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DIVINITY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
AND D. C. SIMPSON D.D.
ORIEL PROFESSOR OF THE INTERPRETA-
TION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE IN THE UNIVER-
SITY OF OXFORD, CANON OF ROCHESTER

**THE FIRST AND SECOND
EPISTLES TO THE
THESSALONIANS**

THE FIRST AND SECOND EPISTLES TO THE THESSALONIANS

BY

E. J. BICKNELL, D.D.

**PROFESSOR OF NEW TESTAMENT EXEGESIS
KING'S COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON**



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WALTER LOCK
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PREFACE

THE aim of this book is not to add another to the list of commentaries dealing in detail with points of interpretation and scholarship. That need is already well supplied. It attempts rather to put the results of recent scholarship and research in a form in which they will be useful to the ordinary parish priest and educated layman. There is a real danger of getting on the one hand a body of specialists divorced from all pastoral interests and developing their views in academic isolation, and on the other hand the great bulk of clergy and laity content to go on with views of the Bible and its interpretation which the increase of knowledge has shown to be in need of modification. We must insist that no devotional interpretation of the Scriptures can be sound, which flies in the face of true scholarship, and also that scholars must recognize that these books can only be rightly appreciated by those who share to some extent the life and interests of the religious community whose experience they reflect.

E. J. BICKNELL

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INTRODUCTION

I. THESSALONICA

UNDER the name of Salonika, the ancient city of Thessalonica summons up many memories in the minds of Englishmen since the Great War of 1914-18. In December 1915 the Allies were compelled for military reasons to violate the neutrality of Greece and enter the town. The fact witnesses to the abiding importance of Thessalonica, owing to its geographical position. It was the one port on the coastline that would take us up to the Serbian frontier. Since the war the importance of the port has increased. It is the only place from which Serbia and Macedonia can export their produce. It is technically a free port for Serbia, though the jealousy of the Greeks makes its free use difficult. The point about the town and its situation which most impressed our troops was perhaps its extreme unhealthiness. Owing to the swamps which extend for many miles, its climate is deadly. Fever and pernicious types of malaria abound. Infant mortality is appalling. There is no reflection of this characteristic of the town in the New Testament. If he had been living in modern days, it might have been suggested that the means by which Satan hindered St. Paul's return (I Thess. ii. 18) was the bad climate and the danger from malaria. But there is not a scrap of evidence to support such an interpretation. With the modern condition of the town we are not concerned. Some sixty per cent. of the inhabitants are Spanish Jews, but these have no connexion with the Jews who persecuted St. Paul. They are descended from immigrants of a much later date.

The foundation of the city, according to the most probable account, given by the geographer Strabo, an older contemporary of St. Paul, was due to Cassander in 315 B.C. Cassander was a general of Alexander the Great and had married Thessalonica, daughter of Philip of Macedon and step-sister of Alexander. He called the new town after her name. In earlier days the gulf on which Thessalonica stands had been named the Thermaic Gulf after the town of Therme, so called from the hot springs in the neighbourhood. Thessalonica was built in the vicinity of Therme, whose inhabitants, together with those of twenty-five other villages, were compelled to migrate there. The natural advantages of the site ensured the commercial prosperity of the town. Its importance continued to increase, as we approach the Roman period. Macedonia was conquered by the Romans in 168 B.C., and divided for purposes of government into four regions. Thessa-

lonica became the capital of the second region. In 146 B.C. the different regions were for all practical purposes reduced to a single province. Thessalonica became virtually the capital of Macedonia.

Its position rendered it of the utmost importance to Rome. It lay on the Via Egnatia, the most important artery of communication in the Roman Empire. The traffic between Rome and the East passed through it. Cicero spent seven months there during his exile and can describe it as placed in the heart of our empire ('in gremio imperii nostri'). In the First Civil War it was the head-quarters of the Pompeians. In the Second Civil War it was more fortunate. Being found on the side of Octavius and Antony, it received the reward of being made a 'free city'. This meant that it had the privilege of being ruled by its own assembly and magistrates. There is a possible allusion to this in Acts xvii. 5, where the word for people might mean the formal assembly of the people (op. xix. 33). But the allusion is far from certain, since it might equally mean an irregular concourse, and the whole context suggests mob-action. On the other hand, the unusual title for the local magistrates—'Politarchs'—shows the accuracy of the author. The title used to be disputed, but its employment has been vindicated by the discovery of inscriptions in which it is found. Its use is specially common in Macedonia. The number of politarchs at Thessalonica in St. Paul's day is estimated at five or six. The result of its status was that it remained essentially a Greek city. In this it affords a contrast to Philippi, which was a Roman colony. There the charge against St. Paul was that he was introducing customs unlawful for Romans (Acts xvi. 21), and the magistrates are called by Roman titles. In Thessalonica the charge was wider, but more dangerous, namely that of treason to Caesar. To appear to countenance disloyalty might endanger the privileges of the city. There was every reason to fear revolution, since the city was abundantly flourishing at this time, and, as Strabo expressly affirms, the most populous in Macedonia.

II. ST. PAUL AT THESSALONICA

Into this city St. Paul and his comrades entered about A.D. 50. They had been roughly handled at Philippi, and it was inexpedient to remain there (Acts xvi; I Thess. ii. 2). In Acts xvii. 1 we read: 'Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews.' The statement is in certain respects ambiguous. It has been suggested that these towns are mentioned because they were the stages at which the journey was broken. That is possible. If so,

the travelling must have unusually rapid. It cannot have been done on foot. We must suppose that St. Paul had the money to pay for exceptional speed, and that he desired to get to Thessalonica as quickly as possible. Other conjectures can be made. These towns may be mentioned because some preaching was attempted in them, though nothing specially remarkable happened, as far as St. Luke knew. The precise interpretation turns on the meaning to be given to the word 'passed through'. It is derived from the word for 'road', and may be used to denote that they journeyed along the great Roman road, the Via Egnatia, which led them naturally to Thessalonica. Or possibly the word may have acquired the technical meaning of making a missionary journey, 'itinerating'. It is, therefore, reasonable to hold that Thessalonica was deliberately selected for a longer stay, partly because it possessed a synagogue, and partly perhaps because, in the centre of Roman government, St. Paul might hope for immunity from the attacks of his enemies.

Nor is it clear who accompanied St. Paul. The sudden cessation of the we-passages proves that St. Luke was left behind at Philippi. This is important as informing us that he was not himself present at Thessalonica. His absence may account for the obscurity of the narrative at many points. Acts xvii. 4 tells us explicitly that Silas was still present. So presumably was Timothy, since he, too, joins in the salutations and is mentioned a few verses later as being with St. Paul at Beroea (14). If Acts is silent about his presence at Thessalonica, as earlier about his presence at Philippi, that is because Luke is not primarily interested in the fortunes of individuals, however eminent, and Timothy was essentially a person of secondary importance, sufficiently inconspicuous to escape the attention of the mob, and so could be sent back to Thessalonica, when the presence of either Paul or Silas was no longer possible.

The ministry at Thessalonica is described as follows:

'Paul, as his custom was, went in unto them, and for three Sabbath days reasoned with them from the scriptures, opening and alleging, that it behoved the Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom, said he, I proclaim unto you, is the Christ. And some of them were persuaded, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.'

The passage records a ministry of three weeks to the synagogue and those who gathered round it. It is followed immediately by the account of the attack instigated by the Jews which led to an immediate departure. If Acts stood alone, we should conclude that the Apostle's stay was limited to some twenty-one days, that he did not move outside the circle of the synagogue, and that the heathen

were untouched. On the other hand the Epistles imply a church of some size. The First Epistle especially uses language which makes plain that a considerable percentage of the converts were won direct from heathenism, and that the Greek element predominated. These facts are hard to reconcile with the evidence of Acts, and it must be remembered that if there is a conflict of evidence, preference must be given to the first-hand testimony of St. Paul's own Epistles.

If we return to the study of the passage of Acts in the light of these considerations, it is possible to suggest certain lines of reconciliation. We must insist that the R.V. translation 'three sabbaths' is right, and that the R.V. mg. 'three weeks' is to be rejected. It is in any case a doubtful translation of the Greek. That leaves open the possibility of four weeks, or, if we suppose that St. Paul was not invited to address the synagogue on the first or second sabbath that he spent in the town, we might extend the period to between six and seven weeks. Further the Bezan text inserts 'and' between 'devout' and 'Greeks', making three classes of converts, Jews, 'God-fearers', and heathen. This may be correct, though the ordinary text provides a perfectly satisfactory reading, since 'God-fearers' were in origin Greeks. Women are specially recorded, as they held an important place in Macedonia (cp. Phil. iv. 2-3). They were probably God-fearers or pagans, rather than wives of Jews, as Hort suggested.

Many hold that such a period is sufficient for the founding of such a community as is implied in the Epistles. It is argued that a longer time is psychologically unnecessary. We must not think of the conditions under which missionaries work in the heathen world to-day. They are mostly engaged in commending the Gospel to races that are largely content to remain as they are, or who are hostile to Christianity. But at Thessalonica the ground had been prepared. Round the synagogue had gathered many 'God-fearers', Gentiles attracted by the monotheism and the morality of the Jews, but unwilling to embrace the religion of a race that they had been brought up to detest, and reluctant to accept the full demands of the Mosaic Law. Christianity offered them just what they were seeking, a religion of monotheism and morality unhampered by such restrictions. They could become Christians without being forced to become Jews. Further, among the Jews there was a Messianic expectation of varying intensity. The news that the Messiah had appeared must arouse at least interest. In short, the whole religious atmosphere was such that a great deal might happen in a very short space of time. The Apostle's visit has been compared to that of a revival preacher presenting a message which met a felt need, and

for which the ground had long been prepared. As regards the heathen, it may be taken for certain that St. Paul was not idle in the interval between the sabbaths. He would behave as at Athens, and take any opportunity that he could find to get into touch with those whom he met. Thus he might win a certain number of converts direct from heathenism. We cannot say that the foundation of the Church at Thessalonica, such as is implied in the Epistles, necessitated a visit of more than from four to six weeks. The riot which led to the Apostle's departure may have come at the close of the period described in Acts.

On the other hand, it is more natural to suppose that the breach with the synagogue came at an earlier date than usual after preaching on only three sabbaths. That is why Acts gives the precise note of time. It was followed by a period of preaching to the Gentiles, of uncertain length. St. Luke is not in the least concerned to give detailed chronology. He is interested in the spread of the Gospel. Also he was not present himself, and may well have been vague about the exact order of events. In any case the story is condensed. There is no mention of the arrival at Jason's house. Further there are two facts to be gleaned from St. Paul's Epistles which strongly suggest a visit of greater length. First, St. Paul needed to turn to his trade of tent-making to support himself (I Thess. ii. 9). Secondly, the Christians at Philippi sent twice with money for his needs (Phil. iv. 16). That is at least the natural interpretation of the passage. 'Once and again' means literally twice. Frame would render it 'at Thessalonica and on other occasions more than once'. This is a possible rendering, but the other is the simpler. As far as distance is concerned, two visits from Philippian envoys would need only three weeks or so. But it is unlikely that St. Paul would require such frequent benefactions, or that the Philippians would be able to afford them. We prefer, then, to hold that there was a period of a few weeks during which he devoted his energies to a direct mission to the heathen, as he did later at Corinth. This would account for the apparently predominantly Gentile tone of the Church.

We may now pass on to the account of the Jewish plot which succeeded in driving him away.

'But the Jews, being moved with jealousy, took unto them certain vile fellows of the rabble, and gathering a crowd set the city on an uproar; and assaulting the house of Jason, they sought to bring them forth to the people. And when they found them not, they dragged Jason and certain brethren before the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; whom Jason hath received: and these all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar,

saying that there is another king, one Jesus. And they troubled the multitude and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things. And when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.' (5-9.)

The main points are clear. The jealousy of the Jews is easily explicable. The circle of God-fearers who had gathered round the synagogue represented the fruits of years of missionary zeal. There was always the hope that many of them might embrace Judaism. Now that hope was for ever shattered. St. Paul, arriving from outside and reaping where he had not sown, swept them into the Christian Church. He offered them full membership on just those terms against which the Jews had always held out. No wonder that he was unpopular with the Jews. But by themselves they could do little beyond expelling him from the synagogue. They had to enlist the sympathies of the pagans. The charge brought against him was plainly the product of Jewish malice, and admirably adapted for its purpose. St. Paul had spoken in a strongly apocalyptic strain of the coming Kingdom of God and the return of Christ to reign. This is implied by the teaching of the Epistles and is in full accord with Acts xvii. 3. There we are told that his preaching centred round two great messages. First, that the Old Testament Scriptures, the common ground between Jews and Christians, if rightly interpreted, foretold that the Messiah should suffer and that therefore the Cross did not in the least disprove the Messianic claims of Jesus by showing that He was accursed of God. Secondly, that the Jesus whom he preached was the true Messiah because He fulfilled in various ways the predictions of the Scriptures. As such He would return to judge.

This preaching could easily be misrepresented. Phrases like 'the Kingdom of God' which were familiar enough to Jews were dangerous novelties to Gentiles. It was difficult to explain that the kingdom for which the Christians looked was spiritual and supernatural, to come by the direct act of God, and that Christians did not propose to raise a revolt to establish it. The descriptions of the abolition of the present world-order might easily appear to be tinged with revolution. Hence the Jews could with a show of reason accuse St. Paul of disloyalty to Caesar by proclaiming the coming of another king and of turning the world upside down, that is revolutionary propaganda. The Roman Empire above all cared for law and order and was not above using rough methods to secure it. The Jews enlisted the aid of the loafers of the town (or possibly the word may mean professional agitators) to get up a public indignation meeting and assault Jason's house. A charge of treason the magistrates were bound to take seriously. To appear to treat it lightly would have

endangered the liberties of their city. It is even possible, as Knox conjectures, that the Jews of Thessalonica knew of the riots at Rome mentioned by Suetonius. It is usually held that his words 'impulsore Chresto' point to the cause of the trouble being a dispute between Christian and non-Christian Jews about the Messianic claims of Jesus. This had led to the edict of Claudius expelling the Jews from Rome as disturbers of the peace (Acts xviii. 2). These events were plainly quite recent. St. Paul had put in the forefront the claims of Jesus to be the Messiah, and this with the proclamation of the coming kingdom could easily be represented as identical with the revolutionary teaching which had led to trouble at Rome, and which the imperial government had repressed. This admirably explains the form of the charge in Acts xvii. 6. It would never do for the magistrates to harbour those who might have been responsible for the rioting at Rome.

The exact procedure of the magistrates is not very clear. Jason's house was evidently the centre of the movement. He was accused of harbouring the revolutionaries. St. Paul himself judged it wiser to go into hiding. There was no chance of justice, and his life might have been thrown away for no purpose. As Thessalonica was a free city, there was no Roman force to protect him against the fury of the mob. The magistrates seem to have acted as mildly as they dared. Probably they saw through the plot. The accused were bound over to do nothing which might endanger the peace of the city. That meant that they could no longer give hospitality to the missionaries. For such conduct meant certain trouble. As he did not wish to expose his friends to danger, St. Paul was obliged to leave the town secretly 'by night', and with all speed. The plan of the Jews had so far succeeded. I Thess. ii. 14-16 make it plain that for Christian converts the trouble had only begun. The Jews exhibited a lasting and dangerous animosity against them and lost no opportunity of stirring up their pagan neighbours to persecute them.

III. OCCASION AND PURPOSE OF I THESSALONIANS

The movements of St. Paul and his companions between departing from Thessalonica and the writing of the First Epistle are described in Acts xvii. 10-xviii. 5. Here too there is a discrepancy between St. Luke's narrative and the Epistle. If we had the story of Acts alone, we should suppose that after the visit to Berea was cut short by the Jewish emissaries from Thessalonica (xvii. 13-14), Silas and Timothy waited on at Berea till they received orders from St. Paul at Athens to rejoin him with all speed (14 b-15). In xviii. 5 their

arrival at Corinth is recorded and we should naturally conclude that they had come straight from Beroea, failed to catch St. Paul up at Athens and so gone on to Corinth. But the evidence of I Thess. iii. 1-2, 5 shows that their movements were not so simple as this. These verses prove that Timothy rejoined St. Paul at Athens and was sent back from there to Thessalonica. Whether the use of the first person plural in 2-3 is to be pressed as meaning that Silas was at Athens too, is uncertain. The singular is used in verse 5. But it is most probable that Silas came down with Timothy. Then the following verse 6 records the return of Timothy from Thessalonica with good news. There is no mention of the place where he met St. Paul, but it is reasonable to identify this return with that described in Acts xviii. 5, and to hold that the place was now Corinth. The period of depression depicted in the next verse would fit in with the period of opposition at Corinth described in Acts xviii. 6-8 and would be prior to the vision of verse 9. As Acts says that Silas also returned with Timothy, we may conjecture that he had been sent on a mission to some other church, possibly Philippi. This theory cannot be proved or disproved. There is no evidence whatever against it, and it has the merit of combining into a coherent whole the positive statements of the Epistle and Acts. All that it assumes is that St. Luke consciously or unconsciously condensed the narrative by omitting to mention the arrival of Silas and Timothy at Athens. In any case he was not in the least interested in this kind of detailed accuracy. It only warns us against assuming that his account of the visit to Thessalonica is in any way exhaustive. Other conjectures have been made to solve the discrepancy between I Thess. and Acts. It is possible that when Timothy was on his way to Athens, St. Paul sent him a message to turn back and visit Thessalonica. So he never actually reached Athens. Or it is conceivable that St. Paul returned for a short time to Athens from Corinth. But all these solutions are more complicated. We have not got the evidence for a final answer.

One thing is beyond dispute, the First Epistle was occasioned by the return of Timothy and the report that he brought of the condition of the Thessalonian Church. We may go further and say that there is no real ground for doubting that it was written from Corinth. The mention by name of Athens in iii. 1 is not decisive though it supports the view that the writer was not at that moment in Athens. But to suppose that in Acts the author blundered is gratuitous. We may therefore with confidence date the Epistle during the early weeks of the stay there recorded in Acts xviii. Thus it is the earliest extant Epistle of St. Paul that we can date with certainty. Many scholars, especially in England, would date Galatians earlier, even

before the Council of Jerusalem, but there are objections to this view which prevent it from winning universal acceptance. So it must be left an open question whether I Thessalonians is not the earliest of the writings of St. Paul that we possess, and therefore the earliest book in the New Testament, with the doubtful exception of the Epistle of St. James.

As we study the Epistle, what may we infer as to the general condition of the Church and its life since the hasty and premature departure of the Apostle? It is clear that St. Paul had been anxious about the welfare of his converts. We may surmise that his anxiety was partly due to the fact that he had been prevented from making full provision for them after his absence. His work had been cut short, before he had had time to build them up in the Christian life as he would have desired. The organization too may have been left incomplete. This pressing anxiety explains the sending of Timothy, who may have carried a letter from St. Paul which has not been preserved. II. iii. 17 suggests the possibility of more than one previous letter to Thessalonica. There is no evidence against this conjecture, since I. v. 27 does not imply that the practice of sending important letters was new, but simply stresses the importance of getting the apostolic reproof to the ears of the right people. There are more substantial grounds for holding that Timothy brought back not only a verbal report but a letter from the Thessalonians to St. Paul (see notes on I. ii. 13; iv. 9-13; v. 1).

The report was on the whole most encouraging. St. Paul was filled with the spirit of thanksgiving to God (i. 2; ii. 13, 19; iii. 6-9). There had been fierce and persistent persecution instigated by the Jews, but they had stood firm. His labour had not been wasted (i. 6; ii. 1, 14; iii. 3 ff.). They were showing a marvellous spirit of fellowship (iii. 6; iv. 9). They were loyal to himself (iii. 6). But there were dangerous tendencies which needed to be watched and reprov'd.

(i) The Jews were conducting a ceaseless campaign of slander against St. Paul personally, in the hope of detaching his converts from their loyalty. They were insinuating that he was just a travelling teacher of religion, no better than many of the vagabond preachers with which a town on a main road was only too familiar. His motives were low and selfish. He was getting what he could for himself. The morals of that class of men were only too well known. If he concealed his real object under a cloak of piety or austerity, that was only craftiness that he might catch his prey (ii. 3). He courted popularity and was ready to preach anything to win it. The more converts, the more money came into his pocket (ii. 5). He was out for what he could get, if not money then influence.

Such men love to lord it over others even in a small way (ii. 6). But events had shown him up in his true character. When the charge of seditious teaching was brought against him, he did not dare to meet it. He left his host to face the music. And when the verdict had been given, he slunk away, deserting his friends and letting the dupes of his schemes bear the consequences. He did not dare to show his face in Thessalonica. Otherwise he would have come back to take his share of the punishment. That only showed that he did not care about his friends, but only about his own skin. His whole behaviour proved that the charges brought against him must have had some foundation (ii. 17-18).

Those were the kind of things that obviously were being said. Some of the Christians were perplexed at his continued absence. It is to be noticed that the charges seem to have been all of a personal character. There was no formal doctrinal controversy, such as we find in Galatia. If the Jews challenged his authority, there is no hint of it. Still less is there any trace of Judaizing Christians. The Gospel indeed was being openly opposed and slandered, but it was by enemies outside the Church.

In reply St. Paul appeals quite frankly to what his converts had found him to be. He had been with them at most a few weeks, but it was long enough for them to find out what manner of man in reality he was. He could remind them with a clear conscience of his behaviour among them. There was nothing to hide. They knew themselves that his teaching was a teaching of righteousness (cp. iv. 6). He had been open and straightforward. He had made great demands on them and warned them that they would have to suffer (iii. 3-4). He could point to actual details to support his case. So far from sponging on them, he had worked hard with his own hands to earn his own living (ii. 9). They cannot have forgotten his conduct. He had not in the least attempted to tyrannize over them. Further, his message had come home to them with spiritual power. It was no human invention. It had changed their lives for good (ii. 13). So far from having forgotten them, he had twice at least tried to return, but been prevented (ii. 18). Then he had done the next best thing. At great personal sacrifice he had sent Timothy to reassure and encourage them. He was longing to see them or, failing that, to hear of them. They could be assured of his fullest personal sympathy and affection.

Strong personal feeling colours the whole of chapters ii and iii. We can observe the intense pastoral care for his converts, and his warm and affectionate interest in their welfare. Such a passage gives us an insight into the real character of Paul the missionary.

There is no trace of argument. At most he is haunted by the fear that some of those for whom he would have given his life may be led astray or may fall away under the strain of persecution. If he resents the falsehoods against himself, it is not his personal pride that is offended. Rather it is the horrible possibility that they may succeed in seducing some one of his beloved converts from his allegiance to the Gospel.

(ii) Timothy reported that there was at least a danger of moral laxity. How far matters had actually gone, we cannot say. For pagans the connexion between religion and personal purity was by no means obvious. For an inhabitant of a seaside town temptations of all kinds were strong. It is even possible that the cult of the Kabeiroi at Thessalonica encouraged immorality in direct connexion with religion, but the evidence for this is not clear (see note on p. 53). At any rate there was the need for St. Paul not indeed to give new teaching on this subject, but to remind them of what he had already taught (iv. 2-8). They must not fall back into their old heathen ways. As in the mission-field to-day, the force of old habits is only too likely to return when the first enthusiasm is over. Unlike converts from Judaism or God-fearers, those who had come to Christianity direct from paganism had had no previous moral discipline. They had not been moulded by the Law of Moses. Their conscience was still lax on questions of morals. Quite definite rules were needed. Further it is possible that even here there may have been cases of antinomianism. Christians may have felt that they were liberated from all external control. The experience of conversion had changed their whole life and outlook. They were living a new life in a new world. They seemed to have left behind even the old restraints. Such antinomianism is a danger inherent in a religion based on the doctrine of God's free grace. St. Paul himself at times writes as if he were hardly alive to the danger. He himself had been trained in all the strictness of the Jewish Law. He carried over into his new life his old habits of self-control. He seems hardly to have imagined that any Christian who had tasted the grace of God could fall into sin. The experience of pagans which had been so different from his own lay outside his imagination. Probably his Jewish opponents could point to only too many cases where converts from paganism gave every excuse for the argument that the Law was still needed. Still, here at Thessalonica he recognizes the possibility of danger and he bases his appeal not on any external moral code but on the indwelling Spirit of God.

(iii) Again, either Timothy reported, or, more probably, the Thessalonians themselves raised, a difficulty felt about those mem-

bers of their body, doubtless quite few in number, who had died since his visit. They had been led to expect the speedy return of Christ in glory and the inauguration of the kingdom. They all had looked forward to living till this should happen. St. Paul himself in this Epistle plainly expects to be alive on earth at the Lord's coming (iv. 15). But this hope had been rudely shattered. Some Christians, baptized into the Body of Christ, endowed with the Spirit, believers not outwardly different from others, had been struck down prematurely, perhaps in the persecution. This was a great shock. Were they to suppose that their brethren would be shut out from the kingdom? According to the ideas of the time, by which early death was often considered as the punishment of sin, some may have supposed that these Christians had been guilty of some secret unfaithfulness, and so had been smitten by the hand of God. It is a fair inference that the resurrection of all believers had had no prominent place in the preaching at Thessalonica, precisely because both the Apostle and his hearers looked for a speedy coming of Christ.

St. Paul meets the anxiety with a full and clear proclamation of the Christian hope. Dead believers are still in Christ (iv. 16). As members of Him they will share His kingdom. Death will in no way penalize their full reward (15). In other words, fellowship with Christ is something that death cannot touch. There is no hesitation in St. Paul's pronouncement. It is no new doctrine that he is teaching. It is not developed as it is in later Epistles, but the essentials are all there. If the language is borrowed from Jewish Apocalyptic, the certainty itself is new, and based on the Gospel (14).

(iv) It can be inferred from iv. 10-12 and v. 14, that some members of the community were showing signs of restlessness and refusal to go on with their daily work. They were ceasing to earn their own living and expecting to be kept by the community. By the time of the Second Epistle this tendency had become more pronounced, and we can fill out the details from the more developed treatment in II. iii. 6-15. The form of words in I. iv. 9 rather suggests that the Thessalonians themselves had raised the question what was to be their attitude to such men. The connexion of thought may be: 'You have asked me how far your love of the brethren is to extend. I hear excellent accounts of your love to one another, but do not forget that that includes the will to work, so that you may be independent and able to help others.' The exact cause of this idleness has been much discussed. But there seems no good reason for abandoning the ordinary view that it was due to the expectation that the end of the world was about to come. We must

OCCASION AND PURPOSE OF I THESSALONIANS **xxi**

remember that the acceptance of Christianity involved an entire revolution of outlook and habit for converts from paganism. In the most literal sense of the term they were leading a 'new' life. That in itself was unsettling. When the teaching that they had accepted included the vivid expectation of the immediate return of Christ, the abolition of the present world-order, and the arrival of a new heaven and a new earth, we cannot wonder that the unsettlement went deep. If Christ might come to-morrow, why go on working? Why not live on the resources of the community and, as the temperamentally devout would add, spend the time in prayer and watching? Laziness and piety would unite in deprecating the need of work. Similar results have followed elsewhere when the expectation of the speedy end of the world has been proclaimed and accepted. It may be true that all religions suffer from professional adherents who join them in the expectation that they will be kept by the community. There were probably such at Thessalonica, but they would support their plea by the appeal to eschatological expectations. St. Paul's words make plain that he did not regard work merely as an unpleasant necessity, to be abandoned as soon as possible. Rather it had moral and spiritual value. It occupied the mind, kept men out of mischief, developed character, and forwarded the welfare of the community. Nothing would give a bad impression of Christianity to those outside so quickly as the belief that it encouraged idleness and mendicancy.

IV. OCCASION AND PURPOSE OF II THESSALONIANS

The First Epistle must have been sent by the hand of some friend. Nothing like our postal system was in existence. There was, indeed, an imperial system of posts, but that was restricted to government communications. We are not told in this instance who was the bearer. The Second Epistle, assuming for the present its genuineness, must have been sent quite soon after the First. Possibly on the return of the messenger who carried the First, St. Paul was moved to follow up his instructions. He had plainly in the interval received news, if not from the bearer of the First Epistle, then from some other source, about the reception of his letter and the condition of the church. It is also probable that the leaders of the church had sent a letter to him deprecating his warm commendation of them and telling him of their difficulties in maintaining discipline. (See notes on i. 3, 11 and iii. 1-5.)

We gather that the fresh information was in part entirely satisfactory. There was a real growth of spiritual life (i. 3). They were

facing the continued persecution with courage and perseverance (i. 4 ff.). So too the Apostle's mind was set at rest about their loyalty to himself. The entire silence of this letter on the subject of his personal character shows that the slanders of the Jews had failed, and perhaps largely died down. At the close of the First Epistle (v. 14) he had singled out three classes who needed special attention—the idle, the fainthearted, and the weak. The last may be identified with those who were tempted to fall into immorality. As there is no mention of them in this letter, it may be conjectured that the rest of the community had given them the support that he enjoined and that the situation was so far satisfactory.

As regards the other two classes the problem had become more acute. Somehow the idea had got abroad that St. Paul himself had said or written something that implied that the Day of the Lord was now present, that is, they were actually living in it. This disquieting statement had increased the restlessness. The fainthearted grew more nervous about themselves. They felt that they were far from fit for the kingdom and were filled with terror of the coming judgement. The idle grew more idle than ever and disregarded the efforts of the leaders of the Church to reform them. They spent their spare time in fanning the general unrest and stirring up strife. They refused to give ear to the commands of St. Paul, alleging perhaps that they were not convinced that his letter was genuine.

St. Paul first tackles the underlying cause of the trouble. He explicitly denies that he had ever said or written anything that could be interpreted to mean that the Day of the Lord was present (ii. 1-2). Such an idea contradicted his whole line of teaching with which they ought to have been familiar. Accordingly he runs through many of the details of his teaching about the future, adding nothing new, but reminding them of what they ought to have known. Before the Day of the Lord, Antichrist must come. He had not yet appeared, which showed that there must be still some interval of time (ii. 3-10).

He also repeatedly dwells on the thought that judgement will fall on unbelievers, not on believers (i. 8-9; ii. 10-12). On the other hand, the fainthearted had really proved their faith and were proving it now. God would not fail them, but they had the right to look for a share in the final salvation (i. 3-7, 10, 12; ii. 2, 13-15; iii. 3).

The insistence that some period of time must elapse before the end of the world had its message for the idlers. It is followed up by a direct attack on them in iii. 6-15. The community is exhorted to put moral pressure on them to return to work. The means to bring them to a better mind is not formal excommunication, but social disapproval expressed by refusal of intimacy, and admonition. At the

same time it must be made clear that the motive of such conduct is the love that seeks the highest welfare of all the brethren.

