a later influence of the thought in Romans as it had remained

¹ Romans ii. 14 f. The above translation appears to give the true sense. The American Revision properly disconnects this from ii. 16 (which Westcott and Hort closely connect). There is no reference to the judgment day (as the punctuation of the two great English editors would imply), but to meditation by thinking pagans over their conduct. II. 13 is continued by ii. 16, while ii. 14, and 15 are parenthetic. The true connexion is disguised both in the Authorised and in the Revised Version.

always in Paul's heart. The expression in that passage is an echo of Romans vi. 8, "But if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him"; but the thought is modified by the idea of kingship which was in Paul's mind a few verses earlier, verses 14 and 17. The form which Paul chooses was intelligible to the Greeks, because they had always before them the philosophic principle that the truly good man "is a King." Paul raises this principle to a higher level, but keeps the phrase. The passage in Timothy is not a quotation made by some later Paulinist from a church hymn which had been taken phrase by phrase out of Paul; it is a fresh expression of Paul's own favourite thoughts in slightly varying phraseology.¹

The influence of Greek thought on Paul, though real, is all purely external. Hellenism never touches the life and essence of Paulinism, which is fundamentally and absolutely Hebrew; but it does strongly affect the expression of Paul's teaching. Further, it lends to Paulinism the grace and the moderation, the sense of where to stop and how to avoid overstating, which is natural to Paul. It gives to him also that strong sense of the joy of the Divine life, which he expresses most emphatically to the Philippians, "Rejoice always," and to the Galatians,² but which is characteristic of him everywhere, even amid his equally strong sense that the Divine life is an unceasing strain and a struggle against trial after trial, which taxed his powers daily to the utmost.

Paulinism is essentially Hebrew; but it is Hebraism exalted to a new level. What is added to it is what specially fitted it to reach the European and the Greek world specially; but this addition was not Greek, or derived in any way from

¹ Although neither the English nor the American Revision favours the view, yet in 11, "Faithful is the saying" is an emphatic adjunct to the impassioned statement of verse 10.

² See Gal. v. 12, quoted on p. 558. Philippians iii. 1, iv. 4, ii. 18.

Greek philosophy, though it answers the questions of that philosophy. It was the true and proper development of Hebrew religion to its highest standard, and not a syncretism of Hebraic and Greek elements. Yet it was attained in the process of answering the great questions which had been raised by the contact of Judaism with the Graeco-Roman world.

XIX. FAITH AS A POWER.

The consciousness of power, energy, strength, is one of the most characteristic features of the Christian experience and life, as they are described by Paul. "According to the power that worketh in us" is the range of our achievement, "above all that we ask or think" (Ephesians iii. 20). So he declares in Philippians iv. 13 "I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me." The energy is the Divine element in the man, present from the beginning, making man originally in the image of God, but weakened, obscured, apparently almost extirpated by sin and misunderstanding of the nature of God (yet never wholly and finally extirpated), and needing to be reinvigorated by the process that begins with the apprehension of the work and meaning and power of Jesus.

The Gospel which Paul preaches is not in word but in power. Hence he hated mere empty talk and vain discussion about even the highest subjects: they distract the attention of men from the real work of life: they tend to degenerate into quibbles of words, and empty logomachy. What he urges and desires and prays for in his converts is that they may be "strengthened with all power, according to the might of His glory . . . bearing fruit unto every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Colossians i. 10 and 11).

This power, therefore, is co-extensive with "the know-

ledge of God." The power and the knowledge grow together stage by stage: the one cannot increase without the other increasing. What is from one side knowledge of God is from another side action like that of God. Such knowledge is not abstract theory or mere passive thought. It is not gained by a process of acquisition, like the growing knowledge of mathematics or languages. It is gained instantaneously through the power of God seizing and holding fast the nature of the man. It is in a sense perfect and complete from the first, because the man instantaneously sees God once and for all time, because he grasps instantaneously the nature of God and of his relation to God. Yet in another sense it can grow continuously and indefinitely, not by becoming more complete and rounded in whole than it was at the first, but by expanding on all sides, and filling up more effectively the activities of the man, and enabling him to carry his activity into a wider range of relations with the world around, and thus, as it were, making him realise with growing completeness the relation of the Divine nature to the whole universe, and the way in which the Divine nature fills and interpenetrates and constitutes men and history and everything that is.