What can we infer as to the nature and condition of the Church in Thessalonica at the time of the composition of these Epistles? We must imagine a small group, not larger perhaps than could squeeze into the largest room of Jason's house Sunday by Sunday. We cannot press 'a great multitude' of Acts xvii. 4 to mean more than this. The description is obviously coloured by missionary enthusiasm. In the Epistles there is no hint of more than one gathering (I. v. 26). I. v. 27 need not mean more than that it was to be read to the assembled congregation and that any members absent were to have the opportunity of seeing it. The predominant element was what we should call working-class. There were a few wealthy women (Acts xvii. 4) who had stuck to the movement. But the great majority were poor. St. Paul was careful not to burden them with the expense of keeping him, and welcomed the money from Philippi. They had, to a marked degree, the virtues of their class, including generosity and a readiness to help one another, even where perhaps that help was not deserved. They had little purely intellectual curiosity. They were not interested in doctrinal refinements. Rather they appreciated moral qualities, as men who were in constant touch with the hard realities of life. Two prominent individuals stand out, Aristarchus and Secundus, who were chosen to accompany the collection to Jerusalem (Acts xx. 4). Aristarchus also accompanied St. Paul on his journey to Rome and shared his imprisonment (Acts xxvii. 2; Col. iv. 10; Phil. 24). Demas forsook St. Paul to go to Thessalonica (II Tim. iv. 9), but we are not told that he came from there. The general character of the Thessalonians is presented as attractive. They were very dear to St. Paul's heart. Like the other Macedonian Church, Philippi, they proved themselves affectionate, loyal, and generous. The Macedonians, though despised by Athenians or Corinthians as of less pure Greek blood, were in character in many ways their superiors. Commentators quote the verdict of the great historian Mommsen (*History of Rome*, E.T. ii, p. 229): 'In steadfast resistance to the public enemy under whatever name, in unshaken fidelity towards their native country and their hereditary government, and in persevering courage amidst the severest trials, no nation in ancient history bears so close a resemblance to the Roman people as the Macedonians.' These qualities they transferred to their Christianity.

We may contrast the character of the Thessalonian Church with that of the Corinthian. Both were situated in busy and flourishing seaports. Both presented the same moral dangers. In both, the

dominant element was of the same class. But the differences are plain. The Corinthians brought into their religion a shallow intellectualism, a love of rhetoric, a fashion for following after brilliant teachers, the typically Greek spirit of faction, and a general moral instability. They overstressed the emotional and abnormal side of religion. They valued showy and exciting gifts like 'speaking with tongues', and underrated those sober moral qualities which are the foundation of social life. On the other hand, the Thessalonians had no interest in oratorical displays or doctrinal controversies. They were solid, reliable, homely folk who distrusted brilliance and disliked the unfamiliar and had to be warned in their love of order not to 'quench the Spirit' or 'despise prophesying' (I. v. 19-20).

V. THE AUTHENTICITY OF I THESSALONIANS

The authenticity of the First Epistle is now generally allowed. There are no certain quotations from or references to it in the Apostolic Fathers, or in *Hermas* or the *Didache*. This may be explained by the fact that it does not easily lend itself to quotation. It had a place in Marcion's Canon, it is included in the Muratorian Canon, and from the time of Irenaeus was quoted and accepted as a genuine letter of St. Paul in all parts of the Church. It had a place in all early versions. But the most important piece of external evidence which proves its existence and its attribution to St. Paul at a very early date, is the existence of II Thessalonians.

The most serious attack on its authenticity was made by Baur, starting from presuppositions many of which have now been universally abandoned. His objections are based on internal evidence. (F. C. Baur, *Paul: His Life and Works*, E. T., vol. ii, c. 7.) The most important are these: 'The insignificance of the contents.' 'The want of any special aim and of any intelligible occasion or purpose.' It gives 'only a lengthy version of the history of the conversion of the Thessalonians as we know it from the Acts'. 'It contains nothing that the Thessalonians would not know already.' Attention is drawn to the frequent recurrence of words like 'as you know'. Further, Baur claims to show that in several passages we have reminiscences of other Epistles, especially the Corinthian, which he accepted as authentic. He also raises difficulties about the persecutions in Judaea, and the statement that the Thessalonians were patterns to all believers. He also finds the mark of a later age in ii. 15, which he refers to the destruction of Jerusalem.

The main value of such objections is that they make us face the real nature of an apostolic letter. To the theologian in his study,

dominated by purely academic interest, it is no doubt a matter for surprise that an apostle, whom he regards primarily as a theologian like himself, can write a letter so destitute of doctrinal subject-matter. 'It is made up of nothing but wishes, instructions, admonitions.' There is an 'absence of individuality'. But when we realize that St. Paul was primarily a preacher of the Gospel, then a pastor, and only quite incidentally a theologian, this criticism falls flat. If the circumstances of the Church were such as we have been describing, there were very good reasons indeed for writing this letter. It meets the needs of the moment admirably. Only those who judge a writing from a very limited academic standpoint can complain that it lacks individuality, because it contains no striking contribution to doctrine. This type of criticism does little more than show up the limitations of the pure scholar remote from the religious life of ordinary people. Further, as Jowett well observes, 'If it were admitted that the absence of doctrinal ideas make the Epistle unworthy of St. Paul, it makes it also a forgery without an object.'

So too as regards the relation with Acts. We cannot have it both ways. If the Epistle is built up on the narrative of Acts, how can we account for the serious discrepancies which we have already examined? All scholars to-day would agree that the witness of this Epistle is to be preferred, if there is a conflict of evidence. The argument from similarities of phrase and thought to other Epistles rests on sound observation, but the facts themselves suggest a far simpler explanation.

The chief similarities to which Baur calls attention, are these. I Thess. i. 5 resembles I Cor. ii. 4; I Thess. i. 6, I Cor. xi. 1; I Thess. i. 8, Rom. i. 8. So too I Thess. ii. 4-10 is full of resemblances to passages in I and II Corinthians. See especially I Cor. ii. 4, iv. 3-4, ix. 15; II Cor. ii. 17, v. 11, xi. 9. These similarities cannot be denied. But when we turn to Epistles which Baur considered to be indubitably genuine, we find precisely the same kind of similarities between them. We may put on one side the constant resemblances between Colossians and Ephesians, since Baur did not acknowledge their authenticity. An abundance of examples remain. Thus compare I Cor. ii. 4, iv. 3-4 with Gal. i. 10; II Cor. xii. 7 with Gal. iv. 14; Rom. xiv with I Cor. viii; II Cor. xiii. 1 with Rom. i. 13; Rom. xv. 18-24 with II Cor. x. 14-16; Gal. iii. 6-12 with Rom. iv. 3-11. In fact every Epistle is full both of ideas and expressions to which parallels can be found in the rest. It is only natural that a writer should tend to express himself in much the same terms when dealing with similar situations. In pastoral work even the most original of teachers falls into certain habits of style and phrasing. In short the similarities between the

Thessalonian Epistles and the rest are really an argument for their genuineness. They are not of the kind that a forger would consciously have created. We may add certain passages. With the lively sympathy of I Thess. ii. 17 and iii. 5, 10 we may compare II Cor. vii. 5-7, 12-13, Phil. i. 8, 23-25, 29-30, iv. 1. For a similar mention of himself see II Cor. xi. 9, xii. 13-14, where it is to be observed that the characteristic word of this part of II Corinthians, 'glory', is absent from I Thessalonians. Would a forger have failed to make use of it? So, too, germs of thoughts and precepts developed in later Epistles have been found in I Thess. v as compared with Rom. xii; v. 8 with Eph. vi. 13-17; and i. 9 with I Cor. xii. 2, Eph. ii. 11, Gal. iv. 8.

As regards the minor points we may reply that persecutions in Judaea may not indeed be mentioned in our very scanty records, but they would be just what we should have expected. The passage ii. 15 does not necessarily imply the fall of Jerusalem (see note, ad loc.). Even if it did, it would be better to regard it as an interpolation than to reject the whole Epistle. Further, no forger would have represented St. Paul as expecting to be alive at the Parousia (iv. 15). And the difficulty concerning those whose friends had died, belongs to the earliest stage of Christian faith.

Lastly it is hard to see how any one with any literary tact can fail to discern in this letter a living document. It is full of personal touches. It has all the delicacy of life. We find the skilful combination of reproof and admonition that could only be dictated by love (e.g. iv. 9; v. 2). Early ecclesiastical forgeries can certainly be found. In an uncritical age they met with a ready acceptance. On the other hand, their clumsiness betrays them. Nothing can be found of the nature of an artistic forgery which would afford an example of what would be required if we had to suppose that this Epistle was manufactured in a later age to claim the authority of St. Paul for certain beliefs.

VI. THE AUTHENTICITY OF II THESSALONIANS

The question of the authenticity of the Second Epistle is far more complicated. There are problems connected with its contents of which no completely satisfactory solution has yet been attained. Partly these problems are due to the fact that we are dealing with what at least claims to be correspondence, and in all correspondence mutual familiarity with many of the circumstances is assumed. Much is implied, or alluded to, rather than directly stated. Thus a certain amount of obscurity is in itself no final argument against authenticity. At the same time it must be granted that there are

genuine difficulties against treating this Epistle as an authentic letter of St. Paul. The real question is whether greater difficulties are not raised by denying its genuineness.

The external evidence for its early acceptance by the Church is stronger than that for the First Epistle. Not only is it universally used and quoted as a letter of St. Paul by and after the time of Irenaeus, but it has a place in the Muratorian Canon, in Marcion's collection, and in all early versions. Further, Polycarp (140) in his letter to the Philippians (xi. 3-4) quotes, or adapts, the language of i. 4 and iii. 15. It is true that in the former instance he supposes himself to be using words taken from St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians, but the phrase is only in II Thess. and he may easily have confused, or even partly identified, the two Macedonian Churches. This section of Polycarp's letter is now only extant in a Latin version, but there are no grounds for doubting its accuracy. It is also possible, but not certain, that Justin Martyr (150) refers to the Antichrist passage. The Epistle of the Churches of Lyons and Vienne (170) clearly does so. References in Ignatius, the Didache, and Barnabas, which are sometimes quoted, are very doubtful.

Accordingly the real difficulties centre round the internal evidence. Here again modern knowledge has completely altered our outlook. In earlier days many scholars felt that the apocalyptic passage was out of harmony with the mind and teaching of St. Paul, and bore evident traces of the expectations of a later age. Few would maintain such an opinion to-day. There have been two main lines of objection.

(1) It is argued that in I Thess. stress is laid on the suddenness of the coming of Christ. It is now imminent. On the other hand, II Thess. teaches that certain events, especially the coming of Antichrist, must occur first. As they have not yet occurred, Christians must know that the Last Day has not arrived. How can the coming be at once sudden and unexpected, and also to be preceded by a series of predictable signs? This argument will not bear examination. The Antichrist passage belongs to apocalyptic literature, and must be interpreted in the light of the general principles of that literature. It will be found that the two ideas of the suddenness of the end of the world and of the need of being prepared to meet it, on the one hand, and of premonitory signs, on the other hand, are constantly combined. They may both be found, for instance, in the Apocalyptic discourse of Mt. xxiv and in Rev. Nor are they mutually inconsistent. Those who watch will be able to observe the signs and be ready; those who refuse to watch will be caught unprepared. In I Thess. St. Paul is concerned to encourage timid believers by reminding them that though the Day of the Lord will come suddenly, 'like a thief', it

should not catch them unprepared (v. 4-5, 9). It is the unbelieving world that will not be ready to meet the Lord. He assumes that Christians are familiar through his teaching with the premonitory signs. In II Thess., on the other hand, he is meeting a different need. He wishes to refute the idea that Christians are now living in the Day of the Lord. Accordingly he reminds them explicitly of his teaching about the premonitory signs. There is a change in emphasis, but that is due to the change in situation. He expressly affirms that he is not teaching anything new, but something that they ought to have remembered. We must also bear in mind that apocalyptic teaching is not something clear-cut and scientific. From its very nature it is apt to fall into apparent inconsistencies.

(2) Some critics have identified 'the man of Sin' with the anti-nomian Gnosticism of the second century. Others, with more probability, have found an allusion to the Nero Saga, that is the belief that Nero would return to lead the hosts of the East against Rome. Later the historical Nero came to be identified with Antichrist. All such views demand a late date for the Epistle, because it presupposes a situation that did not arise till after the death of St. Paul. The attempt to find an allusion to Gnosticism does not need further discussion. It contradicts both the external and the internal evidence. The other view has been overthrown by recent investigations into the origin and development of the Antichrist legend. It is now proved that the legend is far older than the Nero Saga, and has a place in Jewish writings at least from the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. Also there are good reasons for holding that the particular stage in the development of the legend which is found in this Epistle fits in with the date assigned to it by tradition, and cannot be later than at most the death of St. Paul. Thus the argument is of the nature of a boomerang. Fuller study has shown that the precise form of the legend found here really supports the genuineness of the Epistle.

But more serious objections remain, based on the relation between the two Epistles, and on the assumption that the First is a genuine letter of St. Paul.

If the two Epistles are read one after the other, it is at once obvious that there is a remarkable similarity between them, both in general outline, in language, and in thought. If this occurred in two letters by different writers, we should at once conclude that there was some literary dependence. As against this it is held that the tone is strangely different. The Second Epistle is much more formal and official. There is a cooling of the heartfelt sympathy of the First. Further, if the First Epistle were read by itself, we should conclude

that it was addressed to a purely Gentile community (e.g. i. 9), while if we read the Second by itself, we should conclude that it was addressed to a purely Jewish community. There is nothing that hints at any Gentile origin. The complexion of the Thessalonian Church cannot have changed between the two letters. Hence it has been suggested that the Second Epistle was composed by some unknown writer who observed that the Thessalonians, or some other body of Christians, were too much occupied with the expectation of the immediate coming of Christ and wrote to warn them that Antichrist must come first. In order to win a hearing, he set the central paragraph in a framework of Pauline phrases borrowed from I Thess. and published the whole in the name of the Apostle.

This theory is met with an initial difficulty when it attempts to date the Epistle. It is admittedly improbable that such a letter should be sent to the Thessalonian or any other Church during St. Paul's lifetime and accepted as genuine. It is therefore necessary to find a later date, which at once raises a whole host of new difficulties. Why should I Thess. have been taken as the point of departure? If the Antichrist passage is only a reminder of teaching recently given, its obscurity is only natural and can be accounted for. On the other hand, if it was composed not less than twenty years later, it is extraordinarily unfitted for clarifying the minds of its readers. And the further that its date is brought down, the less easy is it to account for the apparent familiarity with the situation at the time of the earlier Epistle.

But the final answer must depend on close attention to the matter of the Epistle itself. We may begin by criticising the idea that it is 'psychologically impossible' for St. Paul to have written II to the same people a few weeks or months after I. A slight acquaintance with pastoral work makes it plain that exhortations and teaching of all kinds have to be repeated. The mere issuing of instructions, however clear and emphatic, is not enough. That St. Paul himself was aware of this elementary truth is sufficiently shown by Phil. iii. 1. Again, pastoral experience shows that the repetition of instructions often requires a somewhat sharper tone. If St. Paul felt that plainer speaking on the same subject and in very similar terms was needed, he only felt what many missionaries have felt since. Much of the difficulty that has been discovered in regard to the similarity of the teaching appears to proceed from academic innocence. It is only the professor in his study who never needs to repeat himself.

Even so, the fact of the close resemblance in phrase and thought remains. If St. Paul conformed to the general custom of the time as illustrated in the papyri and in the case of Cicero, his letters were

dictated and then revised. A copy of the revised letter was dispatched and the original kept by the writer. Thus he may well have had a copy of I Thess. actually in his hand when he dictated II. In this way he could easily see what, if any, parts of I had given rise to misunderstandings. A second, and perhaps more weighty, cause of the similarities may be found in the current formularies of the time. We must allow for current literary conventions and forms of speech. It would be rash, for instance, to be unduly impressed by the fact that two English letters began with the address 'Dear', or closed with the phrase 'Yours sincerely'. How many popular compositions have contained the wish 'I hope that this finds you well, as it leaves me'. This consideration applies far more widely than we might suppose. And in the case of the Epistles we must also allow for the technical vocabulary of a religious community, and the jargon of the mission preacher. In all live religious circles there soon arises a set of terms and metaphors and phrases which become current among the members, because they are useful for describing their common religious experiences. Christianity was no exception. What appear to us to-day to be arid and rather obscure expressions, remote from daily life, were once alive and expressed in the most naïve and natural way the devotional fervour of ordinary people. So too St. Paul inevitably acquired the habit of using particular words and sentences, and perhaps putting into them a new shade of meaning. The mission preacher readily falls into the familiar language. Thus the difficulty felt about the similarities between these two Epistles may well be due to the fact that only these two from this particular period have survived. If we could recover a letter written at this time to Philippi, we might find in it another whole series of similarities. One of the most obscure problems of interpretation in dealing with this class of writing is to be sure what expressions are determined purely by the situation with which the writing deals, and what are merely the commonplace exhortations of Christian teachers, which no doubt are suitable in this case no less than in others, but which might equally occur in any letter. We have not got the evidence to draw a hard and fast line in this matter. All that we insist is that due weight must be given to these practical considerations.

We may now pass to consider the actual similarities. The chief of these is the similarity in outline, as is apparent from a study of the analyses. No other two Epistles of St. Paul that we possess agree so closely. At the same time there are differences, and II Thess. has new material. Further, if parallel sections be compared it is at once plain that the author of II did not simply imitate or reproduce the corresponding section of I. His reminiscences are by no means

wholly drawn just from the parallel passage, but from the Epistle as a whole. For instance, the material of II. i. 3-4 is not simply drawn from I. i. 2-3, but also from other passages, I. iii. 12; ii. 12; iii. 6; iii. 2. This does not suggest a mechanical copyist, but rather the same author independently reproducing his stock phrases and words. Throughout there are few lengthy agreements, and similar phrases occur in different settings. The methods of recognized forgers, such as the compiler of the 'Epistle to the Laodiceans', are very different.

Again, the alleged difference in tone in II has been much exaggerated. Partly it rests on the repetition of the word 'We are bound' (i. 3; ii. 13). But, as is shown in the notes, so far from this denoting a cold and official attitude, it expresses an affectionate protest against their own self-depreciation. St. Paul is not in the least backward in voicing his affection and approval of their efforts. He expressly speaks of the progress that they have made (i. 3). If at times a note of severity or a quiet insistence on his authority strikes through, that is due to the circumstances, and is not in the least a sign of lack of affection. We must also make allowance for the fact that a large part of the warmth of the opening chapters of I is due to his own attitude of self-defence. This strongly personal element is lacking in II because the defence was no longer required. But the absence of the personal note does not betray a cooling of his interest in his converts. We should also be prepared to assign some weight to the feelings and mood of the moment. The first letter was written in the initial enthusiasm occasioned by the report of Timothy and the sense of relief at the good news that he brought. Local circumstances at Corinth would be sufficient to account for a slight change of mood. But, as we have already insisted, the difference of tone has been much exaggerated.

When we turn to the remaining objection that I implies Gentile readers, while II implies Jewish readers, we may begin by considering Harnack's brilliant hypothesis to solve this difficulty. Harnack holds that II is thoroughly Pauline, but that it is 'psychologically impossible' (a conveniently vague phrase) that it should have been sent soon after I to the same community. He finds in the alleged difference in the character of the readers the clue to the solution. He holds that there were two churches in Thessalonica, the main body of Gentile origin, and a subsidiary body of Jews. I Thess. was addressed to the former, II to the latter. I Thess. had in mind the needs of Gentiles, e.g. the exhortations against impurity, which was a typically Gentile sin, though he is careful to insist that the Jewish Christians should also have the opportunity of hearing the letter read (I. v. 27). At the same time, or only a few days later, he wrote II for the benefit of the smaller

Jewish community. He realized that there was little in I that would appeal to the Jewish section, and some things that might possibly offend them. This met the needs of Jewish Christians who were steeped in eschatology which tended to make them idle. Harnack further appeals to ii. 13, adopting the reading 'as firstfruits' which he interprets as referring to the Jewish section as compared to the Gentile. Though the smaller body, they were the older in time, since St. Paul's ministry had begun with the Jews.

The conjecture is brilliant and has all the attraction of novelty, but it is faced with one overwhelming objection. The tolerance and recognition of two churches in one place, one Jewish and the other Gentile, is in direct contradiction to all that we know from all sources as to the mind and policy of St. Paul. It is unthinkable that he should have endured such a condition of the Church for a day. The whole contention of St. Paul and his party at Antioch was that Jew and Gentile must share one Agape and one Eucharist. A fellowship that stopped short of eating together was no true Christian fellowship. The whole problem could have been easily and quickly solved if two communities, one Jewish and the other Gentile, had been possible. But the solution was not entertained for a single moment. Jew and Gentile must learn to live and worship together in one body. It is therefore inconceivable that such a condition of things should have been allowed at Thessalonica without a protest.

When, then, in the light of this consideration we examine the positive evidence for Harnack's theory, we see how weak it is. The reading 'as firstfruits' (II. ii. 13) may be correct, but is by no means certain. The MSS. evidence is very evenly balanced. Even if it be adopted, it is capable of another meaning. The term is thoroughly Pauline and belongs to the vocabulary of election. Neither in Acts nor in the Epistles is there any clear indication of two groups. Each Epistle is addressed to 'the Church of the Thessalonians' as if it were one. To suggest that the address has been altered to suit later ideas is a counsel of despair. It is true that there are traces of alteration of reading in the opening verses of Ephesians and Romans, but in either case our MSS. have preserved evidence that the text has been tampered with. Here there is not the slightest trace anywhere of such a process. Each letter is plainly addressed to the whole body. Nor is it really possible to hold that instructions were given to the messenger to give each separately to the right section. That must have left some trace in the address. The allusion to 'all the brethren' in I. v. 27 is capable of simple explanation. The letter would be read at the assembly on the Lord's day. There was always the expectation that in a community of slaves and

freedmen some would be prevented from coming. Those who missed the reading must be given a chance to hear it later. So too the 'all' in II. iii. 16 refers to the danger of divisions through untactful treatment of the idlers, and emphasizes that even they have a part in the apostolic blessing.

The alleged Gentile and Jewish colouring of the respective Epistles remains to be considered. We hold that even this is largely illusory. We should expect that many at least of the Gentile Christians had come to the Christian Church by way of the synagogue. They had been God-fearers before their conversion. Therefore it would be difficult to draw any clear distinction between their beliefs and those of the Jews. They would have been equally acquainted with apocalyptic expectations. Hence the Jewish character of II would be as suitable for them as for the Jews. So again if we suppose that the pure Jewish element in the Church was relatively small there is nothing in I that might not have been addressed to the whole Church. As we have already seen, the exhortation on purity may not have been called forth by the special circumstances of Thessalonica. It may well have been a part of customary instruction in Christian ethics which was suitable for a seaport and would certainly be appropriate, but was not in the least specially composed for Thessalonica. It is true that in I there is no actual quotation from the Old Testament. But the same is almost equally true of II. As Kirsopp Lake himself observes, 'St. Paul's quotations from the Old Testament are mostly in his polemical passages, and are not due to the nationality of his readers, but to the character of his letters'.¹ In other words the presence or absence of Old Testament language and ideas proves nothing either way. Gentiles who became Christians would at once take on the Christian attitude to the Scriptures and become familiar with them. We see therefore no sufficient reason for holding that the two Epistles could not have been sent to one and the same community by the same author, and that St. Paul.

From time to time the suggestion has been put forward that the order of the two letters should be reversed, that the Second is really the First and the First the Second. In that case the allusion to a previous letter in II. ii. 2, 15 would be taken as referring to a still earlier letter, now lost. It is argued that this eases the problem of the relation between the two. The Church may have grown so as to include a larger Gentile element. St. Paul himself may have passed from a crude and Jewish to a more developed and Gentile form of eschatology. II. iii. 17 suggests an early letter.

¹ *The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul*, pp. 81-2.

In itself the hypothesis is perfectly reasonable. Similar ambiguities about the order of compositions could be quoted from classical authors. But an examination of the two Epistles themselves shows that the usual order, which is at least as old as Marcion, is far the more natural. The reference to the growth in faith and love in II. i. 3 is an advance on I. i. 2. The vivid feelings expressed in I. ii. 17—iii. 10 must belong to the first letter composed after the arrival of Timothy with the good news. The more definite reference to the idlers is more naturally taken as dealing with the growth of the evil. The problem of the departed would arise almost immediately. The whole literary relationship between the two letters strongly supports the view that I is primary and II secondary. We need have no hesitation in rejecting this hypothesis.

VII. WAS SILVANUS THE REAL AUTHOR?

Another suggestion affecting both Epistles has been put forward by Professor Burkitt (*Christian Beginnings*, pp. 128–32). He points out that if Galatians is regarded as the earliest of St. Paul's extant Epistles, a view that he personally supports, then we have to face the strange fact that in Galatians we find one kind of teaching, not specially eschatological, followed by a change to eschatological teaching in the Thessalonian Epistles and then in turn a reversion to non-eschatological teaching in Corinthians and Romans. On the older view which connected Galatians with Corinthians and Romans this difficulty did not exist. Accordingly he suggests that these two Epistles are really the composition of Silvanus, and that St. Paul did little more than read them through, give a general approval, and add I. ii. 18 and II. iii. 17 with his own hand. In support of this hypothesis he adduces the general similarity of the undeveloped and eschatologically coloured teaching of these Epistles to the early speeches in Acts, which cannot be denied. Also he reminds us that Silvanus came from Jerusalem only a short time before this, and was a prophet (Acts xv. 32, 40). What, then, is more natural than that he should reproduce the type of teaching that as a prophet he had been accustomed to propagate at Jerusalem? We may compare the close connexion between the Apocalypse and Christian prophecy. Thus both the apocalyptic tone and the primitive type of theology would be explained. St. Paul might not have produced just that kind of teaching himself, but he would readily approve of it. On this view there is no need to attempt to explain the apparent departure from the teaching of Galatians in these Epistles and the return to it in the later Epistles.

In reply we may point out that the problem only arises on this particular dating of the Epistles, which is by no means universally accepted even in this country, and is definitely rejected by the majority of Continental scholars. If we retain the old view of the order of the Epistles, the change is sufficiently explained by the development of St. Paul's teaching to meet the rise of a new and urgent situation. Otherwise the suggestion has many attractions. The chief and probably fatal objection to it is that it is hardly consistent with the character of St. Paul himself, as we should gather it from his other writings. He is not the sort of person who would hand over to another a task of this kind, or lightly append his signature to the composition of another. He had an intense personal interest in the churches that he had founded, and dealt in person even with relatively trivial matters. The Corinthian correspondence illustrates both points, and Macedonia was dearer to him than Corinth. There also remains the close similarity both in language and idea with other Epistles which came from his own hand. This we have already illustrated. The only reply could be that Silvanus had picked up much of the phraseology of St. Paul, or even was striving to express himself as St. Paul would have expressed himself. That Silvanus had a real share in the writing of the letters is quite possible, but we cannot think that St. Paul's part was so subsidiary as this theory would require.

If, however, we adopt Burkitt's dating of the Epistles, there is a real problem. Perhaps the best line of solution is to insist that the kind of teaching given in any letter depends on the state of mind and stage of development of the converts, not on the state of mind or stage of theological development of St. Paul himself. The Macedonians were a practical people, little given to theological refinements. As far as we can tell, they were entirely unaffected by the propaganda of the Judaizers. Their temptations and failings were of a very different order. Hence the theological arguments that fill Galatians would have been both irrelevant to their needs and unintelligible to their minds. It is a great mistake to find the core of St. Paul's teaching in the doctrine of justification by faith. If we look for a single centre in his theology, we are more likely to find it in his doctrine of union with Christ. That is certainly implied in the Thessalonian Epistles. The reason why justification by faith finds such a large place in certain Epistles is simply because it was being attacked or denied, or because the false teaching that St. Paul was combating in effect contradicted it. But St. Paul was not always or primarily proclaiming it other than as one element in his Gospel. Where, as in Macedonia, it was accepted, there was no cause

to insist on it or to put it in the forefront. Thus the prominence given to it in Galatians, and then again in Romans, and to a less degree in Corinthians, can be largely accounted for by the local condition and character of the Church addressed.

We can go further than this. A study of the Epistles shows that even to the end the teaching of St. Paul always contained a strong, definite, and consistent eschatological element. This appealed not only to Jews but to heathen, who were familiar in various forms with the idea of a great divine judgement. In one of the two speeches to pagans placed in his mouth in Acts, judgement forms the climax (xvii. 30-1). When we turn to the two Epistles which are nearest in time to I and II Thess. (namely Galatians and I Corinthians) it is instructive to observe that they both imply an insistence on eschatological ideas similar to those in Thessalonians.

Thus in the opening salutation of Galatians (i. 1-5), where St. Paul is plainly alluding to familiar and undisputed ideas, we find two strongly eschatological clauses. The first is 'God the Father who raised him from the dead'. If that does not strike us immediately as having an eschatological reference, that is because we have not grasped the outlook of the New Testament on the subject. Undoubtedly among the Jews in the time of Christ the resurrection of the dead was a common article of belief, and was connected with the end of the world and the arrival of a new cosmic order by a catastrophic act of God. Hence the first Christians held that the resurrection of Christ was an eschatological event. It was due, as St. Paul says, to the direct act of the Father. It was the herald of the coming of the new order. It implied the breaking through of forces that belonged to the age to come. It did not belong simply to the history of this age. Hence it is significant that, as in the passage from Acts referred to above, it is placed in close connexion with the judgement (cp. I Thess. i. 10; iv. 14-15; Phil. iii. 18-21). The second passage is even more explicit, 'Who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil world'. That is a clear allusion to the current Jewish belief in the two worlds or ages, the present which is largely under the usurped dominion of evil spirits, and the age to come when the kingdom or rule of God shall be effectively expressed in a new order. The resurrection of Christ is regarded as both the pledge and foretaste of this new world. In the following section of the Epistle, which states the position in Galatia and contains a largely historical defence of St. Paul's conduct, there is little room for references to eschatology. Nor again in chapters iii-iv, which are a theological controversy largely based on the Old Testament, should we expect eschatological teaching. The appeal to the experience of

the Spirit and to miracles wrought in the power of the Spirit is indirectly eschatological. The coming of the Spirit was one of the marks of the new age, and miracles were viewed as an irruption of the powers of the world to come (Heb. vi. 5), but the demands of controversy did not call for the development of these points. In the practical section that follows, v. 2 is sufficient to show that the idea of the judgement through which Christians would enter the Messianic Kingdom at the last day was a familiar belief to which appeal could be made in cases of moral laxity (cp. also vi. 7-8). We are in an atmosphere similar to that of I Thess. v. To sum up, Galatians implies a background of eschatological teaching fully consistent with that summed up in I Thess. i. 9-10. It is less prominent owing to the urgent controversy concerning the place of Jewish Law and the particular nature of the false doctrines which called for correction. The question of acceptance with God (justification) is primarily a problem of here and now. There is no trace of any restlessness or anxieties about the future life which called for explicit teaching or reminder of past teaching on the subject of the last things. There is therefore no sure ground for holding that Thessalonians could not have been written by St. Paul himself shortly after Galatians.

The case for this assertion is strengthened when we turn to I Cor., which was indubitably composed two or three years after Thess. When we allow for the fact that the letter is largely a detailed reply partly to the report brought by members of the household of Chloe, partly to the letter sent by the Church of Corinth through its delegates, we cannot but be struck by the amount of eschatological teaching that it contains. The most important chapter for our present discussion is xv. There we start with the resurrection of Christ Himself, pass on to the resurrection of Christians, and reach in verses 21 ff. the fullest exposition of apocalyptic teaching to be found in St. Paul. It is not put forward as fresh information, but as part of the already familiar apostolic Gospel. The intimate connexion between the resurrection as an eschatological event and the catastrophic end of this present world is to be noted. But this chapter does not stand alone. In i. 7; iii. 17; v. 5; vi. 3 the immediacy and certainty of the judgement is made the ground of appeal. In vii its nearness colours the teaching about marriage in a way which modern Christians are often reluctant to face. Here and again in x. 11 St. Paul insists that Christians are standing by the death-bed of the present order and must behave accordingly. So again in xi. 26-31 the Eucharist is the preaching by act of the Lord's death 'till he come'. The preparation for it should be a means of preparation for the impending judgement. xvi. 22 implies that Maranatha, 'Our

Lord, come', is a regular Christian watchword, perhaps the termination of the Eucharistic prayer.