This knowledge begins from completeness and culminates in completeness: the growth lies in the increase of energy and mastery, because its nature is energy. It begins in the recreation of a human mind and character: "ye have put off the old man with his doings and have put on the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of Him that created him" (Colossians iii. 9-10). New creation is everything. Nothing else, neither ritual nor want of ritual, is of the smallest consequence in this rebirth of the human energy, "but new creation" (Galatians vi. 15).

This aspect of the knowledge of God is, of course, rightly stated, and emphasised by many writers. We would, how-

ever, not regard this as a sort of corollary or additional chapter to an account of Paulinism. This constitutes and is Paulinism : this is the essence of the teaching and Gospel of Paul. If we speak of adoption, and justification, and the imputing to man of the righteousness of Christ, all these are merely attempts to explain the nature of the inexplicable and the Divine : they are metaphors, and some have become poor metaphors to us, though they were rich and instructive metaphors to a former age. They have in large degree lost their meaning to us ; and the study of Pauline teaching frequently degenerates into a study of past methods and old attempts at an explanation of Paulinism. Paul had to drive home into his hearers some conception of what he was aiming at ; and in the attempt he had to use their ways of looking at the world, and to work on their habits of thought. No one knew so well as he knew that this was unsatisfactory and imperfect. Hence he always turned from the theoretical side of teaching to the practical : he exhibited to them the knowledge of God in the process of exerting itself actively : “ he placarded before them the crucifying of Jesus ” (Galatians iii. 1) ; “ he preached Christ crucified ” (1 Corinthians i. 23).

There are two instructive variations of the fundamental truth in the letter to the Galatians :

V. 6.

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision ; but faith working through love.

VI. 15.

For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision ; but new creation.

The second explains the first definition, and the first explains the second. The whole Epistle was written in one mood of feeling, at one time, and in the same white and fervent heat of passionate enthusiasm ; and the two phrases

which conclude the two definitions are reiterations of what Paul felt so deeply. In vi. 15, writing with his own hand, he is briefly recapitulating the gist of the whole letter ; and just as was customary in placarding laws and ordinances and public documents,¹ he puts in large letters the most important points. So with this point. "Faith working through love" is equivalent to "a new creation."

This energy of the Christian is the Spirit of God working in him. What is sometimes called by Paul faith working in him is at other times expressed as the Spirit of God. These are equivalent terms and ways of making clear the one fundamental power. I do not call it the one fundamental *fact* ; because it is urgently important to remember that there are no facts, no hard stationary situations : there are only acts, processes, force, energy. There is the power of evil, "the flesh," "the devil," sweeping away the nature of man from God ; and there is the power of faith, i.e. the Spirit, seizing him, renewing his mind (Romans xii. 2), reinvigorating the Divine element that had been almost killed within him, bringing him towards God, setting him free from the power of sin which ends in death and turning his attention to the things of the Spirit (Romans viii. 2, 5), making him a temple of God in which dwells the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians iii. 16).

In that last metaphor of the temple, the idea of force and growth is lost : it is a very external figure, and has no grip of the inner nature of the process. It was, however, suitable after a fashion to the Corinthians, who were new converts from paganism, and continued from old habit to regard the power of God as something that dwelt in a temple. Paul

¹ The very word *προγράφειν*, to set forth openly, to placard in public, refers (as Lightfoot rightly remarks) to the custom of publishing documents of this class by a public copy before the eyes of all citizens in a conspicuous place.

had to raise their old way of thinking to a higher level, so that when they searched this level they could see more clearly the real nature of the whole, and the true nature of the relation between God and man ; and through this metaphor he does lead up the mind of the Corinthians to the higher, in fact to the highest possible and supreme level : “ since you are the temple of God, the Spirit of God dwelleth in you.” Beyond that there is nothing greater : there is nothing more completely and finally true than that : “ the kingdom of God is within you,” for “ the Spirit of God dwelleth in you.”

The result of this indwelling Spirit of God is to quicken and strengthen the capability of the man to love. In love the human nature approaches most closely to God, for the love that God entertains towards man is the initial and the final law of the world. “ Faith working through love ” (Galatians v. 6) is another expression for this result : “ the Spirit working through love ” is an equivalent statement of the law of Christian life.

The apparently supernatural powers which were seen occasionally in specially striking manifestations were the spiritual gifts ¹ of which the early writers often speak, and which the Corinthians so eagerly desired and aimed at. They are great and impressive expressions of the one permanent power dwelling in the Christian man ; but, being exceptional in their appearance and not absolutely continuous, they are really less true and lofty and lasting, though they appear more striking to the external observer. It is the permanent, and not the occasional, that is the really and fundamentally Divine. As Professor W. P. Paterson ²

¹ χαρίσματα τὰ πνευματικά.

² *The Apostles' Teaching*, i. p. 82. To Dr. Paterson's conversations, when we were colleagues in Aberdeen, I owe more than can be adequately expressed.

expresses it, "The Christian life consists, not in occasional spiritual exaltation, but in a walk in the Spirit" (Galatians v. 25). Hence Paul, while respecting such powers and occasional manifestations, warns the Corinthians that these are not the greatest things. Even though miracles seem to fail, yet miracles are not the most important expressions of the Spirit and power of God. The continuous expression of that Spirit and power in love is the greatest, the truest, the most lasting (1 Corinthians xiii. 13).

This Spirit of God co-operates with the innate sympathy of man for God, and strengthens the natural perception of man in the belief that he is the child of God: this is natural to all men, so long as they give free play to their own nature.¹ "The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God."²

Further, the Spirit of God produces in man the power of insight into the nature of God; it is a continuous and growing revelation of God to him; it advances and widens his knowledge of God: "a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, keeping the eyes of your heart enlightened that ye may know" (Ephesians i. 17, 18): "we received the Spirit which is from God . . . the Spirit which searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God . . . that we might know" (1 Corinthians ii. 12, 10, 12).

It also gives us the power of expressing these "deep things of God." On this power Paul's experience induced him to lay special stress in writing to these Corinthians (1 Cor. ii. 13), who rather prided themselves on their ability to conceive and express philosophically the truth of God. Paul tells them that only through the power of the Spirit can they

¹ So Paul said to the Athenians Acts xvii. 27-29, quoting the words of more than one among the Greek poets.

² To "bear witness" here means to confirm and strengthen the perception that is naturally existent in man.

express the things of the Spirit. Poetic phraseology, the technical terms of philosophy, metaphors drawn by man from the experience of life, all were inadequate and ineffective. Doubtless, Paul would have included in this list of inadequate expressions some of his own metaphors in so far as they were human and external: only in virtue of the enthusiasm and the passionate feeling that surged through them did they become true: in themselves, as mere philosophical terms, they were incomplete and lifeless. "Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; marrying spiritual ideas to spiritual words." Philosophical terms are valueless, dead, uncreative. Paul wants spiritual terms to convey his meaning; and the intensity of his emotion gives life to them.

That the idea of force or power is dominative in Paul appears in Tim. ii. 15, which has always been misunderstood through failure to perceive that the writer is describing the motive power of an immensely strong instinct in the human mind: this was pointed out by the writer in the EXPOSITOR 1910. In 1 Cor. i. 23 Paul "preaches Christ crucified, the power and the wisdom of God": the scandal of the crucifixion is called not a fact but a force, the expression of God's ruling providence. This power and wisdom of God is not merely a power outside of man: it is also in man, expressing itself through the right action of man.

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