Sufficient has been said to show that the apocalyptic tone of Thess. is no isolated phenomenon. The eschatological elements in the preaching both of St. Paul and of the Apostles were more numerous and more prominent than it has often been fashionable to suppose. No contradiction was felt between ethics and eschatology. A primitive Christian would not have been conscious of more than at most a slight change of emphasis between the contents of Thess. and Gal. and I Cor. They would all represent to him an exposition of the one apostolic preaching with which he was already familiar.

To sum up, the traditional authorship and order of these two Epistles on the whole involves us in the fewest difficulties. They both have every claim to be treated as Pauline on the score of language and thought and expression. The personal equation and the religious convictions of the writer are in full harmony with what we know of St. Paul elsewhere. They imply a situation which is inherently consistent and probable. That there are obscurities is sufficiently explained by the fact that they are occasional writings and assume a knowledge of much the clue to which has now been lost.

VIII. THE NATURE OF A PAULINE EPISTLE

It is hardly too much to say that on many points our conception of St. Paul's Epistles has been revolutionized by the discoveries of papyri in Egypt. Not only can we imagine the appearance of the original as it left St. Paul, when we look at the papyri documents exhibited in our museums, but our whole idea of the character of the language in which it was written, and of the form in which it was composed, have been changed. This in turn should lead to a new outlook in dealing with the teaching which these letters contain.

(1) A generation ago scholars were familiar with classical Greek (which was considered the norm by which all forms of Greek should be tested), with the translation Greek of the Septuagint, and with the Greek written by the professed literary men of the first century A. D. It was plain that New Testament Greek did not correspond with any one of these classes. There were rare places when it resembled the formal Greek of the literary class. There were more passages where it resembled the Greek of the LXX. But on the whole it was considered to be unique. It was styled Semitic Greek, and was supposed to betray the influence of Aramaic and Hebrew. To some indeed it seemed fitting that the sacred scriptures should be composed in a language of their own, and they named it 'the language of the Holy

Ghost'. Others were less complimentary and called it 'tired Greek'. To-day the discovery of more inscriptions, and above all of letters and private documents of all kinds in the rubbish heaps of Egypt has shown that the Greek of the New Testament is for all practical purposes identical with the Greek spoken and written by ordinary people. It was the vernacular all round the shores of the Mediterranean. It might have been conjectured that throughout history, side by side with the literary Greek of our classical writers, there must have existed a popular Greek. It was improbable that Athenian workmen of the fifth century B.C. spoke the Greek of the speeches of Thucydides or the dialogues of Plato. But no memorial of their popular speech survived. To-day we have abundant evidence for the popular speech of the time of the New Testament. And there is no possible doubt that the Epistles of St. Paul were composed not in the artificial literary Greek of cultivated circles, but in the ordinary speech of the day. New Testament Greek is no longer a language apart.

(2) The results of this discovery are of great importance for a right understanding of the Epistles. Not only is the precise meaning of many words, phrases, and passages cleared up, but the democratic and missionary aspect of the New Testament is re-emphasized. It is brought into the closest connexion with the life of the primitive community at every point. A letter such as one of the Thessalonian Epistles could be read and understood in all the main centres of life of the Mediterranean world. St. Paul was troubled by no language problems, as is the modern missionary. In part the presence of this common language accounts for the rapid spread of the new faith. Again, the writings of the New Testament are emphatically democratic. Deissmann has well called them 'Writings of the people, by the people, and for the people'. St. Paul did not belong to any exclusive literary caste. He wrote for ordinary men and women. In a real sense his Epistles belong to the pre-literary period of Christianity. He was in no sense a man of letters. At the same time, viewed from another aspect, his letters often rise to the level of great literature. He has something fresh and great to say, and says it in the language of common men and women. His writings may be compared with, say, the poems of Burns, or the *Pilgrim's Progress*. There is nothing of which to be ashamed in acknowledging that they do not conform to the standards of the professed literary men of the day. Cultivated Greek was only for the few. The New Testament is in no way degraded because it appeals to universal humanity. Here again the missionary value of his writings is apparent. They could strike home to the ordinary man.

(3) Again, the papyri have shown that St. Paul employed not only the language, but the form of popular writings. His Epistles are in outline and construction only a development of the form of correspondence used by ordinary people. This in itself emphasizes the truth that they are genuine letters. They have in view a particular audience and definite circumstances. There was no thought of publication. St. Paul as a rule opens with an address or greeting, followed by a thanksgiving. His opening formulas are simply a development of those in current usage. Even the presence of a thanksgiving or prayer has abundant parallels. The only difference is that he lifts up to a new level what was no doubt largely conventional. So, too, after the chief contents of the letter, which are determined by the purpose for which it was sent, he concludes with personal salutations and an autographic ending. That is precisely the ending of the ordinary letter in the papyri. Certain customary phrases, e.g. 'I exhort you', to introduce a request, 'I wish you to know', to introduce information, and 'I rejoiced greatly', to express satisfaction, are found alike in the papyri and in St. Paul. The question has been much discussed as to whether St. Paul uses the epistolary plural or not, especially in the Thessalonian Epistles. The papyri help us to decide the question. There are plenty of examples to hand from the papyri where the writer passes backwards and forwards from the singular to the plural in a single letter. In some of these it is probable that he includes friends or other members of the family, but in other cases this is ruled out by the context. Accordingly we should be prepared at least for the possibility that St. Paul may at times make use of the epistolary plural as equivalent to the singular. On the other hand, in several Epistles he opens with a greeting from himself and others, and then employs the singular consistently throughout the remainder of the letter (Gal. i. 2; I Cor. i. 1; Phil. i. 1). This looks as if it were deliberate. By contrast, in the Thessalonian letters he continues to use the plural, though he resorts to the singular in I. i. 18, where he wishes to emphasize his own personal affection; iii. 5, where he distinguishes himself from his companions; v. 27, where he asserts his authority; II. ii. 5, where he appeals to his own personal teaching; and iii. 17, where he draws attention to his autograph as the guarantee of genuineness. When we take into account the circumstances under which these letters were composed, we are inclined to believe that this sustained use of the plural is designed to include his fellow missionaries with himself wherever possible. This again brings out the occasional nature of the composition.

(4) We must carry our inference a stage further. Not only is the

language of the Epistles popular language and the structure of the Epistles a variety of the popular letter, but the thought-forms and ideas and expressions of the Epistles belong to the level of popular thought. In other words, it is a serious misinterpretation of St. Paul's words if we regard them as if they were drawn from a treatise of scientific theology. He uses the vocabulary of worship and devotion rather than that of precise thinking. His interest is evangelical rather than speculative. Hence to treat his doctrinal assertions as if they possessed the accuracy and precision of science is to misunderstand their purpose. He writes frankly on the popular level. He expresses truth as the preacher expresses it, so that it may make its full appeal to the heart and conscience of those whom he is addressing. That is not to say that his statements have not a definite meaning or that he is indifferent to truth. Rather they possess the kind of truth that belongs to religion rather than to science. They enshrine devotional rather than intellectual values. The popular mind works largely by picture thinking rather than by abstract reasoning. That is precisely the nature of St. Paul's theology. It is description rather than definition. It does not spring from any purely cognitive interest, but from the demands of the moral and spiritual life. This does not detract from its abiding value. Far from it. Precisely because it is not entangled in the scientific categories and schemes of philosophy of the first century it does not grow out of date. On this point St. Paul represents the Jewish rather than the Greek attitude to reality. The Jew cared little for intellectual pursuits or consistent thinking. He was content to state and affirm moral and spiritual truths and leave them side by side, even where they appeared to conflict. He possessed as little interest in subtle and abstract speculations as the ordinary Englishman. Hence the impossibility of building up out of St. Paul's Epistles a complete and consistent body of scientific theology.

IX. THE DOCTRINE OF THE EPISTLES

Bearing in mind the above considerations, we shall not expect to find in these Epistles any compendium of doctrine, or any formal presentation of theological truth. Rather we overhear certain beliefs which are taken for granted as shared by the missionaries and their converts. What is implied is no less important than what is explicitly stated. It is the universal assumptions of the primitive church that are the most illuminating guides to the nature of its fundamental beliefs. Thus in these Epistles we find throughout a resolute ethical monotheism, the continuation of the belief of

ancient Israel which had attracted the God-fearers. The one true God is contrasted with the sham gods of paganism (I. i. 9; cp. Jer. x. 10). It is towards Him that their faith is directed (I. i. 8). The truth of the Gospel is His word (I. ii. 2, 13, &c.). The salvation of the Thessalonians proceeds from His will (I. i. 4; ii. 12; v. 9; II. ii. 13). Indeed in true Jewish fashion everything that happens is ascribed directly to His working (e.g. I. iii. 11; iv. 14; v. 23; II. i. 5-6; ii. 11). On the other hand, the Gentiles are said not to 'know' God, which implies not so much intellectual ignorance as refusal of obedience (I. iv. 5; II. i. 8). The Fatherhood of God is assumed. He is at once the Father of Christ and of Christians (I. i. 3; iii. 11; II. i. 1).

On the other hand, Christ is placed side by side with the Father as the source of life and grace for the Church (I. i. 1; II. i. 1). The Christian churches in Judaea are distinguished as being 'in Christ Jesus' (I. ii. 14). The dead are 'in Christ' (I. iv. 16). Life in fellowship with Him is the source of salvation (I. v. 9-10). He is the agent through whom the will of God is made at once operative and accessible (I. v. 18). The Gospel of God is styled equally the Gospel of Christ (I. iii. 2). The unity of operation of the Father and Christ is expressed in the strongest possible language by the use of the singular verb (I. iii. 11; II. ii. 16-17) after the two substantives, and even of a singular participle agreeing with both (II. ii. 16). He is called God's Son (I. i. 10). He is the Messiah of Jewish expectation, as is shown in the Antichrist passage, though the term Christ is usually little more than a proper name. His human name Jesus is used by itself twice (I. i. 10; ii. 15), in each case with a conscious reference to the events of His earthly life. His usual title is the Lord Jesus. It is now coming to be recognized that the origin of the title Lord as applied to Jesus in the Christian community is to be found in Jewish rather than in Gentile sources. Even so it had a meaning for the first Christians that we find it hard to recapture. It meant at least this, that they acknowledged that their lives were to be ruled by His teaching and commands. He was for them the representative of the rule of God. And the title readily gathered round itself other associations. In a pagan town 'the Lord Jesus' would easily be contrasted with the 'lords' of the mystery-cults. It would suggest divinity in the loose pagan sense of the term. What is more important for our present purpose is to observe the devotional attitude towards Him that is implied in these letters. Prayer is already being made to Him (I. iii. 11-12; v. 28; II. ii. 16-17; iii. 5, 18). Old Testament language applied to Jehovah is being applied to Him (I. v. 2; II. i. 7). His death is said to have been 'for us' (I. v. 10). His death and

resurrection are the ground of Christian hope (I. iv. 14). The salvation that He is able to offer in virtue of His resurrection is largely viewed eschatologically (I. i. 10; v. 9; II. i. 7). He is plainly viewed not simply as a teacher or an example, but as a Saviour, and His ability to save is connected with His death and resurrection. At the same time, though He is the Judge who is to come, He is no less active as indwelling in the lives of believers and in the church (I. i. 1; iv. 1; v. 18; II. iii. 6-12). St. Paul exercises His apostolic authority, and Christians are to grow in holiness, in virtue of a present union with Christ, who will be revealed in His full glory at the last day. In short the attitude towards the Lord Jesus Christ implied throughout these letters is in the long run indistinguishable from that of worship. There is everywhere the sense of redemption, and He is the redeemer and the impartor of new and divine life. In the position which is assigned to Him, without comment or explanation, side by side with the Father we get the germs of the later doctrine of the Trinity. In the attitude of adoration and devotion there is implicit a theology which can hardly rest content to stop short of the decisions of Nicaea.

So too the experience of the power of the Holy Spirit of God in the soul is assumed to be universal. It was the result of the reception of the Gospel and bore witness to its truth and power (I. i. 5-6). Joy even amidst persecution is one of the fruits of the Spirit. It is taken for granted that all Christians have received the Holy Spirit who will sanctify their lives (I. iv. 7-8; II. ii. 13). But besides these universal gifts, the Holy Spirit bestows special gifts, prophecy and probably speaking with tongues (I. v. 19-20). The relation of the work of the Spirit to that of the Ascended Christ is not made explicit, but it is clear that the work of the Holy Spirit is the work of God Himself (cp. I. iv. 7 with v. 23).

As we have seen, the picture of salvation is largely eschatological. But Christians are redeemed here and now in order that they may be delivered at the impending judgement and enter into their final bliss (I. iii. 13; iv. 17; v. 8-10, 23; II. i. 5; ii. 13-14). The whole idea of salvation is ethical. There is no contradiction between eschatology and morality. Religion is to show itself in right conduct and good works (I. i. 3; iii. 12; iv. 3 ff., 11-12; v. 14 ff.; II. i. 3; iii. 4, 12-13).

Lastly there is implicit a very definite doctrine of the Church. Membership in the Christian fellowship is at every point taken for granted. It is in that fellowship that love is to be practised and deepened. Language is used which implies that the Christian Church is the new Israel, the inheritor of all the promises and blessings of the old Israel (e.g. I. i. 1, 4; II. i. 10; ii. 13). Social disapproval is to be one of the great instruments by which disorderly Christians one of

be brought to a better mind. Regular gatherings for common worship are implied. The mention of the kiss of peace suggests the Eucharist (I. v. 26). At such meetings the Apostle's letters would be read aloud. Some organization existed (I. v. 12). The whole circumstances find their analogy to-day in some small body of Christians in the midst of a vast heathen population where it is only possible to maintain Christian standards of living by the closest fellowship among believers.

(For full information on the composition of New Testament writings see Milligan, *New Testament Documents*; Deissmann, *The New Testament in the Light of Modern Research*.)

X. ANALYSIS OF THE EPISTLES

I THESSALONIANS

A. Introduction and Thanksgiving. i. 1-10.

(a) 1. Superscription.

(b) 2-10. Thanksgiving for the faithfulness and zeal of the readers.

B. Chief subject of the letter, an exhortation to stand firm, coupled with a defence of his own conduct. ii. 1-iii. 13.

(a) 1-12. An apology for his manner of life among them, and a reminder of the power of the Gospel that they had experienced.

(b) 13-16. A renewed thanksgiving for his success among them, and for the share of persecution that they had borne.

(c) 17-20. His desire to visit them and its frustration.

(d) 1-10. The mission of Timothy, and his joy at the report that he brought back.

(e) 11-13. Prayer for growth and perseverance.

C. Warnings and instructions in practical Christianity. iv. 1-v. 22.

(a) 1-2. General exhortation.

(b) 3-8. And especially against immorality.

(c) 9-12. Brotherly love must include quiet and steady work.

(d) 13-18. A reply to anxious questionings about the faithful departed and the advent of Christ.

(e) 1-11. In view of the suddenness of that advent there is the need of watchfulness.

(f) 12-22. Miscellaneous injunctions to order, unity, and holy living.

D. Final prayer, salutation, and blessing. v. 23-8.

II. THESSALONIANS

- A. Introduction and Thanksgiving.
- (a) i. 1-2. Superscription and blessing.
 - (b) 3-5. Thanksgiving for their continued growth and endurance: leading to—
 - (c) 6-10. Instruction that the coming of Christ will mean the punishment of sinners, but reward for believers.
 - (d) 11-12. Confident prayer that they may attain this.
- B. The chief subject of the letter. Antichrist must come before the final coming of Christ. Therefore the Day of the Lord is not yet present.
- (a) ii. 1-12. The fainthearted must not be troubled by suggestions that they are living in the Day of the Lord. Its coming must be preceded by the appearance of Antichrist who is at present restrained, but who will be destroyed by the Lord Jesus.
 - (b) 13-15. A reassurance of the fainthearted based on their election.
 - (c) 16-17. A prayer for their encouragement.
- C. Practical instructions and warnings.
- (a) iii. 1-5. A request for their prayers, together with an expression of confidence.
 - (b) 6-15. More detailed injunctions against the idlers, and an exhortation to loyal members to admonish them.
- D. Final prayer, salutation, and blessing. iii. 16-18.

XI. SHORT BIBLIOGRAPHY

The English reader will have the choice of two admirable commentaries on the Greek text of these Epistles, with full and detailed notes on points of grammar. The older, by Dr. G. Milligan (Macmillan & Co.), is specially valuable for its references to the papyri, the other, by Professor J. E. Frame (International Critical Commentaries. T. and T. Clark), contains full exegetical notes.

Of smaller commentaries special mention may be made of those by Findlay in the Cambridge Greek Testament, and Moffatt in the Expositor's Greek Testament, a slight but suggestive treatment which makes the reader desire more.

Bishop Lightfoot's lectures have been published in *Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul* and, together with his essays on 'The Churches of Macedonia' and 'The Church of Thessalonica', published in

Biblical Essays, provide a mine of useful material for the study of these Epistles.

Older commentaries by Ellicott, Jowett, and Vaughan are still of value. Professor Denney's homiletical treatment in the Expositor's Bible is admirable, allowing for a strong Protestant bias.

Of German commentaries special mention may be made of those by P. W. Schmiedel, B. Weiss, E. von Dobschuetz, and M. Dibelius.

Attention should be paid to the relevant portions of Kirsopp Lake's *Earlier Epistles of St. Paul*, and Ramsay's *St. Paul the Traveller and Roman Citizen*; also to the articles by Dr. Lock in *Hasting's Dictionary of the Bible*.

The translations into modern English by Rutherford and Moffatt will be found illuminating. Much use has been made of them in this commentary.

A complete bibliography will be found in Frame.

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS

CHAPTER I

A. INTRODUCTION AND THANKSGIVING. 1-10.

(a) *The Superscription, 1.*

I. 1 PAUL, and Silvanus, and Timothy, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy send greeting to the assembly of the Thessalonians that meets in the name and in the life of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We send no formal greeting. May you in very truth enjoy the grace and peace that Christ has brought.

St. Paul freely adapts to his purpose the phrases and forms that had become conventional in private correspondence. Recent discoveries in Egypt have provided abundant examples of the ordinary papyrus letters of this date. The address was written on the outside of the folded letter, or on its cover. The letter itself began with a greeting in grammatical form identical with those of St. Paul. This is the shortest of such greetings in St. Paul's writings, but contains the essential points of the longer greetings in the remaining epistles.

1. *Paul.* The bare mention of his name is significant. Since he is writing to a church where his authority had not been questioned, there is no reason to insist on his apostolic rank and divine call. We may contrast, at the other extreme, the opening verses of Galatians, where his authority is asserted at length. Only when he writes to his

much loved Philippians, or in a private letter to Philemon, is he as brief as he is here. Elsewhere some mention is made of his apostleship.

Silvanus. The name was commonly contracted into Silas. He may be unhesitatingly identified with the Silas of Acts, a Jew and a Roman citizen (Acts xvi. 37-8). He is placed before Timothy as being the more important. Already in Acts xv. 22 and 32 he is prominent as 'a chief man' and a prophet. He filled the place of Barnabas on the second missionary tour. His presence at Thessalonica is mentioned in Acts xvii. 4, 10.

He was with St. Paul at Corinth when this epistle was being composed (cp. II Cor. i. 19). After that he disappears both from the narrative of Acts and from the Epistles of St. Paul. He reappears in I Pet. v. 12, if indeed that Silvanus is the same person.

Timothy was taken by St. Paul

as his companion at Lystra earlier in the tour (Acts xvi. 1-3; II Tim. i. 5-6). Acts does not mention his share in the work at Thessalonica. He filled an entirely subordinate position, but in view of his mission to Thessalonica after St. Paul's departure his mention in the greeting is natural.

unto the church . . . Christ. These words must all be taken closely together. The Greek word for 'church' (*ecclesia*) had associations of all kinds. To the ordinary Gentile it would summon up at once a picture of a civic assembly. In the LXX it is employed, alternatively with synagogue, for the 'congregation' of Israel (cp. Acts vii. 38). The words which follow distinguish the Christian Church from pagan and secular assemblies, on the one hand, and from the Jewish synagogue, on the other. An entirely new phrase is used because there is an entirely new kind of assembly to designate.

In Thess. it plainly denotes the local church (cp. ii. 14), and the form of the title, '*the church of the Thessalonians*', is peculiar. In Gal. i. 2 it is used in the plural, 'the churches of Galatia'. In I and II Cor. St. Paul prefers the form 'the church of God which is in'. His mind is full of the universal Church, the new Israel, which was not confined to the local Church of Corinth, as the Corinthians needed to be reminded. In his developed thought the idea of the universal Church, the body of Christ, is primary, that of local Churches is secondary. The universal Church is not formed simply by adding together the local Churches. Rather it is prior to

them. Just as the Roman citizens in a town represented the whole Roman Empire, so the community of Christians in a particular place represented the Catholic Church. In Romans and the later Epistles he adopts a new form of address, 'to the saints in', or some equivalent term. In Philemon we find 'the church that is in their house', but that is an expression that it would have been hard to avoid. In Thess. the idea of the universal Church is left undeveloped.

in God . . . Christ. This phrase that designates the novelty of the Christian Church deserves study. It is a developed form of the common Pauline expression 'in Christ' or 'in Christ Jesus', and is only found in Thess. All strong religious movements throw up a vocabulary of their own. Words and phrases are coined or borrowed to express spiritual experience. So here metaphors of space are used to picture what transcends material imagery. St. Paul plainly expected the little community to understand at once his language. The symbolism is that of transference into a new atmosphere or environment (cp. Col. i. 13). We who have always lived in a Christian atmosphere can hardly understand the revolution in life and outlook that conversion to Christianity involved at Thessalonica. Only in the mission field can we find an adequate parallel. Christians literally seemed to be living in a new world. They found themselves possessed by a power not their own that lifted them up to new levels of life. Though there is no explicit mention of the Holy Spirit here, the experience underlying our phrases

is that which is elsewhere described as due to the gift of the Spirit, who makes all things new (cp. Gal. vi. 15; II Cor. v. 17, &c.). Christian life is lived day by day in the power which God the Father has sent through His Son Jesus the Messiah. Those who accept the Lordship of Jesus receive this new life. The same thought is expressed in other metaphors, e. g. in the allegory of the Vine and the Branches (Jn. xv. 1-8). The closest parallel to St. Paul's language is to be found in Mk. i. 23 (contrast Mk. iii. 30), where a man is said literally to be 'in an unclean spirit'. It expresses the same phenomenon to say that he is 'in the spirit', or the spirit 'in him'. An external power seems to have taken possession of him. So Christians in the New Testament are primarily men filled with the Holy Spirit of God, whom the Father sent and the Son bestowed. They have been translated into the very life of God Himself. The language of our Epistle raises intellectual questions about the relation of God the Father and the Lord Jesus which could only be answered by the later doctrine of the Trinity. It is also to be noted that the new life in Christ is emphatically social. It is the life of the society in which the individual shares. 'In Christ' is no merely personal and private mystical relation to God. For St. Paul from the first, membership in the visible community of Christians was a normal part of the Christian life. Here again the mission field to-day supplies an exact parallel. An isolated Christian would find it impossible to stand by himself against the darkness and immoral-

ity of his heathen surroundings. He must be brought inside the fellowship of the Church. The visible membership of the body is as it were the sacrament of the change of moral and spiritual atmosphere. It is the whole community that is in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, not the individual Christian, though it is equally true that the individual can only become and remain a living member by personal faith.

Father. The idea of God as Father is not peculiar to Christianity. The heathen often conceived of their gods as the fathers of their people, often in a gross and physical sense. So, too, to the Jews Jehovah was in the first instance the Father of the nation (Ex. iv. 22; Hos. xi. 1), then of the anointed king as summing up the nation in himself (II Sam. vii. 12-14; Ps. ii. 7), and in later literature of the individual Israelite (Ecclus. xxiii. 1; Wisd. ii. 16). But the idea of Fatherhood received a new and vivid content through the revelation of perfect sonship in the life of Christ. To Him God was supremely the Father. He showed all that the Fatherhood of God could mean. The title is always used in the Epistles in the light of this revelation in Christ.

Lord. It is now coming to be agreed that the title Lord as applied to Jesus Christ is in origin Jewish. It was applied to Him in the Church of Jerusalem, and expressed the sense of awe and authority that He aroused and that was consummated by the Resurrection. Even if in the minds of Gentiles it awoke a comparison between Him and other 'Lords',

whether the Roman emperor or the gods of the mystery cults, that was not its primary origin. It is important to remember that in primitive Christianity it was no empty title, but expressed a great reality. Christians strove to make Him master of their lives in literal truth.

The title *Christ*, the Greek translation of the Jewish Messiah (= anointed), is on its way to becoming a proper name. To the Gentile who was unacquainted with Judaism it must have seemed a wholly unintelligible term, and was frequently confused with the common Greek word 'chrestus', which means 'kindly'. Through Christ Christians are to attain that perfect sonship that He first achieved.

grace . . . and peace. It is often held that St. Paul combines the Greek and Hebrew forms of salutation. It is true that the word for grace is etymologically connected with that for greeting. But the evidence of the papyri shows that the two Greek words for 'grace' and 'greeting' are sometimes used in the same letter in different senses, the latter expressing the greeting and the former thanksgiving. This suggests that St. Paul's favourite form of salutation was a deliberate play on words, to bring out the truth that his greeting was not conventional, but that Christ had indeed brought true grace and true peace.

(b) *Thanksgiving for the faithfulness and zeal of the readers, 2-10.*

2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; 3 remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labour of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, before our God and Father; 4 knowing, brethren beloved of God, your election, 5 ¹how that our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the ²Holy Ghost, and in much ³assurance; even as ye know what manner of men we shewed ourselves toward you for your sake. 6 And ye became imitators of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the ²Holy Ghost; 7 so that ye became an ensample to all that believe in Macedonia and in Achaia. 8 For from you hath sounded forth the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith to God-ward is gone forth; so that we need not to speak anything. 9 For they themselves report concerning us what manner of entering in we had unto you; and how ye turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God, 10 and to

¹ Or, because our gospel &c.

² Or, Holy Spirit.

³ Or, fulness.

wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivereth us from the wrath to come.

We never mention your names in our prayers without giving thanks for you all, and with good reason. We constantly remember your active work that is the fruit and evidence of faith, your toil for others that only love could inspire, and your perseverance that nothing could sustain but hope in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, a hope maintained as under the very eye of our God and Father. We are convinced, brothers beloved of God, that God has truly called and chosen you. It is proved first by the way in which our gospel came home to you, not as mere declamation, but as a living force. We knew ourselves to be filled with the Spirit of God and with deep inward conviction of the truth of our message. Indeed you yourselves know what manner of men we showed ourselves to be in our efforts to serve you. Then, secondly, you set yourselves to imitate us and above all the Lord, inasmuch as you welcomed the word even though it involved you in great suffering with joy that can only proceed from the Holy Spirit. So you became a model church to all believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For from you has spread the trumpet-call of God's message, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, no, in every place, to speak more simply, the news of your faith in the one true God has spread abroad, so that there is no need for us to mention it. Rather men of their own accord keep reporting about us what manner of visit we paid you and then about you how you turned to God from your idols to serve a living and genuine God and to wait for the return of His Son from heaven, even Jesus of Nazareth, our saviour from the wrath that is even now approaching.

The precise punctuation of verses 2, 3 is uncertain, but the general sense is not affected. *Without ceasing* may go with *remembering*, as in R.V., or with the preceding sentence. *In our Lord Jesus Christ* certainly goes with *hope*, but some scholars take *before . . . Father* with *remembering*. The distance between them is against this. Therefore it is better to take them with the preceding words. The sentence should have ended with *hope*, but St. Paul's eagerness makes it run on by the addition of two clauses. This is characteristic of his style.

2. Similar mention of prayers and thanksgiving is common in the papyri. But giving thanks obtains

a special prominence in St. Paul. He seems to have made a rule never to offer a petition for himself or others without first giving thanks for blessings previously received (e.g. Col. iv. 2; Phil. i. 3; iv. 6). In every Epistle he opens with a mention of thanksgiving, with the significant exception of Galatians. There he could find no ground of thanks, but substitutes 'I marvel' (Gal. i. 6).

3. It is to be noted that what St. Paul remembers is not the faith, hope, and love of his converts, but the practical results of these virtues. There is an ascending scale of excellence: first *work*, i.e. ordinary activity, then *labour* or toil, or fatiguing and unpleasant

work, then *patience* or endurance under opposition and insult. The toil may be the manual labour needed to get funds, or missionary effort itself, or both. *Love* is not only the unselfish desire to serve others, but includes the love of God. *Patience* is too passive a word to bring out the full meaning of the Greek. It is heroic constancy and active endurance under difficulties (cp. IV Macc. i. 11; Rom. v. 3; II Cor. i. 6; vi. 4).

4-6. The R.V. rendering obscures the force of the argument. It falls into two parts. The Apostle is sure that God has called them, first because of the effectiveness of his ministry at Thessalonica (this is described in verse 4, and he returns to the subject in ii. 1-12), secondly, because the Thessalonians had given practical evidence of their true conversion. This is described in 6-10 and again in ii. 13-16.

4. *Brethren*. This style of address is common in the Epistles. It was borrowed from ordinary life. Not only is it found among the Jews (Acts ii. 29, &c.), but was used by members of pagan societies whose object was not primarily religious. Its full Christian usage depends on the new realization of the Fatherhood of God, from which it is the necessary deduction. Only here is the phrase added '*beloved of God*' (but cp. II. ii. 13), perhaps to emphasize the truth that their election proceeded from His free love.

Election. The primary reference of this idea here must be to God's will to enrol them among His chosen people, that is the Christian Church. For appeal is made to

something that the writers know as a matter of historical fact. But behind the election by God to be members of the visible Church lies the idea of God's eternal purpose, which works on the principle of election, or, as we should say, selection, and includes (cp. II. ii. 14) the means by which salvation shall be actually attained, such as the gift of the Spirit, fellowship in the body of Christ, and the use of the sacraments. All such terms go back in idea to the Old Testament, where Israel is a chosen people, called of God to fill the central place in the carrying out of His purpose for the world (e.g. Deut. vii. 6-7). In the New Testament the whole vocabulary of election is transferred by all writers to the Christian Church (e.g. I Pet. ii. 9).

5. *how that*. The R.V. mg. *because* is to be preferred. The Greek can equally be rendered in either way, but the context favours the latter. St. Paul is concerned to dwell not on what election consists in, but on the signs of election.

The contrast between *word* and *power* is found also in I Cor. ii. 4; iv. 20. Here it refers not to any abnormal signs, such as speaking with tongues, that followed on their preaching, but to the power with which *our gospel* (i.e. the Gospel which we preach) came home to the minds and hearts of the hearers. As so often the *gospel* is regarded as a living force whose presence can be seen in its effects (cp. Rom. i. 16, where power means exactly what we mean to-day by 'force'. The Gospel is a force that produces salvation). In this verse the primary concern is

with the consciousness of the preachers. They knew that they wielded a power which achieved spiritual results, as contrasted with mere eloquence that tickled the ears of the audience, or the bare repetition of truths that are out of harmony with the inner life of the preacher himself.

The *Holy Ghost* is the source of this power. Again the reference is to the preachers' own consciousness. There may be spiritual power that is not inspired of God, but by the forces of evil (cp. II. ii. 9).

Assurance. The R.V. mg. may be discarded. The word might mean fulfilment, but St. Paul is speaking not of the character of the message, nor of its results, but of the inward conviction of its preachers. It means therefore 'full assurance' or 'confidence' (cp. Col. ii. 2; Heb. vi. 11; x. 22). They were filled with the sense of the divine reality of the gospel.

Showed ourselves, i.e. in your eyes. This is probably right. Others prefer to translate 'were made to be', i.e. by the transforming power of Christ.

6. Verse 6 continues the argument begun in verse 5. The *ye* is emphatic. He turns from the proof of the power of the Spirit in the preachers to the proof of its presence in the hearers, as shown by their response. The collocation of *us and the Lord*, especially in that order, is at first hearing startling. We must remember, however, that a modern missionary might well speak in much the same way. When he is presenting a new ideal of life to the heathen, they

can only fully appreciate what it means if they not only hear about it, but see it worked out in action. And where are they to look for this but to the missionaries themselves? In so far as they are truly Christian, they represent not simply Christ's teaching but Christ's life (cp. I Cor. xi. 1). St. Paul would be the first to assert that this privilege of showing Christ by his life was due simply to the power of Christ within him (cp. Gal. ii. 20; Phil. iv. 13). The appeal to the example of Christ shows that the converts possessed some knowledge of His earthly life and character.

The precise ground of imitation is not only the fact that they *received* (better, 'welcomed') the word, but that they endured affliction and yet were filled with joy. Such a paradox of experience could only be explained by the fact that the joy came from the Holy Spirit (cp. Rom. xiv. 17; Gal. v. 22).¹ The joyousness of primitive Christianity was one of its characteristics, in spite of persecution and poverty. This union of suffering and joy was a new phenomenon. As a rule religion is valued because it gives comfort or is supposed to ensure deliverance from suffering. The Stoics indeed claimed to make men indifferent to suffering. But Christianity recognizes suffering as suffering, does not pretend that it does not hurt, teaches men to expect it as a part of their Christian life, to face it and even rejoice in it, not because it is good in itself, but because God can make it fruit-

¹ But Rabbinical writers teach that the *Shekinah*, which here means the Holy Spirit, only dwells in joyful men. (Strack-Billerbeck, vol. iii, pp. 623, 312.)

ful. The New Testament insists not only that Christ Himself united joy with suffering (cp. Heb. xii. 2; I Pet. iv. 13 compared with 1), but that Christians should rejoice to share His sufferings (Col. i. 24; Phil. i. 29; cp. also II Cor. vi. 10; viii. 1-2). The affliction is persecution from outside (Acts xvii. 5), not inward distress of mind.

7. *an ensample*. It is the community as a whole that is a pattern to believers. Macedonia and Achaia are mentioned as the two provinces into which Greece had been divided since 152.

8. *From* is simply local. 'Spreading outwards from you as a starting-point.' It does not imply missionary effort. *Sounded forth* is a piece of rhetoric, though the exact metaphor is obscure. It may be 'thunder', Lightfoot quotes parallels for its use in this sense. But the word is used quite generally for loud sounds, and the picture may well be that of a trumpet. It will be observed that in R. V. the construction of the sentence breaks down, since a new subject is supplied for the second half. There is no reason to attempt to remedy the grammar by putting a colon after Lord. It simply is an example of St. Paul's impetuosity. In the second part of the sentence he abandons his high-flown language for a simple statement of fact. The whole passage exhibits a natural exaggeration (cp. Rom. i. 8), but the geographical position of Thessalonica made it a centre from which news would be widely spread. It has been suggested that when Aquila and Priscilla arrived at Corinth they told St. Paul that

the report of the faith of the Thessalonians had reached Rome.

9. *they themselves*. The point is that wherever he goes there is no need for him to speak about his successful visit; they, i.e. strangers, from every place, of themselves, without being prompted, start to tell him what they have heard.

unto God. The Greek has the definite article, implying the one God. This sentence shows that the majority of the converts were Gentiles, and suggests that they had not even been God-fearers.

a living and true God. The absence of the definite article draws attention to His character. The word for *true* probably means genuine, as opposed to sham, just as *living* contrasts the true God with mere idols who could do nothing. Both ideas go back to the Old Testament, which from the time of the exile onwards is full of polemic against the gods of the heathen which are identified with their idols of wood and stone (cp. Is. xliv. 9 ff.; xlv. 20; Ps. cxv. 3 ff.; cxxxv. 15 ff.).

10. *to wait... Jesus*. This passage is typical of the doctrinal teaching of these Epistles and of the early chapters of Acts (see esp. iii. 20-1; x. 42). Notice the use of the human name, *Jesus*. To St. Paul, as to the whole of the early Church, there was no separation between Jesus and Christ. Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ, and would return to judge.

which . . . come. The first words are in Greek a participle and express a timeless act, 'our rescuer'. The *wrath* was part of the regular vocabulary of Christian missionaries (cp. ii. 16). The term is

Jewish, and expresses the reaction of God's holy love against all that is evil. In St. Paul it is not purely eschatological, but God's final judgement is regarded as the supreme and typical expression of His wrath. Wrath is often used to express the result of wrath, namely condemnation, and is thus contrasted with life or salvation (ii. 16; v. 9; Rom. ii. 5-8; v. 9-10). The reaction in some quarters today against the whole idea of God's wrath, where it does not spring from a mental picture of a good-natured God that is definitely sub-Christian, largely rests on misunderstanding. God's wrath is not a feeling out of harmony with His true character that temporarily overcomes Him, as man's wrath often is. It is in full accord with perfect goodness. Anger had its place in the perfect human character of Christ. 'The wrath of the Lamb' (Rev. vi. 16) is a paradox that expresses a necessary element of truth. So in the finest human characters we read of occasions when they break out in wrath against some vile or mean action, and their wrath is the more terrifying just because it is selfless and in sheer contrast to the gentle-

ness and patience that they normally exhibit. This just and loving human wrath must have its counterpart in the divine nature. No doubt it is true that, especially in undeveloped forms of religion, God is often supposed to be angry on unreasonable grounds and to allow His wrath to issue in violent and unjust action. That is even true of parts of the Old Testament. The savage naturally interprets God in terms of himself. Because he and his tribal chief give way to fits of passion and he cannot conceive of perfect self-control, therefore he naturally thinks of God as acting in the same way. But a more developed religion should strive not to abolish but to purify the idea of God's wrath. Further, God has often been supposed to be angry with, so to say, the wrong things, such as ritual errors or unintentional mistakes. Here again it is the duty of Christian teachers to insist that He is angry with the things with which Christ was angry, such as selfishness and cruelty and refusal to learn. In His wrath there is no element of personal animosity or offended dignity. If He is intolerant, it is because love must be intolerant.

Additional Note.

Faith, Hope, and Love.

The occurrence of this triad of Christian virtues at the opening of this Epistle raises the questions of their origin, meaning, and position in the Christian life. The manner in which they are introduced shows that they are already familiar to the Thessalonians through the preaching of St. Paul. The clearest evidence, however, for their currency not simply as individual virtues but in conjunction as a recognized triad, is to be found in I Cor. xiii. 13. There the subject of the chapter is love. There is nothing in the context that demands the mention of

either faith or hope. The contrast is drawn not between faith and knowledge, but between love and knowledge. At once, however, the mention of love summons up into the mind of the writer the ideas of faith and hope. They spring naturally to his lips. He assumes that the mention of the other two members of the triad will be as expected and as natural as it is to himself. Plainly it was not being made for the first time. The conjunction was already familiar in Christian circles. We should indeed have drawn this inference from their appearance twice in I Thess. i. 6 and v. 8, and again in Gal. v. 5-6. In the light of later writings we are justified in supposing that even at this early stage the conjunction had become current. The three are also found in Col. i. 4-5, where, however, hope is rather the object than the attitude of hope, and in Rom. v. 2-5. Outside St. Paul's writings the three occur in Heb. vi. 10-12 and I Pet. i. 21-2, which suggests that their collocation is not limited to Pauline Christianity. Faith and hope are mentioned together in Rom. iv. 18; xv. 13; Col. i. 23; Eph. i. 15-18; Tit. i. 1-2, and faith and love in Eph. iii. 17; vi. 23; II Thess. i. 3; I Tim. i. 5; vi. 11; II Tim. i. 13.

The origin of their combination is quite uncertain. All great religious movements coin a phraseology of their own. They either frame new words and expressions or borrow and select from those in current use, stamping them with a significance of their own. The formation of such a vocabulary is sometimes the work of some great leader or teacher, sometimes of the community at large. In its origins it is largely unconscious. The spontaneous prominence given in primitive Christianity to the attitudes denoted by the words faith, hope, and love reflects the general tone and direction of Christian life. They received their place of honour because they corresponded to the demands of the Christian conscience. Hence the question of the actual origin of the names for these virtues is relatively unimportant beside the fact that they were felt to be the characteristic attitudes of the new religion. Their selection may be due to St. Paul himself, but they may be pre-Pauline. They may go back to some traditional utterance of Christ. It is less probable that they were introduced into Christianity from outside. Some have conjectured that they were borrowed from the Hermetic movement, but a study of the Hermetic literature renders this most improbable. In any case they were employed by the Christian Church in its own sense and with varying shades of meaning. They are typical of the inmost meaning of Christianity. (A full discussion of the use of these terms will be found in the valuable excursus in Burton's *Galatians* (Int. Crit. Com.). On their place in Christianity see Strong, *Christian Ethics*, Lect. iii.)

Faith.

The ordinary Greek word for faith, *pistis*, employed in the New Testament is familiar in classical literature. Its primary meaning, as found first in Hesiod, appears to be active, 'trust' in others, or more generally

'confidence'. But the subjective sense, 'faithfulness', 'trustworthiness', 'honesty' is soon acquired, and indeed the two meanings insensibly shade off into one another. The word is further employed to mean a 'pledge', or warrant of good faith, or a means of persuasion, a 'proof'. But it is with the first two meanings that we are now concerned. So, too, the kindred verb, *pisteuo*, means to 'trust' a person, or 'believe' a statement, or again to 'entrust'. The chief point that demands attention is that faith in ordinary Greek usage is intellectual or ethical rather than religious. It plays a considerable part in philosophical discussions about knowledge. In Plato, for example, it denotes confident belief and is distinguished from knowledge, as implying only subjective certainty, based on second-hand information (*Republic* 601 E). In Aristotle it is distinguished from opinion. Even when it is used in a religious context it means usually little more than the acknowledgement by the intellect that the gods exist. It is simply the repudiation of atheism. The possibility of a deeper meaning in the word is shown, however, in Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, I. i. 1 and 5, where Socrates is defended against the charge of atheism. He is said not only to have thought that the gods existed but to have believed in them. 'Believing in the gods as he did, how can he have thought that they did not exist?'

A step towards the transforming of faith into a theological virtue was made when the Old Testament was translated into Greek, but the method was at first direct rather than indirect. It is something of a shock to discover that the substantive 'faith' occurs only twice in the whole of the Old Testament, and the verb 'believe', as used in a religious sense, only some thirty times, and in a limited number of books. It is significant that when St. Paul is seeking verbal support in the Old Testament Scriptures for his doctrine of justification by faith, he is hard put to it to find texts for his purpose. Indeed, he can only find two, unless we add Is. xxviii. 16, quoted Rom. ix. 33. The first is Gen. xv. 6, quoted Rom. iv. 3 and Gal. iii. 6, 'Abraham believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness'. Against all appearances he trusted in God, committed himself to Him, in full confidence that He would fulfil His promises. The second text is Hab. ii. 4, quoted Gal. iii. 11; Rom. i. 17, 'The just shall live by his faith'. Here the original meaning of the passage is not that faith is the source or condition of true righteousness, but rather that in face of the disasters and trials of the time, the righteous man will be enabled to survive by steadfast adherence to the covenant laws of Jehovah. The word faith meant primarily not so much personal trust in God as faithfulness to the Covenant. It is in much the same sense that the verse is cited in Heb. x. 38. So, too, in Deut. xxxii. 20, the only other place where the substantive faith is found, it plainly means much the same, faithful obedience to the laws of God, loyalty to Jehovah as opposed to idolatry. In short there is no verbal equivalent in the Old Testament to *pistis* as used in its active religious sense of personal trust in God.

On the other hand, St. Paul was right as against his legalist opponents in maintaining that the Old Testament, rightly interpreted, was on his side. If faith, in his sense of the term, is not mentioned explicitly, it is implicit in the religion of Israel from its earliest days. It is true that the fear of the Lord is often more prominent than faith, and that the threat of punishment is constantly put forward to prompt obedience. But, for all this, the religious attitude later denoted by faith is the basis both of individual and corporate religion. The very existence of Israel depended on trust in Jehovah, the God of grace and power, who out of pure and undeserved love had delivered them out of slavery in Egypt. The prophets see in fervent and steadfast trust in God the one ground of assurance (e.g. Is. vii. 9; Jer. xvii. 5-7). Such faith is not fatalistic, but prompts moral co-operation with the purposes of God and obedience to His declared will. The psalmists delight to celebrate at once the duty and the joy of resting on God with firm and unwavering confidence. The obligations of faith and its practical consequences are everywhere assumed, but it is not yet clearly recognized as an element in moral personality.

'Faith is a keyword in the transition from Hebraic to Christian theology. In its twofold combination of trust and belief, it has no exact counterpart in biblical Hebrew: its nearest equivalent . . . occurs but rarely in the Old Testament, and does not rank among the saving or sanctifying attributes of soul-life. Nor is the reason far to seek. The ethical and spiritual ideals of Judaism were modelled upon the attributes of Jehovah, as gradually developed and conceived in the religious consciousness of Israel. But among these "faith"—as belief in his own existence, or as trust in his will for good, or as acceptance of his dispensations, or assurance of his power—could obviously have no place' (Rendall, *The Epistle of St. James*, p. 71).

In the Septuagint, *pisteuein*, occasionally compounded with a preposition, becomes the normal rendering of the Hebrew verb for 'to believe'. As we saw, the opportunity for employing the substantive *pistis* is hardly offered. But it is used in the translation of Hab. ii. 4, and had considerable influence. St. Paul's use of the passage to enforce the claims of active faith had already been anticipated in Rabbinical circles. And the context readily lent itself to such an interpretation. The faithfulness of the righteous Israelite is contrasted with the presumption and wickedness of the Chaldaean, who is the type of insolent self-assertion. Hence the Israelite's trustful dependence on Jehovah is at least implied, and the transition from faithfulness to faith is easy. So too the passage in itself seems to contain a reference back to the faith of Abraham, and that, too, tended to become a stock subject for discussion in the Jewish schools. In the Apocryphal Books faith is used in both meanings. Indeed, though the usage is often influenced by the Greek, it is often quite impossible to determine whether the sense is active or passive. In Philo, who may be regarded as typical of Alexandrine Judaism, faith attains a definite status as a religious term.

He frequently refers to the faith of Abraham. On the whole, faith takes the highest place in his theology. It is 'the queen' and 'the most perfect of virtues'. If it is at one time ranked side by side with piety or regarded as the reward rather than the source of godliness, it is plainly the crowning virtue of the godly man. His use of the term marks a development on Jewish ground of the idea found in the Epistle to the Hebrews that it is through faith that we lay hold on the eternal and unchanging realities of the unseen world. Such an idea is indeed never far absent from its use in the New Testament.

We may sum up the position by saying that in its employment of the term faith, the New Testament combines Hebrew thought with Greek terminology. The roots of the idea are to be sought mainly in the experience of the prophets and psalmists of the Old Testament, even where the expression is Hellenistic. In the Septuagint and Apocrypha *pistis* is used largely in a passive or ambiguous sense, in the classics the active and passive are about equally common, but in the New Testament its meaning is predominantly active, and its occurrence far more frequent than in any previous literature. So, too, in Greek writers its significance is intellectual or ethical; it lies outside the sphere of religion, except accidentally and occasionally. In Jewish-Greek writings its use is mainly ethical. In the New Testament *pistis* is almost always religious, and *pisteuein* is prevailingly so. These facts bring out the novel prominence that faith came to assume in the vocabulary of Christian writers, reflecting its new importance in the Christian life. In part this prominence is the climax of a process that had been at work in Judaism itself owing to the changed conditions of the world, but in larger measure it is due to the historical life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. Faith was the attitude that He demanded towards Himself and His teaching. Faith was the indispensable condition for healing of soul and body. Faith was for Him the true human response to the claims of moral and spiritual truth inherent in His teaching and in His person. Above all, He sought to evoke moral and spiritual sympathy with the truth for which He stood. And the faith that He sought was a response of the whole man, a response of person to person.

We may now turn to the conception of faith in the New Testament, especially in the Epistles of St. Paul. In modern terminology faith is what the psychologists call a 'sentiment', that is, an attitude largely emotional, towards a person. Christianity, unlike pagan moralists, is not afraid of the emotions. It consecrates them. Like all sentiments faith contains elements of feeling, of will, and of cognition. It is a complex state. Further we would stress the truth that, as used in the New Testament, it is usually explicitly, occasionally implicitly, a personal relationship. It is never a purely intellectual attitude to abstract truth. Hence we are prepared to find that it is used with a great variety of shades of meaning and emphasis, even in St. Paul's writings. Faith embraces within itself many possible forms of response.

Broadly we may describe faith as an attitude of trust, loyalty,

dependence, and obedience evoked by the appeal of a person and issuing in conduct. In human relationships the typical example of faith is the confidence of a small child in its parents. Since we can only imagine our relation to God in terms of the highest that we know, faith is the natural human attitude to our Father in heaven, who deserves and has the right to expect that unlimited trust and self-surrender which belongs to the ideal parent (cp. Eph. iii. 15). So in the New Testament faith is always faith in God or Christ or in the Gospel. It is a similar attitude to that which Christ in the days of His flesh demanded from His disciples. He called for unlimited trust and obedience, as one who claimed to be an infallible guide. Doubtless in the case of cures the faith which he demanded as the condition of the cure is much less. Under the circumstances it could not be much more than the belief that He had both the will and the power to work the cure. But even so the unbelief that He rebuked was not a purely intellectual failure, but the refusal to trust Him as having the goodwill to heal. It was largely moral and sprang from a lack of spiritual sympathy with Himself. We must again insist that when we consider faith as used in a Christian sense, the idea of underlying personal relationship is always fundamental.

Thus, the verb *pisteuein*, 'to believe', is often used in the sense of trustful faith in God and confidence in His promises, as shown in obedience, worship, and peace of mind. That was the attitude of Abraham in spite of the difficulties that confronted him (Rom. iv. 19 ff.; Gal. iii. 6 ff.; cp. also i. 16; Rom. ix. 33; I Cor. i. 21; Eph. i. 13-14; I Thess. ii. 13). Often the phrase 'those who believe' or 'the believers' means no more than 'Christians'. Faith is taken as the typical attitude of the Christian religion (Rom. x. 4; I Cor. iii. 5; xiv. 22; I Thess. i. 7; ii. 10; Acts ii. 44; iv. 4-32, and frequently). At the same time believing has a definite intellectual content. It is often associated with the resurrection (Rom. x. 9; iv. 24; vi. 8-10; Eph. i. 19; I Cor. xv. 1-4; I Thess. iv. 14; I Pet. i. 21). Because there is a definite Christian message, therefore there is the need of preachers. Faith must acknowledge Jesus as Lord and Messiah (Rom. x. 8-15; Eph. iv. 20-1; I Cor. xii. 3). Believing was not a vague emotional state, but involved the acceptance of a definite word of God, by an act of will. If genuine, it must issue in right action, in practical demonstration of the fruits of the Spirit. St. Paul never contemplates a barren orthodoxy as possible for one who has responded to the love of God in Christ.

When we pass on to the substantive *pistis*, 'faith', the same general principles hold good. We may pass over the passages where it is used in the sense of 'faithfulness', Rom. iii. 3; Gal. v. 22; Tit. ii. 10; and possibly II Thess. i. 4. Often faith designates the conscious self-committal to the promises and power of God. As the means of obtaining righteousness or salvation it is contrasted with 'works' or the Law. (Frequently in Rom. and Gal. and cp. I Cor. ii. 5; xv. 17; Phil. iii. 9; Col. ii. 12.) As such it is the gift of God (Eph. ii. 8). Often it means little more than Christianity. It is faith in the Gospel or the truth (II Thess.

iv. 13; Phil. i. 27). Sometimes it is used with the definite article, 'the faith'. Then it denotes that attitude to God and the Messiah whom He has sent which distinguishes a Christian. It never in St. Paul means a collection of beliefs or anything of the nature of a creed. So in II Thess. iii. 2 'All men have not the faith' simply means all men have not received from God the grace to believe in the Gospel. Cp. I Cor. xvi. 13; II Cor. i. 24; xiii. 5; Col. i. 23; ii. 7. So the 'one faith' of Eph. iv. 5 does not mean anything of the nature of a credal formulary, but the common loyalty to Christ which was the bond that held the church together. Even in Gal. i. 23, where St. Paul is said to preach 'the faith' that he once persecuted, the word does not primarily mean a system of beliefs, but a form of religion based on a certain attitude to God. In the Pastoral Epistles faith tends in the direction of correct belief, e.g. I Tim. iv. 6, but on any view of their authorship they reflect a later period in the development of Church life. As in the Gospels faith is used sometimes in a restricted sense to denote the trust and confidence that are the condition of receiving some special benefit, so in the Epistles it is sometimes used to describe that relation to God which conditions the receiving of some particular gift, whether prophecy (Rom. xii. 3-6) or gifts of healing (I Cor. xii. 9). This kind of faith is recognized as incomplete (I Cor. xiii. 1). In order to rise to its full development it needs to be informed and quickened by love (cp. Gal. v. 6). So, too, faith is used in a lower and restricted sense when it is made the ground of confidence that the Christian is freed from the restrictions of the Jewish Law or pagan taboos (Rom. xiv). Indeed it is almost identical with the 'knowledge' which in I Cor. ix is contrasted with love.

In Jas. ii faith is used in a purely intellectual sense, but this is quite exceptional in the New Testament, and the writer is adopting the verbal usage of others whose views he is controverting. In Hebrews the use of faith is somewhat different. It is less personal. It denotes, as in Philo, belief in and response to unseen realities. In that sense Jesus is described as 'the pioneer and perfect example' of true human faith. The A.V. and R.V. translations of xii. 2 are misleading. The nearest approach to this use of the word by St. Paul is II Cor. v. 7 (cp. iv. 17-18), which proves that it is included in the Pauline idea of faith. On the other hand, even if the definition of faith in Heb. xi. 1-2 appears to stress the intellectual apprehension of unseen truths rather than moral choice, the rest of the chapter shows abundantly that faith determines conduct and is far more than correct intellectual belief. It includes the volitional action that acceptance of the unseen realities demands. In Jude 3, which is later, it has become the designation for a definite system of belief, though in 20 it is made plain that the Christian creed is to be made the basis of the Christian life.

We may sum up our conclusions by insisting that faith, especially for St. Paul, is always a personal relationship of trust and affection. It works through love and is, indeed, in practice inseparable from love. It is an attitude of confidence and loyalty to the living God or the living

Saviour. It is precisely this personal quality in faith that enables it to be the means and ground of salvation. In human life we can only help those who are willing to trust and obey us. So even God without infringing our personality can only assist and renew us if we are willing to surrender ourselves to Him. No doubt from this attitude of faith towards God there follows the readiness to accept His word and trust the revelation of His will and character that He has given in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. But the whole idea of faith is reduced and externalized when for faith in a living Person there is substituted faith in a form of words or a set of phrases or a written book. Even the belief that Christ has done something for us falls far short of that abiding personal relationship to a living Saviour of which St. Paul speaks. (Cp. Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, Int. Crit. Com., p. 31.)

Hope.

Hope too is a 'sentiment'. The general attitude cannot be sharply separated from that of faith. The clearest point of distinction is to say that faith is primarily concerned with the present, as a determinant of action, while hope looks toward the future and inspires conduct whose reward is not immediate. Thus in Rom. viii. 23-5 hope is contrasted with sight, not in the sense that the blessings or realities hoped for are already present if only we had the faculties for perceiving them, but in the sense that they will assuredly arrive in due time (cp. Rom. iv. 18; I Cor. ix. 10; II Cor. iii. 12; x. 15; Gal. v. 5; Phil. i. 20; I Thess. v. 8). In all these instances the blessings expected are definitely future, though they depend on faith in the invisible.

It is remarkable that in the recorded teaching of Christ there is no mention of hope. Neither the verb nor the substantive is to be found except in Jn. v. 45 (of the hope which the Jews set on Moses). This may be partly due to Christ's insistence on faith in Himself as present. But if the word is absent, the attitude that it denotes is constantly encouraged. No phrase is more typical of Christ's teaching than 'Do not worry', 'Do not be anxious'. And the ground of such expectation is no vague optimism, but confidence in the power and goodness of the Father. Christian optimism is in effect a summons to hope based on belief in God (e.g. Mt. vi. 19-34). So, too, Christ looked through His death to His resurrection. This is a concrete example of hope based likewise on trust in the Father. Again, disciples were bidden to turn their faces to the future, and to expect that God would do great things for them. That expectation is not limited to the Apocalyptic passages. The whole idea of the Kingdom of God presupposes hope. Enough has been said to show that the virtue of hope is implicit in the example and teaching of Christ.

In St. Paul hope is emphatically based on the reality and goodness of God, or on the risen Christ. Christians have 'hoped in Christ' (I Cor. xv. 19). God is a God of hope (Rom. xv. 13; cp. II Cor. i. 10).

Christ Jesus is 'our hope' (I Tim. i. 4; cp. Col. i. 27). Hence the hope of the Christian calling (Rom. viii. 24; Eph. i. 18; vi. 4; Col. i. 5) is contrasted with the hopelessness of pagans who are 'having no hope and without God in the world' (cp. I Thess. iv. 13). This shows that for St. Paul hope was not a matter of temperament or of easy circumstances, but was bound up with belief in the God who had revealed Himself in Christ and more particularly vindicated His power and goodness by the resurrection (cp. Phil. i. 19 ff.). Hence the typical result of Christian hope is the willingness to endure suffering bravely and cheerfully as being worth while. Hope is often placed in close connexion with 'patience' or endurance. (Rom. v. 3-5; viii. 24-5; xii. 12; xv. 4, 13; I Thess. i. 3; Phil. i. 20.) It does not lose itself in dreams, but braces life.

Hope, then, was one of the characteristics of the Christian, as it had been of the Jew. Indeed the Christian Church inherited the full Messianic hope of the Jewish (cp. Acts xxiii. 6, which should probably be translated 'touching the hope', i.e. the Messianic hope, 'and the resurrection of the dead I am called in question'). That was one of the marks that distinguished Jews and Christians from pagans. To the ordinary pagan, hope did not seem to be a virtue. It was at most a temporarily pleasing illusion. The pagan world had no real belief in progress. Many, including the Stoics, believed in a ceaseless round of cycles in which all would be repeated. Hence the endurance of the Christian is different from the endurance of the Stoic, because it is based on hope.

Love.

The third and greatest of the typical Christian virtues is 'love', *agape*. The Greek word has no exact equivalent in English. The A.V. rendering 'charity' has much to recommend it, but in modern times has tended to be degraded to the mere benevolence or the giving of money or relief, often with the accompanying suggestion that it is given with a sense of superiority. It provokes the retort, 'I don't want your charity'. Thus charity suggests to many minds to-day the kind of condescending attitude which is in direct opposition to true Christian love. On the other hand, love is so misused in popular speech that it includes much that would more truly be described as lust. At its best it is too often used in a sentimental sense which obscures the high moral and spiritual nature of *agape*.

The claim has been made that the Greek word *agape* was born in revealed religion. The claim still contains much truth. The verb *agapaein* is frequent in classical and later Greek literature, but the substantive is unknown. It occurs first in the Septuagint, where it is used mainly of sexual love, chiefly in the Song of Songs, and three or possibly four times in other books. In Alexandrine Jewish writings, Wisdom and Philo, it is used of the love of God or of Wisdom (Wisd. iii. 9; vi. 17-18). Its use in this religious sense may have been facilitated by the

allegorical interpretation of the Song of Songs. Attempts have been made to find examples of the occurrence of the word in inscriptions and papyri, but up to the present no certain example has been found. Of the three suggested, two are clearly mistaken and the third very doubtful. At the same time it would not be surprising if some examples of its use should some day be discovered. So the most reasonable view is that *agape* passed into the vocabulary of the Christian religion from the Septuagint via Alexandrine Judaism. Its prominence was only natural in view of the teaching of Christ that the two chief commandments were 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God' and 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself'. The ordinary Greek word for love, *eros*, is avoided in the New Testament, probably because its associations were predominantly, though not universally, sexual. The verb *phileein* is frequently used for love of God or man, especially in St. John, and modern scholars now usually agree that there is no distinction of meaning between *phileein* and *agapaein*, even in Jn. xxi. 15-17. But the substantive *philia* is only found in Jas. iv. 4. *Agape* is the specifically Christian word and designates a love of which recognition of value is the foundation and desire to benefit the leading element.

In any study of the meaning of love, it is perhaps best to work upwards and outwards. A popular saying asserts that charity, that is Christian love, 'begins at home'; but it is usually forgotten with which member of the home it is to begin. 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' Clearly, then, self-love is in some sense primary. When we ask in what sense a man is to love himself, the answer depends on the whole Christian view of the relations between God and man. Love in the Christian sense has been defined as 'devotion to the ends of God in human personality'. That is an excellent starting-point. True self-love, then, is the desire and will to become what God wishes me to become. Inasmuch as I am 'made in the image of God', my true self is attained so far as I grow into that image. I am to love myself not just as I am but as God means me to be. Self-love so far from contradicting, rather demands severity to self, the crucifying of the 'old man' with its evil and corrupt affections, that I may rise to newness of life, and become remade in the likeness of Christ by the power of the Spirit. The individual has a peculiar worth in the eyes of His creator (cp. Wisd. xi. 23-6). God treats him not merely as a means but as an end, and therefore true love of self recognizes and is based on God's precedent love of him. Such love prompts him to defend and develop the special capacities of his nature, that he may make his individual contribution to the life of the whole as God intended. He is responsible to God for treating himself as a human being created in God's likeness and so capable of conscious and willing fellowship with His creator (I Cor. vi. 19-20). There is a false self-love, which looks not at the ends of God in life but at some lower and selfish end. Such self-love pampers the self as it now is, and thereby hinders its true growth. It spoils the self for social life, and mars the contribution that it can make to the common welfare. In other words, true self-love includes self-

respect, self-reverence, self-control, and self-development, and in all its aspects is inspired and guided by the will of God. It regards life as a trust from God and is willing to give itself away in service that it may find itself. It is the deadly foe of all self-indulgence. It may be truly said to find its perfect example in the life of Christ Himself, who attained His full moral and spiritual stature through faithfulness to His vocation, and thus became the source of new life to others. In its full revelation of the value of each and every human soul to God the Gospel has made possible for all Christians a true and satisfying self-love.

The right understanding of what Christianity means by self-love is the key to the meaning of love as directed towards others. Such love rests on the realization that each neighbour has an individual and unique value in the sight of God. He is one for whom 'Christ died' (I Cor. viii. 11; Rom. xiv. 15). Therefore he cannot be treated as a means, or exploited for the sake of gain or pleasure. All forms alike of lust and acquisitiveness are offences against love. Even the slave is to be treated not as a mere tool but as a brother in Christ (Philemon 16). Again, true love is compatible with or even demands severity. In so far as it grasps the true meaning of the life of another, it strives to enable him to realize the divine purpose. Hence love can be relentless in rebuke or chastisement, just because it is love. It cannot be content with things as they are, or allow the neighbour to be content with them. It loves him, as God loves him, not simply as he is, but as he is to become (cp. Gal. iv. 16 ff.; II Cor. i. 3 ff.). That is one of the motives of excommunication. The offender is expelled from the community and deliberately exposed to suffering that in the end his soul may be saved (I Cor. v. 1-5). The Christian is bound by love to make great demands on others, because he makes great demands on himself. He avoids the temptation to win popularity or affection by acquiescing in a lower standard of conduct than that which God commands. He cannot win pleasure for himself or influence by encouraging or tolerating anything that compromises the true personality of another. Our love towards one another must be a holy love because God's love towards us is a holy love (cp. II Cor. vi. 6; Eph. v. 1 ff.; I Tim. i. 5). Genuine love is constructive (I Cor. viii. 1; Eph. iv. 16). It is the fulfilment of the law (Rom. xiii. 10), not only because as an inner motive it prompts the Christian to fulfil the obligations of the law towards his neighbour, but because it supplies a spirit which goes beyond any outward code. Love is far more exacting than any collection of external commands, because its obligations know no limit. No one can ever say, I have done all that love compels me to do. Love is the virtue that makes fellowship possible (Eph. iv. 15, 25). It enables men to use their gifts not for their own advantage but for the good of the whole community (cp. I Cor. xiii. 1-3, which follows closely on the previous chapter). It stands first in the description of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. v. 22; cp. Col. iii. 14). In the hymn on love in I Cor. xiii we may recognize a portrait of the character of Christ. Indeed, Jesus might be substituted for love. Thus love is the reproduction in the individual

Christian of that attitude to his fellow which marked the teaching and action of Jesus. He always discerned and respected the value of the individual. He treated publicans and sinners not with mere pity, but with a love that paid regard to their worth in the eyes of God (e.g. Lk. xv. 1-10). This attitude is not merely or even chiefly emotional. It is very different from liking people who attract us. It may even be combined with personal dislike. Rather it is a moral and spiritual attitude. It involves an act of will and is shown in conduct rather than feeling (cp. I Jn. iii. 14-18). In this it imitates and expresses the love of God Himself towards men.

When we turn to the love of God, the New Testament has much to say about God's love to men, especially in connexion with the Cross. Strange as it may seem, the love of God in creation is never explicitly mentioned, though doubtless it is often in the background. Where creation is referred to, it is rather in illustration of the power and wisdom of God (Rom. i. 20-1; iv. 17; xi. 33-6; I Cor. i. 28; Col. i. 16). Nor is the love of God regarded as an abstract attribute of His being. It is rather His love as disclosed in definite historical action, the sending of the Son (Eph. ii. 4-6; II Thess. ii. 16; Jn. iii. 16; I Jn. iv. 8-9). But in St. Paul the sending of the Son always includes a reference to the Cross as the supreme act by which the love of God redeemed man (Rom. v. 4-11; viii. 34-5, 37; II Cor. v. 14; Gal. ii. 20; Eph. v. 2, 25). Stress is laid on the divine initiative. Human faith and love are always a response to the free and undeserved generosity of God (Rom. v. 8; viii. 32, 35-9; I Jn. iv. 10, 19, &c.).

As we have seen, the New Testament lays the utmost stress on the duty of loving our brethren. But it is singularly reserved in urging the love of God. It is, indeed, assumed that Christians do love God or Christ (Rom. viii. 28; I Cor. ii. 9; viii. 3; Eph. vi. 24; II Tim. iv. 8). But exhortations to love God, or allusions to the feelings of love in the hearts of Christians, as something to be sought and encouraged, are almost wholly wanting. In passages like Rom. v. 5; II Cor. v. 14; xiii. 11 and 13; Eph. iii. 19; II Thess. iii. 5 the love of God or Christ is His love for us, and our own sense of that love through the illumination of the Holy Spirit. It is true that in I John stress is laid on our love of God, but that love is shown in practical love of the brethren. When emphasis is laid on the duty of a right attitude to God, attention is concentrated on faith rather than love. Faith expresses the sense of dependence and humble trust. We cannot love God in exactly the same sense as we love our neighbour. He does not need our benefits or our protection. There was in those days, as in our own day, the danger of a sentimental love of God. Pagan religion often generated a false emotionalism divorced from morality. The question to be asked is not simply Do I love God, or Christ? but Why do I love Him? Thus the preference by St. Paul of faith to love, in speaking of our relation to God, throws light on the meaning of love. Faith involves an attitude of adoration and humility. It implies the duty of obedience and loyalty

under the strain of life. There was no danger among those to whom he wrote of morality usurping the place of religion, or of the love of man being regarded as a satisfactory substitute for the love of God, but there was a real danger of a spurious love of God which lacked moral earnestness and humility. (On love see Moffatt, *Love in the New Testament*.)

Plainly, then, the three virtues, faith, hope, and love are bound up together. It is impossible to believe in a God whom we do not in some sense love, or to love a God whom we do not trust. Nor can hope rest on a God in whom we do not believe, nor can we believe in God without hoping, if God is the God revealed in Christ. The three together have been called 'a brief definition of true Christianity' (Calvin). 'Faith', says Lightfoot, 'rests on the past; love works in the present; hope looks to the future.' Psychologically they are the threefold expression of a single sentiment towards God.

Two points are specially important. First, unlike the virtues of pagan ethics, these three virtues all look outwards. The virtues of paganism tended to look inwards. They were states or conditions of the man himself. Stoicism prided itself on making a man's life self-contained. Thus the four cardinal virtues could be practised in isolation. But the three Christian virtues take man out of his narrow individuality. They connect man with God and his fellow men. They imply an objective external spiritual order to which man has to relate himself. Thus they are in close connexion with the facts and belief of the Christian message which throw light on that order. They harmonize with the new conditions into which a man is transferred when he accepts the Gospel. Faith is emphatically faith in God or Christ or God's word. It is a response to the divine initiative. It looks outwards. The same is true of hope, which is not based on an optimistic temperament or on prosperity, but on the will and character of God which He has made known. Love, too, cannot be learnt or practised in isolation. For its effective exercise it demands social life. Even the love of God is inconsistent with the idea of absorption in God prevalent in many Eastern religions. It demands a certain distinction between God and His worshipper. So these virtues are something new. They imply a new conception of the moral life based on the Gospel of Christ. It is significant that in Greek ethics there is no word for unselfishness.

Secondly, they are rightly styled 'Supernatural' virtues. Not only do they relate men to the unseen world, but they are only possible through the power of the Holy Spirit. Faith and hope and love are the gift of God. They spring from the presence of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of Christians. They are not just the highest achievement of man.

CHAPTER II

B. THE CHIEF SUBJECT OF THE LETTER. AN EXHORTATION TO STAND FIRM, COUPLED WITH A DEFENCE OF HIS OWN CONDUCT

(a) *An apology for his manner of life among them and a reminder of the power of the Gospel that they had experienced, 1-12.*

II. 1 For yourselves, brethren, know our entering in unto you, that it hath not been found vain: 2 but having suffered before, and been shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we waxed bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God in much conflict. 3 For our exhortation is not of error, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile: 4 but even as we have been approved of God to be intrusted with the gospel, so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God which proveth our hearts. 5 For neither at any time were we found using words of flattery, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness, God is witness; 6 nor seeking glory of men, neither from you, nor from others, when we might have ¹been burdensome, as apostles of Christ. 7 But we were ²gentle in the midst of you, as when a nurse cherisheth her own children: 8 even so, being affectionately desirous of you, we were well pleased to impart unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were become very dear to us. 9 For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: working night and day, that we might not burden any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God. 10 Ye are witnesses, and God *also*, how holily and righteously and unblameably we behaved ourselves toward you that believe: 11 as ye know how we *dealt with* each one of you, as a father with his own children, exhorting you, and encouraging *you*, and testifying, 12 to the end that ye should walk worthily of God, who ³ calleth you into his own kingdom and glory.

¹ Or, *claimed honour*.

² Most of the ancient authorities read *babes*.
Some ancient authorities read *called*.

To return to our first point, you do not need us to tell you or to call witnesses to prove, that our visit to you has shown itself to be not empty-handed, but with power. But though we had had a foretaste of bodily suffering and personal indignity, as you know, at Philippi, we became bold of

speech in the might of our God, to tell you the good news of God in face of much opposition. For our appeal is not based on delusion, or on sensuality, as our enemies allege. Nor again is it with purpose to deceive. Then indeed we should have shrunk back. But, our boldness rested on God. As men who have been attested by God as fit to be entrusted with His gospel, so we speak, as bent on pleasing not men, but God who tests not only our acts, but our motives. For we were never caught employing the speech that flattery uses, or the pretexts of which avarice avails itself, God knows, nor seeking to win glory from men, either from you or others, though we might have been burdensome to you, as Christ's own apostles. Nay we became as it were children, as one of your own selves, as when a nursing-mother makes herself a child again in fondling her own children. Even so yearning after you we were eager to share with you, not only the good news of God, but our very selves, because you had won our hearts. For you remember, brothers, our toil and toil. Night and day we worked that we should not burden any of you, as we preached the good news of God. You can bear witness, and God also, how piously and righteously and blamelessly we conducted ourselves towards you Christians. You know how we urged every one of you, as a father his children, appealing to you and encouraging you and charging you, that you walk worthy of God who calls you to His own kingdom and glory.

The Apostle now turns back to develop the subject of i. 5, the inward assurance that gave power to his ministry. He had formerly introduced it as a proof that his converts had been truly called by God. As he develops it, a new theme becomes increasingly prominent, namely, his desire to defend himself and his colleagues against the slanders circulated by the Jews in order to undermine his influence. Plainly they accused him of acting from unworthy motives. He was out to get money or influence or to satisfy some base appetite. If some of the charges seem to us grotesque, we must remember the circumstances of the age. The roads were full of the missionaries of all sorts of cults and creeds. There were the travelling teachers of the Stoic and Cynic philosophies, who endeavoured to bring down their teaching to the popular level, and not without success. There were the priests of strange Eastern cults, such as the mutilated priests of Cybele. And many of these were thoroughly disreputable. They traded on the grossest superstitions. The practice of their religions was mixed up with immorality. They were men of the vilest character. As in India to-day, religion and morality were not necessarily connected. So it was easy for the enemies of the Christian missionaries to suggest that, after all, they were only on a level with these. How were they to tell that they were not seeking their own advantage? Especially as they had run away as soon as trouble began. As against these charges St. Paul appeals to the personal experience of the converts themselves, which was so recent. They must judge what manner of men they had shown themselves to be. They knew that they had not aimed at getting money or influence. They remem-

bered the nature of their teaching and the personal life of the Apostle. They had felt the spiritual power of the Gospel. They knew that there was nothing unclean or sordid mixed up with it.

1. *vain*, rather 'hollow', that is wanting in power. i. 5 shows that the reference is not to the fruits of his work but to the character of his preaching. He had a real message to deliver.

2. The allusion is to the events of Acts xvi. 19 ff. What St. Paul felt was not simply the bodily pain, but the indignity offered to his Roman citizenship. The fact that after enduring this he persevered, proved that he regarded his mission as a divine call. If he had been pleasing himself, he would have abandoned it. He did not act as a man who sought either ease or profit. *Conflict* refers to external opposition, not inward hesitation.

3. *error*. The Greek word may mean either deceit or error. In the New Testament it is always used in the latter sense, and this suits the context here. Active deceit is reserved for *guile*. Contrast the false teachers of II Tim. iii. 13. Delusion is always weakening in the long run and does not last; the Gospel upholds its preachers and wears well.

uncleanness. This is to be taken quite literally. Fornication was practised in certain heathen temples in the ancient world, as in India to-day. The emotions aroused by pagan cults were often dangerous to morals. The accusations later brought against Christian meetings by the heathen may already have begun. There is no ground for translating the Greek word by 'covetousness' any

more than there is ground for translating the word for covetousness in verse 5 by 'impurity'. The two sins are often condemned together in the New Testament, because they were intertwined, as they are to-day. Each involves the wilful disregard of the rights of others.

4. *approved . . . proveth*. The R.V. is able to reproduce the conscious play on words of the Greek.

5. The phrases of *flattery* and of *covetousness* are subjective. St. Paul means 'the words which flatterers use and the pretexts which covetous men employ'. *Flattery* in Greek moralists aimed not so much at tickling the ears of others as at getting an advantage for oneself. *Cloke* properly means the ostensible reason for which an action is done, usually with the further idea that it is not the genuine reason. A preacher can often use his message as a foil to cover selfish ambitions. The appeal to God is to one who can discern motives. Perhaps a better rendering of *covetousness* is acquisitiveness.

6. It is to be observed that what is disclaimed is not honour, but the desire for honour. If honour or popularity comes in the course of the work, well and good. That is for God to decide.

glory. This word occurs five times in Thess. Here it simply means, as in classical Greek, 'good opinion', 'honour'. There is no evidence that it was ever used in the sense of honorarium, as has

been suggested. But in verse 12 and in II. i. 9 and ii. 14, as applied to God, it means rather God's self-revelation of His divine majesty and goodness. The link between the two meanings is to be found in the LXX, where it is used to translate the Hebrew word for God's glory as manifested. It is in all three passages used eschatologically of the full disclosure of the glory of God at the last day. In II. ii. 14 it approaches the further idea of the glory that is in store for faithful Christians (cp. Rom. v. 2; viii. 18). In the remaining passage, verse 20, the Thessalonians are said to be the glory of the apostles. The reference may be partly but cannot be wholly eschatological. It asserts a present reality. The word may mean either honour or glory. Either they do him honour or they are, so to say, luminous advertisements of his true character.

burdensome. The Greek is ambiguous. It is literally 'men of weight'. It may refer to the right of being maintained by the church (cp. 9, and II. iii. 8), or it may refer to the claim for honour, or to both.

apostles of Christ. The last word is emphatic. Silas and Timothy are apparently included under the title. The word apostle from its derivation includes the two ideas of missionary and holding a commission. From whom the commission is received depends on circumstances.

St. Paul always claimed for himself that he was an Apostle of Christ in the fullest sense of the term, on a level with the Twelve, and based it on the appearance of Christ to him at his conversion,

which he regarded as on a level with the resurrection appearances (Gal. i. 1; I Cor. ix. 1-6; xv. 7-9; II Cor. xi. 5). Here the force of the appeal to his apostleship is that it gave him a claim to be of weight.

7. The reading of R.V. mg. is the more strongly supported and is to be preferred even though it makes St. Paul compare himself in one verse to a babe and in the next to a mother. It is true that the word babe usually in his writings contains the idea of immaturity, but that is not necessarily involved in the word. The idea is the condescension of the true Christian pastor who is willing to put himself on the level of others, which is the essence of sympathy. It is the application of the principle of the Incarnation itself (cp. Lk. xxii. 27; Phil. ii. 5 ff.; I Cor. ix. 19 ff.).

9. *night and day* is to be taken literally. He started work before dawn in order to earn money that he might be independent of his converts and also leave time for missionary work (cp. I Cor. ix; II Cor. xi. 7-10; Acts xx. 34-5).

11. *father.* The metaphor is changed again. If the picture of a mother suggests tenderness, that of a father suggests that of teacher and moral instructor. It was so used of Jewish teachers.

12. He appeals to the intrinsic character of his teaching as evidence of his own moral sincerity. This explains the last words of verse 10, which some have found difficult. It is believers who have had the fullest opportunity of observing the real character of the teaching that he imparted.

The Greek construction shows

that *kingdom and glory* go closely together. The idea is chiefly eschatological. It is the kingdom and glory which will be manifested in all their fullness when Christ comes again. There is no necessary

contradiction between the eschatological and the ethical. Foretastes of the coming kingdom are already enjoyed in virtue of the coming of the Spirit, but its radiant splendour lies in the future.

(b) *A renewed thanksgiving for his success among them and for the share of persecution that they had borne, 13-16.*

13 And for this cause we also thank God without ceasing, that, when ye received from us ¹the word of the message, *even the word of God*, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which also worketh in you that believe. 14 For ye, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judæa in Christ Jesus: for ye also suffered the same things of your own countrymen, even as they did of the Jews; 15 who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drave out us, and please not God, and are contrary to all men; 16 forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved; to fill up their sins alway: but the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

¹ Gr. *the word of hearing.*

And we have this second reason for our ceaseless thanksgiving to God, namely that when you received the word that you heard from us, God's word, I mean, not ours, ye welcomed it not as any human word, but as it is in very truth, God's word, which actually operates in you who believe. For its operation is seen in the fact that you proved yourselves imitators, brothers, of the assemblies in Judæa that meet in the name of Jesus the Messiah. For you also endured the same treatment from your fellow countrymen, as they did from the Jews who both slew the Lord, even Jesus, and persecuted the prophets and us, and are displeasing to God and the enemies of mankind, in that they forbid us to speak to the Gentiles, that they may obtain salvation. So they are condemned by God to fill up the measure of their sins at all times. The wrath of God has come upon them to the uttermost. Nothing remains but judgement.

13. *for this cause.* The expression is ambiguous. It may refer backwards. 'Because we have expended all this labour on you and love you so dearly', or it may look forward and refer to the welcome given to the divine message.

as the word of men. The word *as* is absent from the Greek. Its insertion seriously alters the drift of the sentence. What causes St. Paul to thank God is not the attitude of the Thessalonians to the Gospel, or their appreciation of its

divine origin, but the fact that the word that they accepted is divine and therefore charged with divine power.

14. The proof of the working of the word in the hearts of believers is their endurance of persecution. The words *in Christ Jesus* are added to distinguish the Christian assemblies from Jewish synagogues. The difference turns on the acceptance of Jesus as Messiah.

countrymen. Even if the Jews were the instigators of the persecution at Thessalonica, the actual violence was the work of the pagan mob. The reference is not only to the events when St. Paul was present, but to the subsequent suffering that they had endured.

15. The R.V. punctuation is possible, but *the prophets* is rather an anticlimax after *the Lord Jesus*, and many commentators prefer to make prophets the object not of killed, but of *drave out*. Drave out might also be translated 'persecuted'. The sentence then runs 'who both killed the Lord Jesus and drave out the prophets and us'. The order of the Greek throws the emphasis on Jesus. 'The Lord, even Jesus.'

15-16. St. Paul's tone in speaking of his own nation is very different from that which we find elsewhere. Contrast especially Rom. x, penned later. It reflects the mood of the moment. St. Paul was only human. He was suffering at Corinth from persistent attempts to wreck his work. He had been harried from place to place owing to Jewish hostility and cunning. He was even now prevented by the malignant devices of the Jews from returning to visit his beloved

Thessalonians. For once he adopts the popular charges current among the Gentiles, and joins in the chorus of denunciation against his own people. But though he borrows the catch phrases of the Gentiles, he uses them in a new way. Their hatefulness to God is based on their rejection of His long line of prophets culminating in Jesus. Their enmity to their fellow men is shown by their refusal to share the Messianic salvation with them. It is no longer indiscriminate abuse, but prophetic denunciation. It springs not from prejudice, but from righteous indignation.

to fill up. This clause may represent only a consequence, but probably it represents a purpose. The Jews are pictured as fulfilling blindly the divine purpose, by carrying to its completion the work which their fathers had begun. The nemesis that awaited the past refusal of obedience to the will of God was the inability to discern that will. The sin of the nation must work itself out so as to achieve its own punishment.

is come. The precise meaning of the Greek aorist here is best represented by 'has actually arrived'. It is probably not a case of prophetic anticipation, by which what is yet to come is pictured as though it had actually arrived, even though this interpretation would suit the context: rather it simply denotes what has just happened. The cause is the rejection of Jesus the Messiah, not simply by the isolated act of the crucifixion, but by their subsequent attitude towards Him and His Gospel. What, then is meant by saying that the wrath of God

has arrived? Some refer it to some definite sign of divine judgement that has just occurred, a great famine, or complications with Rome. Those who deny the authenticity of the Epistle refer it to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Others hold that the sentence is a later interpolation, inserted after the fall of the city. There is, however, no manuscript evidence to support this conjecture. It is better to make it refer not to any recent event, but to the certainty of divine hostility. The cup of the nation's sin is now full. They can do no more to provoke the divine wrath. All that now remains is for the judgement to fall. The idea is thus primarily ethical. The day of grace is now gone. The Greek

expression translated *to the uttermost* might equally be rendered 'finally', 'at last'. In either case the sense is much the same. The whole clause is found almost word for word in a Jewish work called *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* (Levi vi. 11). The book itself is pre-Christian, but has been interpolated by Christian scribes. Scholars are almost equally divided as to whether St. Paul is quoting from this book, or whether a sentence from St. Paul has been inserted into the original text. A third possibility is that the phrase was generally current and that both writers employed it independently. As against this, no example of its use in Rabbinical writings has been found.

(c) *His desire to visit them and its frustration, 17-20.*

17 But we, brethren, being bereaved of you for ¹a short season, in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more exceedingly to see your face with great desire: 18 because we would fain have come unto you, I Paul once and again; and Satan hindered us. 19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of glorying? Are not even ye, before our Lord Jesus at his ²coming? 20 For ye are our glory and our joy.

¹ Gr. a season of an hour.

² Gr. presence.

But as for ourselves, brothers, our parting from you, though but for a short period, was a real bereavement. You were out of sight, but never out of mind. We were all the more eager to see you face to face with a great longing, because of the hindrances in our way. For we resolved to come to you, yes, I Paul, again and again, but Satan stopped us. For when we stand before our Lord Jesus at His coming, what is to be our ground of hope or rejoicing, or the prize in which we boast? Our converts, and who if not you? For indeed you are our glory and our joy.

17. For a short season, i.e. as we supposed. In actual fact it proved to be longer.

The more exceedingly. Possibly

in late Greek the comparative simply expresses emphasis, and we should render it here 'excessively'.

But in St. Paul it seems to retain

its full meaning. If so the meaning may be 'separation has not quenched, but only increased our desire to see you'. Or the reference may be to the news of the persecutions which made him all the more anxious to return. Or the phrase looks forward, 'the repeated frustration of our attempts to come serves only to make us the more eager'. In that case the colon in R.V. should be replaced by a comma.

18. *once and again*. Literally 'both once and twice'. The idiom may mean either 'more than once', 'repeatedly', or 'both once and twice', that is actually twice. St. Paul inserts his own name, and for once writes in the first person singular, because he had been the chief victim of the Jewish slanders. This whole passage has an apologetic purpose. He insists that so far from running away from his converts in their danger, or having forgotten all about them, he had definitely planned to return to them and his mind was full of their needs.

Satan hindered us. A typically Jewish expression. Just as St. Paul assigns to the direct act of God much that we should assign to secondary causes, or the working of natural law, so he sees in obstacles to his work for God the hostility of a personal power of evil. Behind the details of his life he discerns the conflict of the forces of good and evil. He claims with an intuition that can only belong to one who has absolutely dedicated himself to the service of God, to be able to perceive where checks and hindrances come from the Spirit of God (Acts xvi. 6-7;

cp. II Cor. xii. 9, where God permits Satan to buffet him), and where they come from the powers of evil. The precise nature of the hindrance caused by Satan is obscure. The most natural interpretation is that it refers to the decision of the magistrates of Thessalonica binding Jason to keep the peace which compelled the missionaries to stay away from fear of compromising their host. The objection to this is that the Thessalonians must have known of it. It would have been the obvious cause of their failure to return. Knox explains it as the vigilance of the unbelieving Jews on watch to prevent a secret return, cp. II Cor. xi. 14. Others refer it to an illness, but this would hardly apply to Silas as well. Others have suggested that Satan hindered their return in order to weaken the spiritual life of their converts, but St. Paul was not indispensable to them, and if they continued to face persecution, he would not be robbed of his joy in them. It is best therefore to admit that we cannot give any definite interpretation. He would hardly allude to his absorption in his work at Corinth under such terms. Such success could hardly be ascribed to Satan. Besides, iii. 1 implies that the hindrance began at Athens.

19-20. The warmth of his personal affection leads him to break out into rhetoric. The main point is clear. So far from his having forgotten them or allowed his later converts to oust them from the first place in his affections, they are the crown of his glory, as a child of its parents.

the crown of glorying, or the crown in which we boast (cp. Phil. iv. 1), is a phrase taken direct from the LXX Ez. xvi. 12; xxiii. 42; Prov. xvi. 31, and refers to the garland with which victors were crowned, or to a public honour granted for distinguished service. It has no necessary reference to royalty.

coming. The technical term in the papyri for a visit by a king or

official. It is used by St. Paul here and in I Cor. xv. 23 of the presence of Christ in glory, and from these passages became a technical term of Christian piety. It may possibly have been already used in a similar sense by the Jews. Deissmann has pointed out that while an earthly king expected to receive on his coming a crown of honour, Christ bestows one on believers at His coming.

Additional Note on Apostles of Christ.

This designation, as used in I Thess. ii. 6, indisputably includes both St. Paul and Silvanus. Its employment in the context is the more remarkable as St. Paul does not employ the title 'apostle' in the salutation of either Epistle, doubtless because his apostolic authority was in no way disputed. As used here it is a link in the chain of evidence that the term was originally used to designate Christian missionaries possessed of a definite commission, and only later became restricted to the Twelve. The title itself was probably borrowed from the Jewish Church. In classical Greek it meant a naval expedition, or its commander. In Herodotus it meant an envoy. In the Septuagint it is used once in I Kings xiv. 6 in the sense of 'He who is sent'. It is used in the same sense in Symmachus' translation of Is. xviii. 2. In the Persian period the Jews took over from the Persian State administration the institution of commissaries for the central religious administration at Jerusalem, who were sent out invested with plenipotentiary powers to teach the due observance of religion and announce matters of essential import. These were styled apostles. Their appointment helped to assist the cohesion of post-exilic Judaism. There is a lack of positive evidence for their existence in New Testament times, but they reappear later. Eusebius and Epiphanius both witness that the title was used for those bearing circular letters for the rulers among the Jews, and Justin Martyr speaks of envoys from Jerusalem sent to war against Christianity. Thus there is no evidence against the view, and much to suggest the view that the title was taken from Judaism. In Mk. iii. 14 the selection and appointment of the Twelve is recorded, but the clause 'whom also he named apostles' is absent from the best text. Its later addition is significant. In Mk. vi. 30 we find 'the apostles', but the term is used in the closest connexion with the missionary tour on which they had been sent. So too in Mt. x. 2 'the twelve apostles' is found immediately after the phrase 'his twelve disciples' to describe their sending forth on a particular mission (verse 5). It need not in the least imply that the title apostle is to be restricted to them. In Jn. xiii. 16 it is used in the vaguest

sense, 'An apostle is not greater than he that sent him', a relic of the original use. In Heb. iii. 1 it is even applied to Christ Himself, 'Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession'. We may note that the same term is applied to the Jewish high priest in an early rubric, whose date is anterior to A.D. 70, dealing with his functions on the Day of Atonement, in order to contrast his plenipotentiary power with that possessed by other members of the Sanhedrin.

In the Epistles of St. Paul the title is applied to others than the Twelve. Rom. xvi. 7 is ambiguous, but possibly includes Andronicus and Junias (or even Junia) among apostles. Gal. i. 19 most naturally includes James, the Lord's brother, among the apostles. II Cor. viii. 23 speaks of 'apostles of the churches', and Phil. ii. 25 of Epaphroditus as 'your apostle'. It is reasonable to suppose that a conscious distinction is to be drawn between such apostles and 'apostles of Christ'. Acts xiii. 3 may well describe the commissioning of Barnabas and Saul as apostles of the Church of Antioch, to which they had later to make their report. I Cor. xii. 28 and Eph. iv. 11 prove that apostles were recognized as the highest order in the Church, but there is no hint that the title was restricted to the Twelve. On the contrary I Cor. xv. 7 'all the apostles' would seem to include more than the Twelve, already mentioned in verse 5. I Cor. ix. 1 (cp. Gal. i. 1) suggests that one of the qualifications for being an apostle of Christ was to 'have seen the Lord'. A wide and indeterminate use of the title apostle is implied by the mention of false apostles. The 'super-apostles' of II Cor. xi. 5 and xii. 11 are best taken to be envoys from the Judaizing section of the original Church of Jerusalem claiming powers on the lines of Jewish apostles. Even passages like Eph. ii. 20 and iii. 5 need not be restricted to the Twelve. The number of apostles may have been as indeterminate as the number of prophets. The use by St. Paul of the naturally suspect phrase 'holy apostles' is eased if it means no more than missionaries belonging to the new Israel.

The facts then can be reasonably explained if we hold that St. Paul in claiming the title 'Apostle of Christ' when vindicating his authority against those who disputed it, at the opening of his letters and elsewhere, unintentionally created the classical form 'Apostle of Jesus Christ'. In this sense it superseded the original use of the term, and became narrowed down to designate those called by Christ Himself. This later and limited use is found in Rev. xxi. 14, though Rev. ii. 2 implies that a wider use was still current, as we know from the Didache. It is also largely found in Luke-Acts, though not with entire consistency (Lk. vi. 13; xvii. 5; xxii. 14; xxiv. 10; Acts i. 26; ii. 37; viii. 1, &c.). On the other hand, in Acts xiv. 14 it is used in the original sense of missionary. There is no reason to deny that the Twelve held a position of unique authority; all that we are concerned to maintain is that the title 'apostle' or even 'apostle of Christ' was not originally limited to them.

CHAPTER III

(d) *The mission of Timothy and his joy at the report that he brought back, 1-10.*

III. 1 Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left behind at Athens alone; 2 and sent Timothy, our brother and ¹God's minister in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort *you* concerning your faith; 3 that no man be moved by these afflictions; for yourselves know that hereunto we are appointed. 4 For verily, when we were with you, we told you ²beforehand that we are to suffer affliction; even as it came to pass, and ye know. 5 For this cause I also, when I could no longer forbear, sent that I might know your faith, lest by any means the tempter had tempted you, and our labour should be in vain. 6 But when Timothy came even now unto us from you, and brought us glad tidings of your faith and love, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, longing to see us, even as we also to *see* you; 7 for this cause, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our distress and affliction through your faith: 8 for now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord. 9 For what thanksgiving can we render again unto God for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God; 10 night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face, and may perfect that which is lacking in your faith?

¹ Some ancient authorities read *fellow-worker with God*.

² Or, *plainly*.

So, when we could bear it no longer, we resolved to be left behind all by ourselves, and that in Athens, and sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow-worker in the good news of Christ, in order to stabilize and encourage you in the matter of your faith, that no one of you be beguiled from the right path in the midst of your afflictions. For you know without my repeating it, that we Christians are destined to suffer persecution. For indeed when we were with you, we kept predicting to you, 'we are sure to suffer persecution'. And the prediction came true, as you know. I must repeat, contrary to the slanders that you hear, this was the reason why when I could no longer bear the separation, I sent to get a report of your faith. Surely it could not be that the tempter had tempted you and our labour would be lost. But the moment that Timothy came to us from you and brought us the good news of your faith and love, and told us that you are always

longing to see us as we long to see you, we recovered our spirits at the good news. You were our comfort in the midst of all our distress and affliction because of your faith. For we live once more, if you stand fast in the Lord. For we can never adequately express our gratitude to God in return for all that He has done for you, for the joy with which we rejoice over you before our God. Our joy prompts us to beseech Him night and day with unmeasured fervour that we may see you face to face and make good the shortcomings of your faith.

1. *Wherefore*, i.e. because of our great desire to see you. *forbear*, better, 'endure'. *thought it good*, the Greek conveys the idea of a deliberate resolve. The mention of Athens has a special point. Not only is it possible to be alone in the midst of a big city, as when we say 'alone in London', but Athens was particularly uncongenial to St. Paul's temperament. In the finest specimens of Greek sculpture he could only see a collection of idols. The intellectual atmosphere chilled him. His message won practically no response. Hence he felt all the more need of a friend like Timothy (cp. the general impression left by Acts xvii. 16 ff.).

2. The R.V. mg. reading is to be preferred. It best explains the existence of the reading in the text and the reading of B, 'our fellow-worker'. The bold expression startled the copyists and led them to tone it down: cp. I Cor. iii. 9, the only other example in the New Testament.

3. *moved*. The precise meaning of the verb here is uncertain. It may mean 'moved away from' or, better, 'agitated'. Or 'allured', 'cajoled', a sense which ultimately goes back to a dog wagging its tail to fawn upon a person.

appointed. The ground of this expectation of suffering is not

simply the Jewish idea of the 'woes of the Messiah', a period of special tribulation which should usher in the coming of the Kingdom of God, but rather the conviction that Christians were called to share the sufferings of Christ (cp. Acts xiv. 22).

5. This verse resumes the subject of verse 1. There is no reference to any second sending of a messenger. The object of *sent* is Timothy, as is shown by verse 6. A secondary purpose in his sending is now mentioned, not only the edification of the converts, but the setting at rest of the fears of the apostle.

lest means 'fearing lest'. Another rendering is to place a full stop after faith and turn the rest of the sentence into a question expecting the answer No. 'Could it be the tempter had tempted you, and our labour would prove in vain?'

6. *even now*. The Greek is ambiguous. Many commentators hold that what happened so promptly after the arrival of Timothy is the writing of this Epistle. But it is better to interpret it to mean that his arrival brought immediate comfort. It acted as a stimulant that at once gave St. Paul new life. This does not exclude the possibility that his new energy showed itself in sitting down to write.

glad tidings. The same word is used as that for preaching the Gospel. The news was in itself a gospel.

9. The news of their faith gave him not only life but joy. This joy is not so much personal as religious and therefore finds expression towards God. *render again*, the word expresses the idea of full and complete return.

10. What Frame calls 'the ethical soundness of his religious feelings' comes out in these words. Though St. Paul overflowed with love towards his converts, he was under no illusions about them. In spite of his joy over their steadfastness, he was aware that there were still deficiencies in their

religion. In this he showed himself a true pastor. Conversion is always only a beginning. The new life needs to be deepened and developed. The mention of prayer prepares the way for this allusion to their immaturity, and for the petitions that follow in 11-13 and also for the moral exhortations of the next chapter, which suggest that the deficiencies in their faith were not simply due to lack of growth, but to the failure to throw off the low moral standards of their past life. The word translated *perfect* may mean either to make good what is wanting, i.e. to 'complete', or to amend what is amiss, i.e. to 'repair' what is out of repair.

(e) *Prayer for growth and perseverance, 11-13.*

11 Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way unto you: 12 and the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we also *do* toward you; 13 to the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before our God and Father, at the ¹coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.²

¹ Gr. *presence.*

² Many ancient authorities add *Amen.*

But after all said and done, it is for God our Father and our Lord Jesus to clear the way for us to visit you. Such is our prayer for ourselves. And for you, whether we come or not, we pray that the Lord will make you increase and abound in love towards one another and towards all men, as we do towards you, to the end that He may fix your wills so that they may be faultlessly holy in the sight of our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus attended by all His holy ones.

11. *himself* brings out the sense of entire dependence on God. In the Greek the verb *direct* is in the singular, showing that to the mind of St. Paul the will and activity

of God the Father and the Lord Jesus was one will and activity. On the importance of this grammatical point, and of the collocation of God the Father and Jesus,

for an understanding of primitive Christian theology see pp. xlii-xliii. *direct* hardly brings out the metaphor in the Apostle's mind. It is the exact opposite of the word used for hinder in ii. 18 (cp. Gal. v. 7), which originally means break up the road so as to make it impassable. So a better translation would be 'make straight' by the removal of obstacles.

12. The petition may imply the danger of quarrelsomeness in the Thessalonian Church. This was the chief fault of the other Macedonian Church at Philippi (cp. Phil. ii. 1-11; iv. 1-2). There it seems to be connected with the independence and prominence of the women, which was characteristic of Macedonia. But the love prayed for here is wider than the love of the brethren (a different Greek word) in iv. 9: it includes love to those outside, even their persecutors.

13. The word *hearts* is misleading, though it is a correct translation. To us to-day the heart is the seat of the affections. For St. Paul and the Old Testament the heart is rather the organ of deliberation and purpose. Here it corresponds more with what modern psychology calls the will. The sanctity and security of the Christian life are made to rest upon the fixity of the will to love. That includes the right emotional attitude to others approved by reason. The word for *holiness* represents not the process of sanctification, but the result of the process. This is grounded in love. The only safe

holiness is based on the genuine and fervent love of God and goodness and of other men in God. Thus the impurity condemned in the following chapter is in the last resort a breach of love. The safeguard against it is a pure love resting on a true estimate of the value of every individual in the sight of God, a love that forbids the using of any human being as a mere means to get pleasure or profit for oneself. Notice the stress throughout on right inward disposition. God is able to look through outward conduct to discern the man's real will.

saints. Ordinarily in St. Paul this means Christians (e.g. II. i. 10). The return of dead Christians with Christ is affirmed in iv. 14. Further the kindred word *holiness* in this very sentence is certainly applied to Christians. On the other hand, 'the holy ones' both in the Old Testament and in later Jewish literature is frequently applied to the angels, particularly in the LXX of Zech. xiv. 5 which St. Paul is here adapting. And the idea of the Messiah coming in glory with His angels is expressly affirmed in the Gospels (e.g. Mk. viii. 38; cp. II. i. 7). Hence it is difficult to exclude either meaning. It is best to suppose that St. Paul used the title to include all who belonged to Christ, angels and Christians alike. Throughout this verse St. Paul probably falls into the language of Christian worship which was already becoming stereotyped.

CHAPTER IV

C. WARNINGS AND INSTRUCTIONS IN PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY

(a) *General exhortation, 1-2, (b) and especially against immorality, 3-8.*

IV. 1 Finally then, brethren, we beseech and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that, as ye received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, even as ye do walk,—that ye abound more and more. 2 For ye know what ¹charge we gave you through the Lord Jesus. 3 For this is the will of God, *even* your sanctification, that ye abstain from fornication; 4 that each one of you know how to possess himself of his own vessel in sanctification and honour, 5 not in the passion of lust, even as the Gentiles which know not God; 6 that no man ²transgress, and wrong his brother in the matter: because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as also we ³forewarned you and testified. 7 For God called us not for uncleanness, but in sanctification. 8 Therefore he that rejecteth, rejecteth not man, but God, who giveth his Holy Spirit unto you.

¹ Gr. charges.

² Or, overreach.

³ Or, told you plainly.

Next brothers, we implore you and exhort you with the authority that we received from the Lord Jesus, that, as you learnt from us how you ought to walk and so please God,—and indeed you do so walk—that you advance more and more in the Christian life. For you know the injunctions that we gave you, prompted by the Lord Jesus. For God's will is this, your entire consecration. It is moral as well as religious. You must hold aloof from fornication. Each one of you must learn how to win the mastery of his own body in consecration and reverence for the body, not gratifying his passions as do the heathen who have no knowledge of the true God. No one must overreach and take advantage of his fellow in this matter. For God is the avenger of such acts, as we both forewarned you and solemnly affirmed. For God called us not for uncleanness, but in consecration of life. Therefore any who rejects this warning, rejects not man but God who offers you His Spirit, the Spirit of holiness.

1. *Finally.* In late Greek the word is hardly so definite. It means little more than 'next', and does not necessarily point to an approaching conclusion (cp. iv. 8, and Phil. iii. 1, which is only half-way through the Epistle). *in the Lord Jesus* probably goes with the second verb and emphasizes his claim to authority. It is

a matter of supreme urgency. The grammar of the rest of the verse is irregular owing to his wish to combine exhortation with praise. A bare command might seem to imply censure. Hence the insertion of *even . . . walk*. That is repeated in order to resume the main construction. As always he insists that growth is a law of life, and that progress in goodness is the surest

safeguard against falling away into sin.

2. *charge* is a semi-military term, 'word of command'. The passage implies that Christian teachers imparted to their converts something like a systematic moral teaching, based on sayings of Christ. They were not left in ignorance of His life and doctrine.

In the following passage it is difficult to be certain how far the Apostle is dealing with the particular circumstances at Thessalonica, and how far he is giving the regular moral instruction that he commonly gave to pagans, in the knowledge that in a city like Thessalonica it would certainly be needed. We are not therefore bound to assume that Timothy had brought back news of actual cases of immorality. On the whole he is pleased with the condition of the church. But the danger threatened the Thessalonians, as it did every Gentile church. Even to philosophers in the heathen world fornication was hardly a moral offence. At least in the case of men it was tolerated. In certain places it was practised in the name of religion. It is possible that at Thessalonica itself in the worship of the Kabeiroi immorality was fostered. As in the mission-field to-day, when the initial fervour was over, it was only too easy for converts to slip back into the low standards of pagan living. A few months of Christianity could not be trusted to undo the habits of a lifetime. Constant watchfulness was necessary both for the missionaries and their flock. In any case the temptations of a seaport must have been great. Here it was that St. Paul's critics had good reason to question the abandonment of the Jewish law. Those who as proselytes or God-fearers had had in the synagogue the benefit of years of moral discipline could be trusted to use their liberty. Those who came over direct from heathenism lacked the stability of character to dispense with the support of external rules. Hence inevitably there were relapses, and the blame was assigned to St. Paul's presentation of the Gospel. The need for discipline through submission to some form of law is a difficulty that St. Paul never really faces. He knew nothing of it in his own life since his own character had been disciplined from childhood by the Law. As a result of his sudden conversion he was possessed by an overmastering spirit of loyalty to Christ which made specific regulations for himself unnecessary. He hardly recognized that others might not be in that position. Indeed there are passages that suggest that those who had once received the Spirit could not fall back into sin. If this was the expectation in the first days of the Church, it must soon have been seen to be untrue.

4. The difficulties in the interpretation of this verse turn on the uncertainty about the meaning of two words (1) *vessel*, (2) *possess*.

The English reader naturally takes 'vessel' in R.V. to be the body. This is the interpretation of most of the ancient commentators. The objection to this is that no exact parallel to this meaning can be found. The word itself is common in St. Paul. It means either literally a household utensil, or metaphorically an implement (e.g. Rom. ix. 22-3; II Cor. iv. 7), where the metaphor is helped out by the context. It is never used in a metaphorical sense absolutely, as here. So again it was commonly used of the body as the vessel of the soul, but then the context makes it clear. Hence some ancient, and many modern, commentators take it to mean 'his own wife'. There is some evidence from Rabbinical writings that the term was used in this sense. I Pet. iii. 7 cannot be quoted to support it, as there both husband and wife are vessels of the Holy Spirit. The real objection to this rendering is that it suggests, at least to a modern mind, an intolerably low view of the marriage relation, and that just when there is need to exalt it. But perhaps at the time the term vessel did not convey any idea of contempt to the Eastern mind. That a woman is to be a vessel of honourable marriage, and not a vessel of fornication, is no doubt true, but can hardly be got out of the passage.

Again, in classical Greek the verb *possess* in the present tense could never be translated as in R.V. It conveys the idea of getting what is not already possessed. In the LXX it is regularly used for marrying a wife. But in later Greek, as the papyri show, it comes

also to be used in a sense which in classical Greek is confined to the perfect, and means not only to 'acquire', but to have acquired, that is 'possess', as R.V. translates it.

We are therefore left with a variety of possible renderings. It may be that the unmarried man is to get a wife in order to avoid fornication (cp. I Cor. vii. 2), or that the married is to possess his own wife in purity. Or that a man is to possess his body in sanctification, or that he is to win his body, since Christian purity is something that does not come all at once but has to be learned.

Further, some scholars challenge the translation *know how*. The verb is in v. 12 used in the sense of 'respect', 'reverence' (cp. a similar verb in I Cor. xvi. 18). So they would separate it from possess or acquire and translate thus: 'That each of you' (i.e. who is married) 'respect his own wife', 'that each of you' (i.e. who is unmarried) 'marry his own wife in the spirit of consecration and honour, not in the passion of lust, &c.'

5. *passion* denotes the passive state or condition which active lust rules, and by St. Paul is always used in a bad sense. The two are often combined. Here the idea is that lust gains the mastery over a man and binds him in slavery to passion. As so often St. Paul connects immorality with idolatry, that is the refusal to hold fast the highest ideas of God (cp. Rom. i. 19-28). St. Paul always places religion and doctrine in the closest connexion with morality.

6. *transgress*, the word literally means 'go beyond'. It may be

used absolutely, as R.V. takes it, 'exceed the proper limit', or taking 'brother' as its object supplied, it may mean, 'get the better of' or 'disregard'.

wrong, more accurately 'over-reach'. The word in itself does not imply any notion of sensuality, but it gains this from the context. The substantive derived from it does occur in connexion with impurity, Eph. iv. 19, but that is simply because disregard for the due rights of others is involved in impurity. To-day covetousness and impurity are often closely connected, as in the white slave traffic.

in the matter, R.V. is doubtless right in regarding this as a euphemism for sins of the flesh, which there is no need further to define. A.V. 'in any matter' is certainly wrong. The suggestion has been made that the words should be translated 'in business'. In that case St. Paul leaves behind the thought of purity and adds a new point, the duty of honesty in commercial transactions. But it is exceedingly doubtful whether the Greek will stand this rendering. No real parallel has been found. The whole section refers to purity.

brother, as always, means 'fellow

Christian'. This does not imply that it is allowable to wrong a non-Christian, but that it is doubly wicked to wrong a brother in Christ (cp. I Cor. vi. 8).

The motive for purity is responsibility to Christ. Notice the practical value of the Christian belief in the future judgement.

7-8. This is reinforced by the thought of God's call and the moral responsibility for living up to it.

giveth: the present tense may imply fresh accessions of the Holy Spirit, or simply refer to the fact that when God gives commands, He also gives the power to fulfil them. In any case the close relation between morality and the Spirit should be noted. To us it is a commonplace, but in the religions of that day it was a startling novelty. Men readily saw the signs of the presence of some divine power in abnormal psychic states, such as speaking with tongues. They were less willing to learn that the presence of the Spirit of God was no less to be seen in the power to lead a good life, in the perfection of the normal, no less than in the abnormal. This ethical doctrine of the Spirit was one of the great contributions of Christian thought.

(c) *Brotherly love must include quiet and steady work, 9-12.*

9 But concerning love of the brethren ye have no need that one write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another; 10 for indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia. But we exhort you, brethren, that ye abound more and more; 11 and that ye ¹study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your hands,

¹ Gr. *be ambitious*.

even as we charged you; 12 that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and may have need of nothing.

But as regards love of your fellow-Christians, there is no need for one to write to you. For you have yourselves been taught of God to love one another. Yes, you show that love in practice, and not only to one another, but to all the Christians in the whole of Macedonia. But we entreat you, brothers, to excel yet more, and carry that love through. Make it your ambition to live quietly and mind your own business. And work with your hands, as we charged you from the first, that your conduct may make a good impression on your unbelieving neighbours, and that you may be independent of others' support.

This whole paragraph should be taken closely together. Love is to run right through life. It is already being shown in a right attitude to fellow Christians. It is also to be shown in the more commonplace duty of earning a living by honest work. Experience shows that it is often more easy to fulfil obligations to those at a little distance than to those at home.

9. *But concerning.* In I Cor. this phrase marks an answer given by the Apostle to a question contained in the Corinthians' letter. So here it may conceivably look back to a question that the Thessalonians had asked in a letter sent to St. Paul by Timothy.

have no need. This is to be taken quite literally. It is not an example of tactfully appearing to pass over what the writer is really anxious to emphasize.

taught of God refers not to any passage of Scripture, or utterance of Christ, but to the guidance of the Spirit in the heart and conscience. From the day of Pentecost onwards one of the signs of the work of the Spirit in the hearts of believers was an urge to fellowship.

10. *all Macedonia* sounds like a pardonable touch of exaggeration.

From Acts we read of Christian churches in Philippi and Berea. There may have been communities formed in the interval in such towns as Amphipolis, but all that is really meant is that visiting Christians from other parts of the province were hospitably entertained. In the primitive church this entertainment of Christians by Christians was a factor of primary importance. It bound the church together and facilitated intercourse. Christians were poor, and inns were few, bad, and of evil reputation.

abound more and more is explained by the following clauses. They are to extend the practice of love so as to cover their daily lives. Love demands that every member of the community should be willing to make his contribution to the welfare of the whole by some form of honest work.

11. *study to be quiet* is what is technically called an oxymoron. The word translated *study* or *ambitious* (R.V. mg.) may mean 'to strive restlessly' after a thing. It originally meant to pursue honour or distinction, but was later used in a more general sense, as in Rom. xv. 20; II Cor. v. 9.

But in any case the paradox remains. They are to strive restlessly to rest.

11-12. The clue to the understanding of these verses is given by the more explicit statements of II. iii. 6-15. Apart from this the situation would be obscure. It is clear that some members of the Thessalonian Church under the influence of their new faith had given up work, and claimed to be kept at the expense of the community. Probably this was a form of what has been called 'eschatological restlessness'. If the Lord is to return within a short time, why go on working? The same phenomenon has recurred from time to time when some movement has aroused a widespread and vivid expectation of the Lord's immediate return. The result has been an unhealthy excitement and distraction from ordinary duties. Others have suggested that what is implied here and in II Thess. is rather a form of professional Christianity. The poorer members, or some of them, supposed that if they embraced Christianity it was the duty of the church to keep them. The two ideas are not entirely incompatible. The members of the church seem to have been for the most part small tradesmen and working people, but verse 12 may imply that a few were wealthy and that there was a danger of their generosity being abused.

work with your hands. St. Paul definitely supports the Jewish, as opposed to the Greek, estimate of manual work. To the Greek, manual labour was degrading; it was to be done by slaves. Indeed, certain races had been created in

order that they might perform the menial tasks and give leisure to philosophers to pursue wisdom. On the other hand Jews held all forms of work in honour. Every Jew, however wealthy his family, learnt a trade. St. Paul had been taught tent-making. Almost unconsciously St. Paul asserts a vital principle of Christian ethics. Every member of the community is bound to make his contribution to the well-being of the whole. Idleness is definitely un-Christian. Possession of wealth does not dispense a man from the duty of work, but gives him the opportunity of undertaking unpaid work. In the sight of God, the primary concern is not the nature of the work rendered, but the spirit in which it is done. A good manual labourer ranks higher in the kingdom of God than a slothful philosopher. To the Christian all work should be regarded as the fulfilment of a vocation. There are vocations to the task of bricklaying as well as to the ministry. A man will only find true satisfaction so far as he finds and fulfils his vocation. The discontent and unrest of our modern civilization is partly due to the fact that social conventions and imperfect methods of education prevent so many of all classes from discovering and responding to their vocations. We need to recover the sense of the dignity of all honest labour. Perhaps St. Paul has here in mind the warning that had been furnished by the experience of the Church of Jerusalem. The communism of the first days had been followed by dire poverty. Those who bid us imitate the methods of finance

suggested by the early chapters of Acts, usually fail to remind us of the consequences. There may have been a danger that the Christians of Thessalonica, in a spirit of religious zeal, should reproduce the methods of Jerusalem. The remedy was to insist on the positive duty of work and self-support. A twofold motive for such work is given. Idleness brings Christianity into discredit with unbelievers. St. Paul never overlooks the duty of not offend-

ing the moral sense of the Gentile world. Secondly, self-support where possible, is a moral duty. To be a parasite on the community leads to moral degradation.

There can be no better preparation for the coming of Christ than to be faithful in ordinary duties. The man who is doing his work faithfully at the right time is ready to meet Christ. This thought should quiet all feverish apprehension.

(d) *A reply to anxious questionings about the faithful departed and the advent of Christ, 13-18.*

13 But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as the rest, which have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep ¹in Jesus will God bring with him. 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the ²coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18 Wherefore ³comfort one another with these words.

¹ Gr. *through*. Or, *will God through Jesus*.

² Gr. *presence*.

³ Or, *exhort*.

There is another matter which is causing you distress. Christians are falling asleep in death. We would wish you, brothers, to be rightly informed, that you may not grieve over them as do the unbelievers, who have no hope. Believing as we do that Jesus of Nazareth died and rose again, it must follow that God will also bring with Him when He comes those who fell asleep as believers in Jesus. For we are only telling you what the Lord has told us, namely that we who are alive and survive to the coming of the Lord, shall in no way take precedence of those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout of command. The archangel shall

call aloud and the trumpet of God sound. And the dead in Christ shall first rise, then we who are alive and survive shall be caught up together with them on clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Accordingly we shall be with the Lord for ever. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

At first sight this paragraph seems to have little connexion with what has gone before. But when we look below the surface there is a real continuity of thought. St. Paul is dealing with the practical effects in the minds of his converts of their belief in the nearness of the Lord's return. In some cases it upset the balance of their life, causing restlessness and idleness. In other cases it led to anxiety about fellow Christians who died before the return. Would they be shut out from the blessings of the Kingdom? It must be remembered that as yet there was no Christian doctrine of an intermediate state. The return was expected so soon that no room was left for the consideration of such problems. For the majority of believers they had no practical interest. Further, death was commonly held to be a punishment. Indeed St. Paul himself in I Cor. xi. 30 explicitly regards the premature death of certain members of the community as the direct punishment of God for the profanation of the Eucharist. So at Thessalonica the unexpected death of Christians may well have aroused fears that they had in some way fallen under the wrath of God. Even though they had appeared to be faithful believers, there was the possibility that they had been guilty of some secret sin. Hence the anxiety of their friends. The whole situation is dominated by the vivid expectation of the immediate arrival of the Lord in glory to be followed by the setting up of His Kingdom of bliss, into which Christians will be taken without having to pass through the experience of death.

13. *We . . . ignorant.* The expression is fairly common in St. Paul's earlier Epistles. It does not imply any rebuke, but serves to introduce a new and important topic, always with the addition of 'brethren'. It always seems to look back to something that has occurred. In Rom. i. 13 and II Cor. i. 8 it is used to correct a false impression about his personal conduct; in Rom. xi. 25, I Cor. x. 1, xii. 1 it introduces a solution of some difficult problem. The positive form 'I would have you know' is very common in the papyri, and is found in Col. ii. 1; I Cor. xi. 3. The phrase is another link between the Epistles and ordinary correspondence.

fall asleep. The correct reading is the present participle, which may mean 'are lying asleep', or, more probably 'fall asleep from time to time'. It denotes a process that was going on. Christians were dying at intervals. The metaphor of sleep for death no doubt lends itself to the thought of a future awakening, but it is hazardous to suppose that this was prominent in St. Paul's mind. It was a metaphor in common use, not only among Jews, but among pagans who are here said to be without hope. Nor again must the metaphor be pressed so as to assert the unconsciousness of the soul between death and resurrection, which can hardly be reconciled

with v. 10. The question of the state of the soul is not in St. Paul's mind at all. The metaphor is suggested by the stillness of the body.

as the rest. The phrase means the same as *those without* in verse 12. St. Paul neither affirms nor denies the natural sorrow of Christians at parting with their friends. He is not forbidding such grief, or allowing it. Rather 'he states his precept broadly, without caring to enter into the qualifications which will suggest themselves at once to thinking men' (Lightfoot).

which...hope. This phrase which may have been current among Christians, causes much offence to certain modern students of mystery cults, which offered a hope of personal immortality to their members, especially when they undertake to show that St. Paul derived much of his theology from these cults. The natural inference is that in forming an estimate of pagan religion the mystery cults loomed less large in the eyes of St. Paul than of many modern scholars. It is indeed undeniable that pagan philosophers, like Plato, argued for the immortality of the soul, and that Orphism and kindred cults taught a blessed life after death. But it is difficult to estimate the place that such beliefs held in the mind of the ordinary man. Almost all our evidence about the mystery religions comes from a period that is definitely later than St. Paul. Nor is it clear what proportion of the population were interested in them. We have no religious statistics. St. Paul's words here

represent the impression which the average pagan outlook made on a Christian, and can be abundantly illustrated by inscriptions on tombstones. They do not indeed rule out a certain belief in a future life, but in contrast with the clearness and certainty of the Christian hope, that belief may be said hardly to have existed. In Eph. ii. 12 converts from paganism are reminded that in old days they lived as men 'having no hope, and without God in the world'. The two phrases must be taken together. In one sense they had had a few hundred gods, but they were of no account beside the knowledge of the one true God; so the pagan hope is mere darkness beside the vision of eternal life given in Christ.

14. The new Christian hope is based on a new revelation contained in certain historical events which bear on their face a certain interpretation. It is to be noticed that here as always St. Paul bases his Gospel not on the Cross taken in isolation, but on the Cross as followed by and interpreted by the Resurrection.

asleep in Jesus. The R.V. text disguises the difficulty of this phrase. The Greek is literally, as R.V. mg. partly shows, 'Those that fell asleep' (aorist participle denoting a single definite event) 'through Jesus'. Some commentators attempt to evade the difficulty by connecting 'through Jesus' with *will bring* (see R.V. mg.). On this view Jesus is the agent through whom God will bring back the dead. This makes admirable sense, but the whole balance of the sentence is against

it. It also harmonizes less well with the phrase in the next verse, *the dead in Christ*, and introduces an element of redundancy. There is no need for the additional words *with him*. But if we reject this solution, it must be confessed that the precise meaning of the phrase is obscure. We must put on one side any comparison with the passages in which Christians are said to die with Christ and rise with Him to newness of life. There the process of death and resurrection is primarily moral and spiritual. Here St. Paul has in mind solely physical death, as is shown by the continuance of the metaphor of sleep. It is true that, as is shown by the language of the next verse, Christians are not separated from Christ by death, and that therefore their fellowship with Christ holds even in the moment of death. To say that the phrase implies 'the indwelling power of that Jesus who died and rose again, the causal energy which operates in the believers from baptism to actual resurrection from the dead' (Frame) is to give an explanation that is theologically correct, but is a confession that the thought is obscure. If we could hold with Lake that the phrase refers to martyrdom, we could give it a more natural meaning. Martyrs might well be said to have died through Jesus. But we do not know for certain that there had been any martyrs. We read of persecution, but none of the allusions necessarily imply death. And the whole problem is probably a wider one. In the months that had elapsed since St. Paul's visit, we should expect that some mem-

bers of the community would have died a natural death.

15. *the word of the Lord*. There are two possible explanations of this phrase. (1) It may refer to some traditional utterance of Christ. If so, then probably not the word itself is given, but only its general drift. It is an allusion rather than a citation. The nearest approach to any such word in our canonical Gospels is Mt. xxiv. 31, but the similarity is not very close. Those who adopt this explanation find the substance of the word in the rest of the verse. It has also been suggested that the word itself is cited in 16-17, but the special point of these verses, namely, that both quick and dead shall be caught up together, does not appear in verse 15. It is better therefore to suppose that these last two verses are a traditional picture of the coming, introduced to explain the word of the Lord previously summarized in verse 15. (2) An entirely different line of explanation is to suppose that the phrase refers to the utterance of some Christian prophet, or even of St. Paul himself in a moment of ecstasy, which had been recognized by the Christian community as being inspired. In favour of this is the parallel use of the phrase in the Old Testament. The primitive church never supposed that direct revelation had ceased with the loss of the visible presence of their Lord.

we that are alive. The language proves beyond all doubt that when this Epistle was composed, St. Paul took it for granted that he would be alive at the second coming. The same expectation is found

in I Cor. xv. 51. The first sign that the Apostle had had to face the possibility of his own death before Christ returned is in II Cor. i. 8-9. In Phil. i. 20 ff., iii. 11 he has become reconciled to the thought. Though he still looks forward to the second coming in the near future, he now expects to die first. In the Pastorals the expectation becomes a certainty. There is nowhere a hint that he found any difficulty in adjusting his faith to the new point of view.

precede. This word more than meets the fears of the Thessalonians. Not only will dead Christians share in the glory of the coming kingdom, they will be on an absolute equality with those that are still alive on earth.

16. The details are taken from the conventional imagery of Jewish Apocalyptic. The Greek makes it probable that the *shout* of command is the general idea, which is then more fully described in the two following clauses. To ask who utters the shout is futile. It is enough that the command comes from God. *The archangel* is usually supposed to be Michael, who is prominent in Jewish eschatology. But the Greek has no definite article, and the phrase may simply mean 'with a voice such as an archangel uses'. The trumpet is the natural symbol for a summons that is sudden, unescapable, and full of meaning. It had become a regular detail in imaginary pictures of the Last Day. Cp. I Cor. xv. 52, Mt. xxiv. 31, where it is a detail added to the simpler language of Mk. xiii. 27.

the dead in Christ is the most important phrase in the verse. It

asserts that membership in the body of Christ is in no way impaired by death.

17. The picture here drawn can easily be imagined. The dead are raised, though nothing is said about the nature of their risen bodies. Then all alike are caught up, presumably immediately, by some supernatural power in a chariot of cloud (cp. Elijah, II Kings ii. 11) into the air, which in the cosmology of the time fills the space between the flat surface of the earth and the pure aether of the lowest heaven. So in the book of the Secrets of Enoch, Enoch is represented as taken by angels on their wings and placed on the clouds. Then the clouds ascend and Enoch sees the aether and is placed in the first heaven. Whether the saints after meeting the Lord descend with Him to earth to share in the inauguration of the Kingdom of God here, as Old Testament prophetic pictures might suggest, or whether they ascend with Him to Heaven itself, is left open. In any case it is irrelevant. The supreme truth is that the fuller intimacy with the Lord thus depicted is to be unbroken.

Here is the ground of consolation. Fellowship with one another in Christ is a fellowship that is abiding. Its permanence is guaranteed by the common union with Christ. The Christian heaven is no mere flight of 'the alone to the alone', it is no merely individual bliss, still less absorption into the divine. It is social, it is a heaven of love. This is one reason why St. Paul and Christian tradition have hung to the idea of the resurrection of the body. Such a fellowship

of love is to us inconceivable unless the individual possesses some organism through which he can express himself and enter into relation with his new environment. The idea of a disembodied spirit goes with the idea of a solitary heaven of contemplation, the idea of a spiritual body goes with the idea of a heaven of fellowship in love and service.

The picture of the advent of Christ given in these verses is one that our modern minds cannot take literally. We may doubt whether even St. Paul believed in a literal trumpet. Science makes the idea of a literal descent from the skies impossible. This recognition that the whole passage is expressed in the thought-forms of St. Paul's day does not really affect its spiritual value. We must admit that any attempt to present to the imagination such truths is necessarily provisional and partial. Not only is the imagination incurably materialistic, but all our terms and phrases have been coined to deal with the objects and events of the present visible world. When we pass outside present experience, their inadequacy is apparent. In thinking about spiritual truths and events we can only use the best ideas and words that we have and recognize that they have a symbolic value. They do not give literal information. They cannot impart scientific accuracy. So St. Paul, like our Lord Himself, employed the picture-language of his day. How far he realized its symbolic character we cannot say. But this is certain, that he used it not with the idea of writing history in advance, or with the object of satisfying curiosity about the future, but with the aim of imparting moral and spiritual truth. Now it is just these moral and spiritual values that remain unaffected by changes of outlook about the nature of the universe. St. Paul may have regarded heaven as a place many thousand miles above his head, but the real interest of heaven for him was not its altitude, but the character of the life lived there. He did not suppose that a man could enter heaven merely by the elevation of his body. 'Flesh and blood', that is corruptible bodies such as we now possess, 'cannot enter the Kingdom of God' (I Cor. xv. 50). In other words, for him the change from earth to heaven is primarily a spiritual change. Heaven is a closer fellowship with Christ. His dominant interest therefore would not in the least be imperilled, if he had been brought to see that heaven was not spatially above the earth at all, that it was a condition of being above the laws of space as we know them. The main teaching of this passage, that Christians will be with the Lord for ever and that they will enjoy fellowship with one another in Christ, is quite unaffected by any discoveries of physical science.

Again, we cannot extract from St. Paul's Epistles any detailed scheme of eschatology. St. Paul was a keen thinker, but he was not a systematic theologian. It is difficult to harmonize his teaching here with that given for instance in I Cor. xv and II Cor. v, because on each occasion he develops certain thoughts to deal with particular situations. He is not giving teaching about the future life for its own sake. He is dealing

with false ideas that needed correction. He expounds his own belief so far as the circumstances demand, but no farther. It is possible that his own ideas were modified as time went on, but it is difficult to prove it. His interest in the future life was practical, not theoretical. He only elaborates particular points when there is need to do so.

Thus in our present passage, and elsewhere in his Epistles, there is no attempt to give any doctrine of an intermediate state. The dead are 'in Christ'. That is as far as he goes. We may contrast this reserve with the detailed and confident assertions of later theology. St. Paul has no doctrine of purgatory. Nor again is he concerned with the fate of unbelievers, whether Jews or heathen. He has in mind here throughout the passage only Christians. Of others there is not one single word. Again we may contrast the fullness of later speculation. It may be true that his teaching is based on and reflects existing Jewish belief about the coming of the Messiah and the gathering of the faithful to share in the Kingdom, but two events have occurred which modify even the clearest of Jewish expectations. One is the human life of Jesus. It is to be noticed that the human name of Christ is twice used. The other is His resurrection. Christian hope is now enlightened and fortified by God's revelation of Himself in history. Heaven is now abiding fellowship with One whose character is revealed in Jesus. The historical resurrection of Jesus furnishes a new ground of confidence in God. The clearness and certainty of the Christian hope in this passage are something new, because they are based on the actual disclosure of God's will and purpose in historical facts.

Additional Note on the permanent value of Apocalyptic.

The employment by St. Paul in this passage and elsewhere of the current language of Jewish Apocalyptic, inevitably raises in our minds the question of its value for us to-day. For the most part it is wholly alien to our modern ways of thinking. Only the most uneducated can suppose that it gives an exact picture of future happenings painted in advance under supernatural guidance. Many of the details are only consistent with that 'three storied view of the universe' which modern science makes it impossible for us to take literally.

All pictures of a future that lies outside present experience and transcends it, can only be expressed in metaphor and symbol. The difficulty about these pictures is that the symbols and metaphors which they employ are Oriental and Jewish, foreign to our sober Western imagination. In large measure the language of St. Paul is similar to the language used by Christ. That does not carry with it the necessity of accepting it as literally true. If there was to be a real Incarnation, the condescension of the eternal Son of God in becoming man must, as far as we can understand the mystery, include far more than the taking of a human body. The Incarnate Son must possess a true human mind and soul. Further, in becoming man, He must display many of the character-

istics of manhood at a particular date. Not only must the clothes which he wore be the clothes of Palestine in the first century, but the common stock of ideas which He shared with His contemporaries must be those of a Jew of the first century. He must speak the language of a particular date, and that includes far more than merely using a particular vocabulary. It includes common meanings and modes of thought. He took the Messianic hope of the Jews and purged it of all that was merely nationalistic and materialistic, until the very title Messiah assumed on His lips a new significance; so too He took the current eschatology of the day, and, in employing its phrases, purged them of what was unworthy. All great teachers who have a new message to proclaim are hampered by the fact that they only have the old language in which to proclaim it. The words which they are compelled to use have already got associations in the minds of their hearers, which the teacher wishes to modify and transform. So Christ in proclaiming His message was limited by the language and mentality of His day. He could only teach the truth as men were able to understand it. That is partly why He used parable and poetry. A truth that cannot be put into words can be hinted at and partially revealed in imagery. Accordingly Christ sifted and used apocalyptic images and terms to express certain aspects of the truth, because they were the least inadequate form of expression. The early church continued to employ this language, partly because it was natural for Jews to do so, partly in imitation of the Master. St. Paul does so in these Epistles without apology.

The problem still remains, what value can we ourselves find in such language. Would it not be well for us to throw over the whole terminology inherited from Judaism and substitute one based on modern ideas? We may point out that this proposal involves more difficulties than at first sight appear. All forecasts of the future must from the nature of the case be expressed in metaphorical and symbolic language. If we employ the terms of the twentieth century, we must admit that to the twenty-fifth century they will appear as obsolete as ever the terms of the first century can appear to us. Further, even if we could agree what scientific scheme to adopt, there would be the danger of bringing in with the use of modern terms a precision and definiteness that are wholly out of place. Pictures of 'Coming on the clouds of heaven' or of an angel blowing a trumpet are not likely to be taken too literally. They are frankly symbolic and imaginary. But an attempt to depict events in modern terms might only serve to disguise its imaginary character. There is also the danger that a modern reconstruction of eschatology may omit elements of spiritual truth that are contained in the old descriptions. It is therefore not unreasonable to hold that it is wiser to retain the old picture-language and endeavour to draw out its abiding spiritual lessons.

What, then, are the chief truths which find expression in Apocalyptic? First, it emphatically puts God, not human progress or well-being, at the centre of all history and all existence. It stresses the objectivity of all religion, the sovereignty of God, His action independent of human

co-operation. The development of psychology in modern times has resulted in the fixing of attention on the human side of religion, on man's emotions and conduct. Against this the stark objectivity of Apocalyptic affords a necessary protest.

Following from the assertion of this truth, Apocalyptic emphasizes the given-ness of divine grace. The Kingdom of God comes not by human effort, or as the crown of a long process of human development, but by a sudden act of divine power. When, humanly speaking, all is lost, God intervenes to reverse the situation. The new order does not arise by any process of gradual evolution out of the old. It is not contained within it, and waiting to be elicited. It supervenes catastrophically. Nothing can be farther from Apocalyptic than the idea of building Jerusalem on England's or any other pleasant land, and building it with our own hands. The heavenly city descends from heaven by the fiat of God upon a land that is far from pleasant. If it be objected that this is only one side of the truth, we can reply that it is the side of the truth that we are most likely to forget. All men, it has been said, are Pelagians up to the age of thirty. The Englishman does not cease to be a Pelagian even after that age.

Again it is precisely this stress on divine action that causes the apocalyptic writers to represent events as happening instantaneously, and the end of the world as being immediate. To the Jewish mind every act of God must be instantaneous. He speaks and it is done. Even here we may find a truth of lasting value. Largely owing to our modern scientific outlook we are apt to pay exclusive attention to gradual evolution, to slow processes of development, and to emphasize the thought of continuity. Apocalyptic by its very exaggeration calls attention to the other side of the truth. In history there is not only slow growth and development, but sudden upheavals and catastrophes, the emergence of the new and unexpected. Nor are the two ideas in any necessary contradiction to each other. Often what appears a sudden catastrophe has been secretly and silently prepared for over long periods. The cliff falls in a moment, but the fall is only the declaration of the inevitable result of long processes of disintegration that have been going on for years. So in the moral and spiritual world what appears at first sight cataclysmic is often but the disclosure of what has been slowly accumulating. As the Gospel of St. John shows, the idea of final judgement is fully compatible with the idea of present judgement. The final doom is but the showing up in the light of God of differences that already exist. At the same time Christianity is committed to a belief in the supernatural, in the sense of belief that the full range of existence is not revealed to our senses. There is a spiritual order beyond and behind this present visible order. If so, then there must be at least the possibility of the breaking through of this supernatural order into the present visible order, with the result that there emerges some act or event that could not have been predicted, some utterly fresh happening. Apocalyptic stresses the existence and the influence of the unseen. If it peoples the invisible order with concrete

beings, good and bad, it at least brings home its reality and importance. If, to the modern mind, the unseen world is often uninteresting, that is partly because it appears an empty world. Nor is there anything in the least unreasonable in holding that human beings are not the only rational creatures in the universe.

Again, Apocalyptic brings out the real and vital difference between good and evil. It emphasizes the truth that even if the universe in its perfection exists ideally in the mind of God, it is far from being realized actually as yet in the time process. Its full attainment depends on what is to come. To us who live in space and time, perfection is to be found not in the present, but in the future. The present is to be used in order to forward it. Thus Apocalyptic is an antidote to that pantheistic or idealistic view of the world which holds that it is the present world that is perfect, if only we can look at it in the right way. A purely intellectual outlook tends to blur the distinction between good and evil, and so to destroy any hope of an effectual dealing with evil. Apocalyptic, just because it treats the difference between right and wrong as real, holds out the hope that God has the power of conquering evil and overruling it to the fulfilment of His divine purpose of love. The apparent pessimism of Apocalyptic, as it surveys the present order, is the very ground of an ultimate optimism. This world is not yet the world that God wills it to be.

Lastly Apocalyptic is accused of being otherworldly. That is true, but the charge only disproves the worth of Apocalyptic if all forms of otherworldliness are to be condemned. In the teaching of Christ the apocalyptic expectations are in no way in conflict with present duties. Christ accepted life in this present world and was interested in this world as it now is. There is no suggestion that there is to be any sudden and violent change in men's characters and actions. Rather this life is the testing-ground for a life which is to attain its fullness hereafter. The gentler side of Christ's teaching is not inconsistent with the stern insistence on ultimate issues. So too in St. Paul, eschatology does not weaken but strengthen the call to present sanctification. Life is to be lived here and now as by those who will have to give an account of it. But the temptation to shirk the ordinary tasks of the present age is sharply rebuked. Christians are to be better citizens, better workmen, better servants because they have already tasted the powers of the age to come, and look for its consummation. So too history proves that men are able to make a better contribution to the present world-order if they sit lightly to it and if their true hope lies beyond. To be wholly absorbed in this world is to miss its true meaning. A right otherworldliness is the condition of the truest success and the wisest use of this world. Thus a Christian Apocalyptic promotes that sound and healthy otherworldliness which is the truest wisdom.

(See Hogg, *Redemption from this World*; von Hügel, *Essays and Addresses*, First Series, v; Bevan, *Hellenism and Christianity*, iv, v, and xxi.)

Additional Note on the cult of the Kabeiroi at Thessalonica.

Thessalonica was one of the centres of the mystery-cult of the Kabeiroi. Lightfoot (*Biblical Essays*, pp. 257-8) argued that there is a definite allusion to the rites of this cult, where St. Paul deprecates any connexion between his gospel and uncleanness. This is, however, doubtful.

The origin of the Kabeiroi mysteries is obscure. Their original home was the island of Samothrace. The name Kabeiroi is non-Hellenic. It is commonly explained by being equated with a Semitic word meaning 'mighty ones'. From this it has been argued that their worship was an importation from Phoenicia. This, however, is open to dispute. Herodotus says that they were of Pelasgic origin. And the descriptive title may well have been given by Phoenician traders to the divinities that were already being worshipped. The earliest evidence of their worship is to be found in shrines belonging to the sixth century B.C. excavated in Samothrace and Thebes in Boeotia, proving that by that date the cult had spread to Greece, perhaps via Lemnos. The remains suggest that the Kabeiroi were divinities of the underworld, probably connected with fertilization, with the ideas of birth and death, and with ghosts. It may well have been that the title of 'mighty ones' was given to them because they were vague and indefinite in number and character. At a later date they are represented as either two or three: if two, an older and a younger god, if three with the addition of a goddess, a female earth-spirit, subordinate to the male pair. The ritual appears to have developed by the absorption of alien elements and to have borrowed much in the way of belief and organization from the mysteries of Eleusis. The Kabeiric mysteries became popular among the Athenians in the time of the Peloponnesian war. They won their way in Macedonia, and the patronage of Philip and Alexander made them influential in the Mediterranean. At a later date, aided by the fiction that Rome was founded by fugitives from Troy and that the Kabeiroi were Trojan deities brought by the founders of Troy from Samothrace, they attracted the interest of Rome. About the time of St. Paul, the Emperor was deified as a Kabeiros. The worship was still maintained in the fourth century A.D. There can be no doubt therefore that the Apostle was aware of its existence.

If we ask for details about their cult in his time, they cannot be supplied. An attempt was made to Hellenize them by identifying them with Castor and Pollux, the saviours from the dangers of the sea. Others identified them with Jupiter, Mercury, and Minerva, a proof of the indefiniteness of their character. Often they were confused with the Kouretes and Korybantes. This confusion led to the transference to the Kabeiroi of a story of the murder of one of the Korybantes by his brethren. Firmicus, a Christian writer of the fourth century, writes: 'This is the Kabeiros to whom the men of Thessalonica offered prayers with bloodstained hands.' But it is very doubtful whether this was really part of the genuine Kabeiric religion, unless it had borrowed from the murder of Dionysus.

An inscription, if a probable but not certain restoration is accepted, bears witness to some kind of sacred meal. There are allusions to a sacred dance. It is reasonable to suppose that some kind of holy drama was performed, which would probably be connected with some promise of a future life. Beyond this all is conjecture.

There is no direct evidence that in the worship of the Kabeiroi 'immorality shielded itself under the protection of religion', as Lightfoot asserted, or of 'foul orgies'. The accusation is plausible. In all nature-cults obscene imagery is common. There is evidence of images of Kabeiroi which, like the idols of India, offend our ideas of decency. But of more than this we have no proof. On the other hand it is interesting to learn that some form of the confessional made its first appearance among the priests of the Kabeiroi in Samothrace, and that we have the express testimony of Diodorus Siculus that 'those who had partaken in these mysteries became more pious and more just, and in every respect better than their past selves'. Such witness is unique.

We might have expected that if hope of salvation and a glorious future life was a part of their teaching, there would have been some reference to it when St. Paul was dealing with the problem of Christians who had died. Yet he speaks of pagans without distinction as those 'who have no hope'.

(On the Kabeiroi see the article by Dr. Farnell in *Hastings, E.R.E.*: on the mystery-cults in general the essay by Nock in *Essays on the Incarnation and the Trinity.*)

CHAPTER V

(e) *In view of the suddenness of that advent there is the need of watchfulness, 1-11.*

V. 1 But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that aught be written unto you. 2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. 3 When they are saying, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall in no wise escape. 4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you ¹as a thief: 5 for ye are all sons of light, and sons of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness; 6 so then let us not sleep, as do the rest, but let us watch and be sober. 7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. 8 But let us, since we are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet,

¹ Some ancient authorities read *as thieves*.

the hope of salvation. 9 For God appointed us not unto wrath, but unto the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, that, whether we ¹wake or sleep, we should live together with him. 11 Wherefore ²exhort one another, and build each other up, even as also ye do.

¹ Or, *watch*.

² Or, *comfort*.

We have spoken of the Lord's coming. As to the times and crises that will precede it, there is no need for any further writing. For you yourselves are already fully informed, that the day of the Lord comes as unexpectedly as a thief in the night. When men are saying 'All is well' and 'All is secure', then sudden ruin overtakes them, as labour overtakes a woman with child, and there is no possible escape. But you, brothers, are no longer creatures of darkness so that that day should surprise you as daylight surprises thieves. For you are all akin to the light and the great day of light. We do not belong to night or darkness. So then let us not like the rest of the world be asleep, but on the watch and alert. For it is at night that sleepers sleep and drunkards are drunken. But let us, as belonging to the day, be alert, clad with the breastplate of faith and love and with the hope of salvation as a helmet. For God did not appoint us for wrath, but for the winning of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died on our behalf, that whether we are awake in life or sleep in death, we should live in fellowship with him. Therefore comfort one another and build up one another, as indeed you do.

1. *times and seasons*. Strictly speaking the first of these two words denotes quantity, the second quality: the first refers to the length of time that must elapse, the second to the critical periods. But in Hellenistic usage the distinction is hardly observed and the phrase has become a popular eschatological expression to describe the future (cp. Acts i. 7).

no need. In the previous section St. Paul had addressed himself to their ignorance, here he addresses himself to their knowledge. His aim is not to impart new truth, but to insist on the practical consequences of the truth that they already possess. A belief in the coming of Christ should lead not to restlessness, but to watchfulness and moral earnestness.

2. *perfectly*. Literally, 'accurately'. He has nothing to correct or supplement in their knowledge. The allusion is probably to the teaching of Christ recorded in Lk. xii. 39 (=Mt. xxiv. 43), and therefore derived from Q. The same figure is used Rev. iii. 3; xvi. 15; II Pet. iii. 10.

the day of the Lord is an Old Testament phrase which first appears in Amos v. 18. Its use there shows that it was already a popular term. It seems originally to have meant a day in which Jehovah manifested His power by giving victory to His people Israel in battle, and may have originated in connexion with some famous victory. Israel looked forward to an even greater day of Jehovah when He would once for all give

them victory over their foes. Amos corrects this expectation by affirming that it would be a day of judgement not on their enemies, but on Israel. The general idea is frequent in later prophecies, and the picture is filled out with apocalyptic details. The phrase itself does not occur in the recorded teaching of Christ, but we find 'the day of judgement' (Mt. xii. 36; x. 15; xi. 22, 24) and 'that day' (Lk. x. 12, cp. II Thess. i. 10). In St. Paul it reappears, evidently as a current phrase, since it has no definite article, but the Lord is now identified with the historical Jesus, and it may equally be entitled 'the day of Christ' (Phil. i. 10; ii. 16) again without the article. In I Cor. iv. 3 'day' by itself is used in the sense of judgement or verdict, 'man's judgement' (R.V.) is literally 'man's day'.

in the night is a detail added in the present passage. It may be borrowed from the Jewish expectation that the Messiah would come at midnight.

3. *they*. The contrast with the *ye* of the following verse shows that unbelievers are meant. The teaching that the advent will be sudden, and yet that believers will be able to discern signs of its approach, involves no contradiction. The signs are there, but only for those who have eyes to see, and the will to watch.

With the general substance of this passage cp. Lk. xxi. 34-6. Cp. also Lk. xvii. 26 ff. (=Mt. xxiv. 37 ff.). *Peace and safety* is an echo of Ezek. xiii. 10; Jer. vi. 14; viii. 11.

destruction. The word implies ruin rather than annihilation. It

is the antithesis to salvation, and carries with it not so much the cessation of existence as banishment from the presence of Christ which alone makes life worth living. Cp. II. i. 9, where the destruction is eternal and connected with separation from Christ.

travail. The point of the comparison is not the suffering as in Is. lxvi. vii; Jn. xvi. 21, nor the certainty of its arrival, but the suddenness.

4-6. In these verses St. Paul passes quickly from one idea to another. The *day* primarily meant the time of judgement, but it carries with it the idea of enlightenment. It is also the time of wakefulness and activity and all honest pursuits. On the other hand, darkness goes with ignorance and sloth and drunkenness. So in verse 4 he rapidly readapts his metaphors, according to the more probable text. Christians are now contrasted with thieves (R.V. mg.), who are essentially lovers of darkness and are in no way prepared to welcome the dawn of day which will betray their activities. And this leads on in the next verse to the thought that Christians by their very nature have affinity to the *light*. They have nothing to conceal. Their minds are alert and enlightened so as to welcome the fuller light that the great day will bring. *Sons of* is a regular Hebrew form of expression, but neither *sons of light* nor *sons of the day* are found outside the New Testament (cp. Lk. xvi. 8; Jn. xii. 36; and for the general idea, Eph. v. 8).

In verse 6 the thought is carried on to the next stage, Christians

show their kinship to the light by wakefulness and soberness. The point of the first metaphor is clear. The man of the world appears to be very much awake, but in reality he is often asleep to the highest things, and so when his present environment is catastrophically transformed he will be caught unprepared. Like a man asleep he is unaware of the signs of this transformation. The exact meaning of the second metaphor is doubtful. Drunkenness may imply either stupor, or excitement. So soberness may imply either that the senses are undulled by drink, or quietness of mind.

7. Simply develops the fittingness of the metaphor. Night is the time when these things are done.

8. The three Christian virtues appear again. The close bond between faith and love is emphasized. The train of thought is probably this. It is not enough to be on the alert, we must also be ready to fight against enemies that assail us. 'Perhaps the mention of vigilance suggested the idea of a sentry armed and on duty' (Lightfoot). The same connexion of thought appears in Rom. xiii. 12-13 and the metaphor is worked out more fully in Eph. vi. 13-17, where it is plainly based on the picture of God Himself as a warrior given in Is. lix. 17. The details are also different, except that there is, as here, the helmet of hope.

9. Here we find the ground of hope, namely the purpose of God to bestow salvation, of which the call into the visible Church is the pledge.

died for us. The bestowal of salvation is definitely connected

not simply with the human example, or the teaching, but with the death of Christ as followed by the resurrection, the reference to which is implicit in the next verse. The precise connexion between the Cross and the obtaining of salvation is not further defined. Indeed the few and scanty references to the death of Christ in these two Epistles, especially as compared with Galatians, is remarkable. The explanation doubtless is that there were no misunderstandings or disputes connected with this part of the Apostle's teaching. There was no need to develop it in writing to this particular Church. It is plain from I Cor. xv. 3-4 that the death and its relation to sin always had a foremost place in his preaching. Here the language is quite vague. He died on our behalf. The Thessalonians would fill out the conception from their memory of the fuller teaching.

obtaining. The Greek word can be used both in an active and in a passive sense. The active, obtaining or acquiring, is here almost certainly right. If used in a passive sense, we should have to translate 'For the adoption, consisting of salvation'. Stress being laid on God's obtaining possession of us. But this is less natural. St. Paul passes on to the source of salvation in the following words.

10. *wake or sleep* are here used in a metaphorical sense that differs from that of the earlier verses. They here simply mean life and death. There is no moral reference.

Live. The words imply that the risen and living Christ is the source of true life to all Christians. St. Paul never assigns salvation to the

Cross taken in abstraction. Christ saves us by what He is, not simply by what He once did, though it is no less true that He is all that He now is because He has died.

11. *comfort* (R.V. mg.) is preferable to *exhort*, though the Greek word equally means either. It continues the exhortation of iv. 18 (cp. verse 10 which reverts to the old topic) where *comfort* is the more in accordance with the context. Now St. Paul adds a further appeal. 'Do not simply use the thought of the coming of Christ as a ground of comfort, but as a motive for building up character.'

Just as St. Paul prepared the way for exhortations that contain an undertone of rebuke by passing into the first person in verse 5, so now he adds a note of encouragement by hastening to assure them that they are already doing what he wishes. In all this paragraph he has in mind the low moral standards of the heathen world to which converts were always being tempted to fall back. Only corporate endeavour and a Christian public opinion could keep up the moral tone. Hence the need for mutual assistance.

(f) *Miscellaneous injunctions to order, unity, and holy living, 12-22.*

12 But we beseech you, brethren, to know them that labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; 13 and to esteem them exceeding highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves. 14 And we exhort you, brethren, admonish the disorderly, encourage the fainthearted, support the weak, be longsuffering toward all. 15 See that none render unto any one evil for evil; but always follow after that which is good, one toward another, and toward all. 16 Rejoice always; 17 pray without ceasing; 18 in everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus to you-ward. 19 Quench not the Spirit; 20 despise not prophesyings; 21 ¹prove all things; hold fast that which is good; 22 abstain from every ²form of evil.

¹ Many ancient authorities insert *but*.

² Or, *appearance*.

But we beseech you, brothers, learn to appreciate those who toil among you, who preside over you and exercise discipline, not of their own choice, but at the call of the Lord. Esteem such very highly, in a spirit not of criticism, but of love, because of the work which they are doing. Live in peace with one another. And we exhort you, brethren, help to discipline the loafers, encourage the despondent, lay hold of the weak, be patient towards all men. See that no one pay back evil for evil to any one. But always aim at kindness towards one another and towards unbelievers. Always be full

of joy. Never cease from prayer. Whatever comes, give thanks. For this is God's will respecting you as sharers of the very life of Christ Jesus. Never quench the fire of the Spirit. Do not make light of prophesyings. Test all things. Hold fast that which is good. Abstain from every kind of evil.

The connexion of thought with the previous passage is the duty of mutual edification. While this is a responsibility shared by all Christians, a special measure of responsibility belongs to the officers of the community, and they must be assisted in fulfilling their duties by the sympathy and co-operation of all members.

12. *know* and *esteem* (in the next verse) are neutral words, but in the context they acquire a favourable meaning, which in the case of *esteem* is helped out by the addition of *exceeding highly*. So *know* here means know so as to see their true character and recognize their worth. Cp. the similar use of another word for 'know' in I Cor. xvi. 18, and the note on iv. 4.

them . . . admonish you. In the Greek the fact that the article is not repeated shows that a single class of men is intended. They are clearly the officials of the local Church. Probably they were presbyters. Acts xiv. 23 is evidence that it was St. Paul's custom to ordain elders in every Church, even though they had been recently founded. Phil. i. 1 shows that at a slightly later date the Church at Philippi possessed bishops (i.e. presbyter-bishops) and deacons. Similar language is used of the duties of presbyters in I Tim. v. 17. All local communities must have possessed officials of some kind, but here, as elsewhere, the writers of the New Testament are more

concerned with the practical duties that they fulfilled than with the precise titles of their office. Labour is a general term. As used here it does not contrast the 'workers' with the 'idlers' but rather brings out the element of hard work and self-discipline that ministerial activity involved. St. Paul uses it of his own ministry to bring out the toilsomeness of it (e.g. I Cor. xv. 10). *Are over* or 'preside over' is a word in common use to denote official position. It is found in papyri and inscriptions. The addition *in the Lord* not only distinguishes them from secular officials, but brings out the important truth that they owe their position not to their own ambition, but to the call of Christ and that all their duties are performed in the power of the Spirit. *Admonish* always carries with it a tone of blame. It is in Col. i. 28 joined with instruct, as representing complementary and contrasting duties of ministry. Here it includes the element of discipline. In the early Church as in the mission-field, the very existence of the Christian community demands constant watchfulness on the part of those in authority to see that the Christian standard of life is being maintained.

13. The R.V. is right in attaching *exceeding highly* closely to *esteem* and treating *in love* as a separate adverbial expression, rather than joining it to *esteem*. The exercise of authority is always apt to

provoke resentment. This would especially be the case in such a body as the newly formed Thessalonian Church. Not only were the Macedonians famous for their independence, but the community was all of one class and hence likely to resent the control of those whom they regarded as on an equality with themselves. There was no established tradition of respect for the ministry. Hence natural human resentment at admonition is to be overcome by the positive attitude of love. Those who rebuke are not only to be tolerated, but enthusiastically supported. And the ground is not personal affection, but Christian love which seeks the good of the whole body and above all desires the fulfilment of God's will. Where that love is present in a community discipline will be easy. *For their work's sake* does not mean because they are efficient, or even because they are self-sacrificing, but because the work that they are doing is God's and not their own.

Be at peace. This is not simply a general precept, but refers to the existing situation. It is probable that, as Frame points out, there had been friction between those who had abandoned work and the ministers of the Church, and that the latter had not been always tactful. If such men demanded to be fed at the expense of the Church, they would necessarily come into close contact with those who had charge of the common funds. Hence would easily arise strained relations and the peace of the Church would be disturbed. On the other hand, it is implied that

the ministry should be a centre of unity. Another reading, 'through them', which has strong support, makes this clear. We can only translate it 'Find your peace through them', i.e. by rallying round them.

14. The ancient commentators regard these instructions as addressed to the presbyters, but this is impossible. In a writing, as opposed to a speech, a change of audience must be made plain. *Brethren* must have the same wide meaning as elsewhere in the Epistle. It is tempting to identify the three classes with those who are mentioned already in this Epistle. *The disorderly* would be those who are idle and refuse to labour with their hands (iv. 11-12). The word was originally a military term, 'one who leaves his rank', but had come into general use and probably by this time means simply a 'loafer'. *The faint-hearted* are those who were worried either about the fate of their friends (iv. 13-18) or about their own salvation (v. 9-11). *The weak* means here the morally weak, and refers to those who were tempted to lapse into immorality (iv. 2-8). Throughout there is the strongest stress on the duty of the community to all its members. The maintenance of moral and spiritual health is not the task simply of the individual Christian or of the ministry but of the whole body.

longsuffering. Down to the end of this verse, St. Paul has in mind Christians. Mutual forbearance on the widest scale is necessary if the peace of the body is to be maintained. This *longsuffering* is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. v.

22), and follows from love (I Cor. xiii. 4).

15. Again, the community is responsible for maintaining the Christian standard of non-retaliation. Here the appeal is widened so as to include conduct not only towards fellow-Christians, but towards the Jews and heathen. The principle is laid down in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. v. 43-6), and was reinforced by our Lord's own example, which never ceased to fill the early Church with wonder (I Pet. ii. 21-4). It is asserted at greater length in Rom. xii. 17-19. In all its fullness it is a distinctively Christian precept, and at variance with the ordinary standards of pagan society. The nearest approach to it in the Old Testament is Prov. xxv. 21-2. Mention is made of the duty of the energetic

pursuit of good, not only to Christians but to those outside, because of the special circumstances. Under the bitter persecution that they had experienced, it would have been only natural for Christians to attempt to pay back their persecutors. And if this was impossible, there was a danger that the feeling of resentment, once roused, should be vented on fellow Christians. The safeguard against this was to be absorbed in positive loving-kindness.

good may here mean either (1) beneficial, helpful as opposed to evil, which here means what hurts or harms; (2) what is ethically good, the moral ideal, which here is practically equivalent to love. He might have said, follow after love (Frame), cp. I Cor. xiv. 1.

St. Paul has been speaking of the new and supernatural longsuffering which Christians are called to exhibit. He now passes on naturally to the spiritual life itself. The whole of this section hangs together. It all deals with life in the Spirit. We shall never understand the apparently impossibly high standard of the opening verses, unless we recognize that the life described is a frankly supernatural life. It is God's will, but only for those who are living as members of Christ, that is, in the power of the Spirit. It is the reproduction in Christians of the very life of Christ Himself. It is not simply a human achievement, or the imitation of Christ. It is assumed that Christians have been lifted up to a new level by the gift of the Spirit. They are in the phrase of Ephesians 'in the heavenlies' and are therefore bidden to exhibit a heavenly life. Then in verse 19 St. Paul easily passes from that heightening of the moral and spiritual life which is the normal work of the Spirit, and none the less supernatural because normal, to the more occasional and, from the worldly point of view, more striking gifts, such as those discussed in I Cor. xiv. These included speaking with tongues, that is, ecstatic utterances to which no meaning could be attached, but which were simply a by-product of spiritual excitement that inhibited the usual control by the brain: also prophecy, that is, the delivery in an ecstatic state of intelligible messages which approved themselves to the community as being in a real sense the word of the Lord. Christian prophets played a leading part in the life and worship of the primitive Church.

The warning against discouraging or underrating these real gifts of the Spirit is tempered by the consideration that the utterances even of those who claim to be inspired need to be tested by the reason and conscience of the community which is no less filled with the Spirit.

16. *rejoice*. The joy to which they are exhorted even amidst persecution and suffering is no merely natural joy. It is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. v. 22; Rom. xiv. 17; cp. Acts ii. 46). It is in no way incompatible with loss and suffering (Acts v. 41; Rom. v. 3; II Cor. vi. 10). In his letter to the other Macedonian Church he not only exhorts them to rejoice, but practises joy himself even in prison, when outward circumstances might well have caused discouragement (Phil. i. 4, 18; iv. 4, 10, &c.). This joy even in the midst of pain and persecution was one of the great marks of primitive Christianity, which amazed the heathen world, and attracted men to Christ.

17. A second precept parallel to the first, and not merely teaching how to win power to fulfil the first: cp. Rom. xii. 12; Col. iv. 2; Eph. vi. 18. But the present injunction really goes deeper than these passages. It bids Christians not simply be regular in their prayers, but lift up their whole life to the prayer level. When we realize that the essential nature of prayer is not asking for anything, or even the use of words, but rather the ascent of the soul to God, we see what this injunction means. 'Work is prayer' is the converse to the saying 'prayer is work'. Ideally the will of the Christian should be so wholly united to God's will, that whatever he is doing he is in fullest union with God.

18. *in everything* means more than on every occasion: it means 'whatever happens', including persecution. The word for give thanks is that from which eucharist is derived. The Christian's life is to be an unceasing eucharist. St. Paul's Epistles are full of exhortations to thanksgiving, e.g. Col. iii. 17; Eph. v. 20; Phil. iv. 6. Such thanksgiving is a recognition of the sovereignty of God: II Cor. iv. 15; ix. 11-12.

this . . . you-ward. The clause probably refers to all three foregoing injunctions, and not only to the last. It gives the ground of belief that such exalted spiritual life is possible for ordinary Christians. It is God's will that that they should practise it. *In Christ Jesus* means far more than 'made clear by the example of Christ Jesus' (Rutherford). Christ is for the Christian not only a pattern, but the indwelling source of life. In the human life of Jesus these ideals received fulfilment, and, through the Spirit, the very life of Jesus is to become the life of Christians.

19. *quench*. Clearly the Spirit, who has been in St. Paul's mind in the previous verses, is pictured under the symbol of fire, as on the day of Pentecost. It represents both His illuminating and His lifegiving power. Some at least at Thessalonica were inclined to discourage the exercise of some of His gifts, probably speaking with tongues, which might easily lead to disorder, as at Corinth. The

situation was exactly the opposite to that at Corinth, where St. Paul had to rebuke the overestimation of the more startling gifts as compared with those that ministered more fully to the moral and spiritual life of the community. Here the danger was that enthusiasm might be unduly checked. As he admits in I Corinthians, such gifts were at least evidence of the religious fervour of those who displayed them. One of the great differences between Christianity and the ethnic religions lay here. In them the evidence of the Spirit was pre-eminently to be found in abnormal states and phenomena. In Christianity the evidence of the Holy Spirit was supremely seen in the deepening of the normal moral and spiritual life, as in verses 16-18. At the same time St. Paul also expected abnormal manifestations of the presence of the Holy Spirit, and these though subordinate were to be treated as real. Frame supposes that some of the idlers had asked for money, claiming to be led by the Spirit. He quotes a parallel from the *Didache* (xi. 1-12): 'Whosoever says in the Spirit: Give me silver or anything else, ye shall not hearken to him.' This is possible, but if so, we should have expected St. Paul's warnings to be more explicit.

20. *prophecyings*. The essential nature of these in the New as in the Old Testament was the declaration of God's will. Needless to say, the proof of inspiration, as the next verse suggests, lies in the content of the message, not in the psychological state in which it was received or uttered. The test of the value of a prophecy, that it

really comes from God and is not the product of the man's own mind, is its lasting appeal to the corporate mind and conscience of the religious community.

21-2. Do these verses lay down a general principle, or are they to be taken in close connexion with what has preceded, so as to apply only to the deliverances of those who claim to be prophets? Probably the truth lies between these two views. St. Paul asserts a principle of the widest application, but in the context it refers specially to the testing of prophecyings. It is important to observe that the aim of this testing is not mere criticism, which would come very near to the despising which is condemned, but the holding fast of the good.

form. The Greek word, *eidos*, has several shades of meaning. It was employed in a technical philosophical sense for 'species' as opposed to 'genera', and in a vaguer popular sense for 'kind'. It is true that this use of the word is not found in the New Testament elsewhere, but it occurs in Josephus and the papyri, and is probably the meaning here. In other places in the New Testament (e.g. II Cor. v. 7, R.V. mg.) it means appearance, in the sense of 'visible form' or 'outward show'. It conveys no idea of unreality. If this sense is adopted here, it must be translated as R.V. margin, or 'from every visible appearance of evil'. The translation of A.V. is definitely wrong. The word for good is literally 'beautiful', and was the technical term in Greek philosophy for the moral ideal regarded as good in itself. There

is probably also an allusion to the well-known principle laid down in Aristotle's *Ethics*, that while the good is one, evil is manifold. This appeal to Greek phraseology supports the view that the principle is of general application. Further, many early Christian writers connect these verses with the traditional saying of our Lord, which

has good claim to be considered genuine: 'Show yourselves approved money-changers.' They would carry the metaphor from coinage right through the interpretation. In that case we might render with Rutherford 'Assay all things thereby', i.e. by the Spirit, 'Stick to the true metal; have nothing to do with the base'.

D. FINAL PRAYER, SALUTATION, AND BLESSING vv. 23-8

23 And the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame at the ¹coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Faithful is he that calleth you, who will also do it. 25 Brethren, pray for us². 26 Salute all the brethren with a holy kiss. 27 I adjure you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the ³brethren. 28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

¹ Gr. *presence*.

² Some ancient authorities add *also*.

³ Many ancient authorities insert *holy*.

May God give you His peace that He alone can give and sanctify you through and through. May your whole man, spirit, soul, and body, be guarded intact, so as to be without blemish at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful. He will fulfil His work. Brothers, pray for us. Give my salutation to the brethren, one and all, with a kiss of Christian fellowship. I adjure you, in the Lord's name, that this letter be read aloud to the brethren, one and all. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

The connexion of thought is that without the grace of God, all striving will be in vain. The title the God of peace is not found in the Old Testament and occurs in St. Paul and in Hebrews towards the close of a letter. It gains here special point from the exhortations to love and unity which have preceded, but must not be limited to peace within the community. It also includes the thought of that peace of soul which God alone can bestow.

wholly. It is doubtful whether this adjective (*holoteleis*) is to be taken qualitatively in a proleptic sense 'so that you may be perfect',

or quantitatively 'wholly', 'in every part of you'. Nor is there any very clear distinction to be drawn between this adjective and the

word translated *entire*. The latter denotes the presence of all the parts. In the LXX it is used of unhewn stone, and in Jewish writers like Philo and Josephus, of wholeness required in priests and victims for sacrifice, according to the Law. Hence it here means probably 'in their entirety', 'intact'. It is quantitative rather than qualitative. The use of *sanctify* may show that the idea of Christians as living sacrifices was in St. Paul's mind. All Christians are in virtue of their calling and baptism 'saints', but their consecration has to be worked out in life. And it demands the whole of them.

spirit and soul and body. St. Paul is not giving a lesson in psychology. It is a complete misunderstanding of the nature of the passage to base on it a system of trichotomy, or division of human nature into three parts as opposed to the dichotomy, or division into two parts, which is usually found in the Epistles. What he is concerned with is the preservation and consecration of the whole man. There is an element of rhetoric in his description of the totality of human nature, which marks an interest the very reverse of scientific. He is pouring out of the fullness of his heart a prayer for the converts whom he loves. The only question worth discussing is whether by *spirit* he means a part of man's human nature, or that 'portion' of the Holy Spirit of God which indwells in the believer. The latter is surely absurd. To speak of a 'portion' of the divine Spirit introduces an idea of spatial division which contradicts the

essential nature of Spirit. Nor is it easy to see how the Holy Spirit can in any sense need to be kept entire. Passages like I Cor. ii. 11 and Rom. viii. 16 show that St. Paul assigned to every man, as such, a 'spirit', which indeed might be defiled by sin (II Cor. vii. 1). It is true that at times it is hard to be sure whether St. Paul is speaking of man's spirit as quickened by the Holy Spirit, or of the Holy Spirit as quickening man's spirit, but it is perverse to deny that every man for St. Paul in some sense possesses a 'spirit'.

24. St. Paul is confident that his prayer will be answered, because of the faithfulness of God. To treat such a religious assertion as if it were a scientific or metaphysical assertion which admits of no qualification is to misuse Scripture. A verse like this affords no basis for the Calvinistic view that grace is irresistible, or indefectible. Still less can we argue by a rigid logic that those whom God has not yet called are doomed to loss. Statements of this kind are rather devotional. They are true as far as they go, but they were never intended to be made the basis of rigid deductions.

26. The nature of the command suggests that it is, in the first instance at least, given to the ministers of the Church, who will receive the letter. It means 'Salute all the brethren from me', and corresponds to the greetings that are commonly found at the close of letters in the papyri. We might say 'give so and so a kiss from me'. It may also carry the further suggestion that the kiss is to be a sign of brotherly love among

members of the community. Elsewhere we find 'greet one another with a holy kiss' (Rom. xvi. 16; I Cor. xvi. 20; II Cor. xiii. 12).

The stress laid on *all* here and in the next verse looks back to the divisions of which he has spoken. Even the idlers are not to be excluded from the sign of fellowship. The adjuration further suggests that in commanding his letter to be *read* to the assembled Church, he is initiating a new custom. If so, it is the first stage in the process that led to the formation of the New Testament canon. There may also be in the background the knowledge that some of the disorderly members

had said that they would not listen to any words from the Apostle. The word for *read* almost certainly means 'read aloud'. That indeed was the regular custom of the ancients as is shown in the incident of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts viii. 30).

28. The letter would up to this point be dictated to an amanuensis. Here the Apostle would himself take the pen (cp. II. iii. 17). Ordinary letters ended (as in Acts xv. 29) with some phrase like farewell. St. Paul's habit was to expand it. This is the typical form. In II Cor. xiii. 13 we find the longest form (cp. note on II. iii. 17).

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS

CHAPTER I

A. INTRODUCTION AND THANKSGIVING

(a) *Superscription and blessing, 1-2.*

I. 1 PAUL, and Silvanus, and Timothy, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ; 2 Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy send greeting to the assembly of the Thessalonians that meets in the name and in the life of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We send no formal greeting. May you in very truth enjoy the grace and peace whose source is God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1-2. The salutation is identical with that of the First Epistle, except that the addition of *our* makes clear that the writer has in mind the divine fatherhood in relation to Christians rather than to Christ. The final words *from . . . Christ* are part of the true text here, and make explicit the source

of divine blessing. The Greek makes plain that the Father and Christ are one source. It is remarkable that even at this early date the Son is placed side by side with the Father as the fount of divine grace, without any need of comment.

- (b) *Thanksgiving for their continued growth and endurance, 3-5, leading to (c) Instruction that the coming of Christ will mean the punishment of sinners, but reward for believers, 6-10.*
(d) *Confident prayer that they may attain this, 11-12.*

3 We are bound to give thanks to God alway for you, brethren, even as it is meet, for that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the love of each one of you all toward one another aboundeth; 4 so that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions which ye endure; 5 *which is* a manifest token of the righteous judgement of God; to the end that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer:

6 if so be that it is a righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict you, 7 and to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power 8 in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: 9 who shall suffer punishment, *even* eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might, 10 when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believed (because our testimony unto you was believed) in that day. 11 To which end we also pray always for you, that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfil every ¹desire of goodness and every work of faith, with power; 12 that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

¹ Gr. *good pleasure of goodness.*

In spite of your protestations, we cannot help giving thanks always to God for you,—and well your conduct deserves it,—because in spite of the strain of persecution your faith increases abundantly and the love of every one of you, each towards his fellows, is spreading. The result is that we boast of you in the churches of God, for your steadfastness and faithfulness amid all your persecutions and afflictions which you are still encountering. This faithfulness under persecution is a manifest proof of the divine law of compensation, that you have been deemed worthy of God's heavenly kingdom, on behalf of which you are now suffering. For in the sight of God it is just compensation to requite affliction to those who are afflicting you, and to you, who are being afflicted, rest together with us, when our Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven with his angels of power in flaming fire dispensing punishment on those who ignore God and are disobedient to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, men who shall pay the penalty of lasting destruction banished from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his strength, when he comes to be glorified in his saints and to be marvelled at in all believers—I say 'all' to include you, for you did believe the testimony that we addressed to you,—at that day. For this end, namely your salvation, we as well as you, pray continually on your behalf that the God of us all may count you worthy of the calling that he gave you, and by his power may give you in all perfection a delight in well-doing and an active faith: so that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you and you may be glorified in it; so effectual is the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. *We are bound.* The word in this connexion is only found here and in ii. 13. It is strengthened by the expression *it is meet*, a parallel

phrase to which is found in Phil. i. 7. This last passage, which is one of the most warm-hearted in a warm-hearted epistle, suggests that the expression does not denote any lack of affection. It is a mistake to point to this verse as a proof that St. Paul was adopting a colder and more official tone, or that his feelings had changed. Nor is there any reason to hold that he is using liturgical language. Rather the explanation given by Frame is the most probable. He had received a letter from Thessalonica, in which the faint-hearted deprecated the praise bestowed upon them in the First Epistle. They did not feel themselves to be worthy of the Kingdom, or to be secure in the faith. This temptation to despondency St. Paul will not encourage for one moment. To refuse to recognize their spiritual growth would be to ignore the manifest working of the grace of God. They must be brought to realize that what God had done was a pledge of what He would continue to do. *We are bound* represents the obligation due to God; *it is meet* the obligation due to the Thessalonians themselves. They had not only received grace, but profited by it. Further, the sentence turns away their attention from their desponding selves to the power and purpose of God. Thanksgiving is a tonic, because it lifts the mind away from human imperfection to the wisdom and love of God.

We may also notice that even in this Epistle, where faults are going to be rebuked, St. Paul is able to appreciate virtues. It is the mark of an immature or perverted mind to pick out and criticize what is

wrong, but to ignore what is good and right. Power of appreciation is a real test of character.

As compared with the thanksgiving in the First Epistle, the new points are the rapid growth in faith and love, and his boasting on their behalf before men. There is no explicit mention of hope, but 'the endurance of hope' is implied.

4. The addition *ourselves* points to an antithesis of some kind. It may mean 'we, as the founders of the Church, are naturally backward in praising the virtues of our own converts, but your excellencies compel us'; or there may be implicit the contrast with the self-depreciation of the Thessalonians.

The close connexion between *patience and faith* leads some scholars to prefer the translation 'faithfulness'; cp. Gal. v. 22.

5. What is the *manifest token*? Is it the suffering, or the patience under suffering? In favour of the view that it is the suffering itself, reference is made to passages where blessing is pronounced upon suffering or where tribulation is declared to be the condition for entering into the kingdom (e.g. Mt. v. 4; Acts xiv. 22; II Cor. i. 5-7). This may be the meaning here. The fact that they are singled out for exceptional suffering for righteousness' sake by God's permission proves that they are being fitted for entrance into His kingdom. But, on the whole the other interpretation fits the context better. The fact that by endurance they are able to make their sufferings fruitful is the evidence that God has not forsaken them, but is preparing them for His kingdom.

counted worthy of the kingdom is an adaptation of the common Rabbinic expression 'to be worthy of the future æon'.

6. *if so be*. The Greek expression does not imply any doubt about the righteousness of God's judgement. It is rather the very certainty of it that makes St. Paul argue from it, as it were, conditionally. And this Greek word, wherever it is found in the New Testament, always implies a true hypothesis, 'Assuming that'. At first sight the passage seems to imply that the divine justice is based on a mere *ius talionis* (cp. Lk. xvi. 5). This is far from being the case. The divine judgement is not arbitrary. It does not change men, but shows them to be what they have made themselves. In the new environment those who have fitted themselves to share its blessings are able to enjoy them, those who have not are automatically excluded. The whole basis is moral.

This section 6-10 is not only abounding in phrases taken from the Old Testament, but falls readily into metre. There is no ground for the conjecture that it is an interpolation. It might be a quotation from, or adaptation of, a Jewish psalm, or even a Christian hymn. More probably it is the composition of St. Paul himself in a state of spiritual exaltation. It is an example of the kind of utterances that Christian prophets produced in church assemblies. The description is made up of language and imagery taken from the Old Testament and common in Jewish Apocalyptic. But we have to observe not only what is affirmed but what is omitted. Unnecessary

details are absent. There is no attempt to depict the punishment of the wicked. The material symbolism is largely spiritualized.

7. *revelation*. Literally, 'apocalypse'. The word denotes the unveiling of what already exists, though hitherto it has been concealed wholly or in part. The idea is common in St. Paul. The final unveiling of God's purpose for the world will culminate in the coming of Christ.

from heaven. The idea is that the glorified Jesus is now waiting in full Messianic glory in heaven, to be revealed in the due time (cp. Acts iii. 21).

angels of his power means more than 'his mighty angels' (A.V.). The phrase 'angels of power' occurs in Jewish apocryphal literature. Originally angels are a sign of the presence of divine majesty. The addition 'of power' emphasizes the idea that they are the executors of the divine will. Here, it is to be noted, they belong to the Lord Jesus. They are His angels. Their presence demonstrates His might and authority.

8. *in flaming fire*, if taken with the remainder of the verse, suggests that the fire is the instrument of punishment. If, however, the words are taken with the previous verse, it refers to the brilliance of the revelation. Others unite both interpretations. The revelation is itself an intolerable torment to the wicked.

The Greek makes it plain that they *that know not God* and they *that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus*, are two classes and not one. It is less certain who the two classes are. Possibly the

unbelieving heathen, and the unbelieving Jews respectively. Both united in persecuting the Christians. But St. Paul's general teaching is that the heathen have within their reach a knowledge of God (e.g. Rom. ii). So the first phrase cannot mean heathen as such, but only those who reject the light of natural religion. And the second phrase would include both heathen and Jews who had rejected the Gospel when it was presented to them.

9. *from the face* might mean 'by reason of the face', but more probably means 'separated from the face'. The sentence sums the Christian doctrine of hell. Heaven is primarily the presence of God. Hell is the loss of that presence (Heb. xii. 14). It is the loss of that for which man was made and in which alone he can find true satisfaction, and which he can attain only through Christ.

10. The change in the balance of the sentence should be noticed. Christ is *glorified in his saints*, that is not simply among, or through, but in the person of His saints, here clearly holy men, who reflect as in a mirror His glory. So the Father is glorified in the Son (Jn. xiii. 31; xiv. 13; cp. Heb. i. 3). Also His attributes are displayed in *all* believers, to the wonder of the angels. But the word *all* is inserted, and explained in the parenthesis, because the writer wishes to bring in the new thought that the believers include even those Thessalonians who were timid about the reality of their faith. He assures them there is no doubt that they did accept the Gospel.

The Greek of the parenthesis is difficult. If the reading of the overwhelming majority of the MSS. is accepted, the R.V. gives the only possible sense, which fits the context very well. But the preposition translated *unto* would naturally have a hostile sense. Some commentators therefore prefer a conjecture which has the support of two cursives and by the change of two letters reads 'was confirmed towards you'.

11. The whole verse looks towards the future. The counting *worthy* refers to the day of judgement. The *calling*, even if it looks back to the past, to the time of their conversion to Christianity, also includes the idea of future blessedness, to be enjoyed by all who are faithful to the initial call. St. Paul certainly held that believers might fall from grace and prove unworthy of their calling. The actual process by which they are to be perfected is described in the next clause, namely delight in well-doing and actual performance of good works. *With power* goes closely with *fulfil*, by the exercise of the divine power.

12. In the Old Testament the *name* of the Lord is a periphrasis for the Lord, meaning practically His character, all that He has shown Himself to be. So here it denotes all that Jesus is in the estimate of Christians, that is Messiah and Lord (Acts ii. 36; v. 41; Phil. ii. 9-11; Eph. i. 21). The relation between Christians and Christ is reciprocal. They too receive glory in virtue of what He has done for them. Cp. Jn. xvii. 1, 10, 21-6.

CHAPTER II

B. THE CHIEF SUBJECT OF THE LETTER, ANTICHRIST MUST COME BEFORE THE FINAL COMING OF CHRIST, THEREFORE THE DAY OF THE LORD IS NOT YET PRESENT

(a) *The faint-hearted must not be troubled by suggestions that they are living in the Day of the Lord. Its coming must be preceded by the appearance of Antichrist who is at present restrained, but who will be destroyed by the Lord Jesus, 1-12.*

II. 1 Now we beseech you, brethren, ¹touching the ²coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him; 2 to the end that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled, either by spirit, or by word, or by epistle as from us, as that the day of the Lord is *now* present; 3 let no man beguile you in any wise: for *it will not be*, except the falling away come first, and the man of ³sin be revealed, the son of perdition, 4 he that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or ⁴that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the ⁵temple of God, setting himself forth as God. 5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? 6 And now ye know that which restraineth, to the end that he may be revealed in his own season. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work: ⁶only *there is* one that restraineth now, until he be taken out of the way. 8 And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord ⁷Jesus shall ⁸slay with the breath of his mouth, and bring to nought by the manifestation of his ²coming; 9 *even he*, whose ²coming is according to the working of Satan with all ⁹power and signs and lying wonders, 10 and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that are perishing; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11 And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie: 12 that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

¹ Gr. *in behalf of*.

² Gr. *presence*.

³ Many ancient authorities read *lawlessness*.

⁴ Gr. *an object of worship*.

⁵ Or, *sanctuary*.

⁶ Or, *only until he that now restraineth be taken &c.*

⁷ Some ancient authorities omit *Jesus*.

⁸ Some ancient authorities read *consume*.

⁹ Gr. *power and signs and wonders of falsehood*.

But we entreat you, brethren, concerning the 'coming' of our Lord Jesus Christ and our 'muster' before him, that you be not hastily cast adrift from your sober sense, or perturbed by any prophecy, or message, or letter purporting to come from us, announcing that the 'day of the Lord' has arrived. Let no one delude you by any kind of stratagem into this belief. For the Lord will not come till 'the apostasy' first take place and 'the man of sin' be revealed, 'the Lost one' who opposes and exalts himself against every one who is called god, or every object of worship, actually taking his seat in the temple of God and proclaiming himself to be god. You cannot have forgotten that when I was yet with you, I kept telling you of these things. So then you know 'the power that binds' him, that he may be revealed in his own time, and not before. For 'the secret force of lawlessness' is already operating in the world, but 'the man of sin' will not be revealed openly till 'he that binds' him be removed. Then indeed 'the lawless one' will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his mouth and shall bring to nought by the manifestation of his 'coming'. The 'lawless one', I mean, whose 'coming' is prompted by the operation of Satan, with every kind of lying power and signs and portents, and with every kind of deceitfulness of iniquity for those who are perishing, because they gave no welcome to the love of the true religion which would have saved them. That is why God sends them the deceitful operation of Satan, to the end that they should believe the false religion, that all may be doomed who believed not the true religion, but took pleasure in iniquity.

St. Paul now deals with the main object of the Epistle. He was distressed to hear of moral disorders and spiritual despondency due to a misunderstanding of his previous teaching, and, possibly, to the production of fresh messages claiming his authority. Accordingly he sets to work to cure these evils by removing their cause. The false teaching that the Day of the Lord had already arrived is directly attacked. Such a mistaken view has no authority from him. It directly contradicts the teaching that he had given. In order to emphasize this contradiction, he gives a rapid summary of his previous teaching about the order of events preceding the coming of Christ. Much has yet to happen, which has not happened. Therefore the Day of the Lord cannot be present, and is not to be expected immediately. The restlessness of those who will not work has no justification, nor the despondency of those who cannot reconcile their present position with the advent of Christ. This practical purpose, the removal of misunderstandings and the evil consequences that had followed from them, governs the whole paragraph, and accounts for its obscurity. St. Paul is only repeating sufficient of his past preaching for his present purpose. He is not giving new information, or developing new points. He is simply alluding to the chief features of the apocalyptic expectation which was already current. This explains the many uncertainties of the passage. We have not got the clues that the first readers possessed. They would at once catch the allusions. Not only are the technical terms of popular first-century

apocalyptic teaching strange to our minds, but the exposition of it given here is only partial and presupposes wider knowledge. In any case St. Paul is not attempting to satisfy curiosity about the future, but to deal with an immediate practical problem. He only states the minimum that is sufficient for his purpose. Behind his statement lies a wider and fuller expectation as to the future, shared by him and his converts, the details of which we can only recover in part.

1. *coming* is obviously used in the technical apocalyptic sense. So too is *gathering together*. Ever since the time of Isaiah xi. 11 and xxvii. 13 Israelites had cherished the hope that their brethren who had been led away in captivity or were dispersed in foreign lands would be gathered together into Palestine to share in the glories of the Messianic Kingdom. In II Macc. ii. 7 (cp. ii. 18) the same Greek word is used to describe this happy event, and the verb connected with it is used in Mk. xiii. 27 and Mt. xxiv. 31 for the Son of Man 'gathering together' His elect at the last day. This forms one of the points of connexion between Mk. xiii and this passage. The idea had passed over into Christian Apocalyptic. In Heb. x. 25 the word is used for the ordinary gathering together of Christians on the Lord's Day. It suggests that this was an anticipation of the final assembling at the Day of the Lord.

2. *shaken*. R.V. brings out the metaphor more clearly than A.V. The verb is applied to winds and storms, and the image is one of a ship driven from its moorings.

troubled is a rare word, found also in Mk. xiii. 7 and Mt. xxiv. 6.

as from us. The order and construction of the sentence forbids us to take these words with the verbs shaken and troubled. They must therefore go with one or more of

the preceding substantives. Some take them only with *epistle*, as the punctuation of R.V. implies. This gives a good sense. St. Paul had reason to suspect that a forged epistle was in circulation, claiming to be from him and supporting the false teaching. iii. 17 implies that there was at least the danger of forgery. The allusion cannot be to our First Epistle. Though it insists on the nearness of the coming of the Lord, it cannot be interpreted as teaching that the day is present. But there is nothing in the balance of the sentence to prevent *as from us* going also with *word*. This again gives an easy sense. A report of some discourse of the Apostle, or even message from him, may have been current in a garbled form. But we can hardly stay here. Although *word* and *epistle* are found by themselves in verse 15 below, in the present context *spirit* is added to them, and if two refer to the Apostle, it is most natural to refer the third likewise. But the sense is less obvious to our modern minds. It can hardly be that Thessalonian Christians claimed to have received in the Spirit messages from St. Paul. Rather it must denote some alleged utterance of St. Paul himself in the Spirit. He claimed to possess the gifts of a prophet, and the distinction between spirit and word here is the distinction between an

ecstatic or prophetic utterance and an ordinary discourse or message. We tend to forget the large part that the utterances of prophets in the Spirit played in the life of the early church.

as that. Better 'to wit that' as in II Cor. v. 19. In earlier Greek and elsewhere in LXX and New Testament the phrase means 'as if', and some translate it so here, but the sense is less good and the translation is impossible in the passage in II Cor.

is now present. This is the only possible translation of the Greek. The same verb is commonly used e.g. of the current year. Attempts are made to soften down the translation because of the difficulty of seeing how any one could suppose that the Day of the Lord had actually arrived. The answer is that it means that the period designated by the term day had now dawned and the visible appearance of the Lord might be literally a matter of minutes. The despondent felt that they were inwardly unprepared and the idle saw that no motive remained for work.

3. *in any wise* implies that other means might be used to encourage the delusion.

the falling away is a technical term familiar to St. Paul and his readers, and needing for them no further explanation. In ordinary use it could be used of a political revolt. But in the LXX it is used of rebellion against the Lord (e.g. Josh. xxii. 22; cp. Acts xxi. 21). Specially noticeable is its use in I Macc. ii. 15 for the enforced apostasy to paganism. Henceforward it became a regular term for

the world-wide rebellion against God which was regarded as one of the accompaniments of the end of the present age. It is used in this technical sense here. It must not therefore be limited to any political revolt, as of the Jews against the Romans. Nor does it refer to the unfaithfulness of the Jews to Moses or the Old Covenant, nor to the refusal of the heathen to obey the promptings of natural religion. It is the final catastrophic revolt against the authority of God which in apocalyptic writings is a sign of the end of the world. The precise relation of this religious rebellion on earth to the revolt of Satan in heaven described in Rev. xii. 7 cannot be determined. All that is clear is that it is not to be identified with the mystery of lawlessness in verse 7, because this is already in operation, whereas the apostasy lies still in the future.

the man of sin. The reading is uncertain. Many scholars prefer the reading in R.V. mg., which has strong support, but may possibly be due to the wish to accommodate the title to the words of verses 7 and 8. In any case the meaning is unaffected. The *man of sin* or the man of lawlessness is a Hebraism, and means the man of whom sin or lawlessness is the conspicuous mark. He was a well-known figure in popular expectation, a human being, as the title emphasizes, the incarnation of wickedness. Not Satan himself, from whom he is distinguished in verse 9. He is, so to speak, the Messiah of evil, and all through this passage he is described in language that suggests a parallelism to the true Messiah. Thus the very word *revealed* sug-

gests pre-existence. His appearance is delayed by some force, but he will appear in his own time, just as the Messiah did. He, too, claims exclusive homage and worship and cannot brook a rival. He is endowed with spiritual power and works signs and wonders. He has his own gospel, the *lie* of verse 11 which is contrasted with *the truth* of verses 10 and 12, i.e. the Gospel. In the whole conception Antichrist, to give him the name that best sums up his character, is not only the opponent of Christ, but a counterfeit Christ claiming the allegiance that rightly belongs to Christ. So his relation to Satan parodies that of Christ to the Father.

the son of perdition. Another Hebraism. It means a member of the class that are in process of perishing. The opposite of perdition is salvation. He typifies perdition as Christ typifies salvation.

4. The opening words are an adaptation of the description of Antiochus Epiphanes in the Book of Daniel. 'He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods. . . . Neither shall he regard the gods of his fathers, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all' (xi. 36-7). In adapting the language of this passage St. Paul is careful to insert '*that is called*' in order to guard against the possibility of seeming to regard the gods of the heathen as true gods. The phrase *that is called God* is probably intended to include not only the so-called gods of the heathen (cp. I Cor. viii. 5), but also the one true God.

temple of God. In the context this most naturally means the actual Temple at Jerusalem. This was the scene of the sacrilege of Antiochus, who set up an altar of Zeus in the sanctuary, probably with an image attached, and sacrificed swine upon it. And if the interpretation adopted in the following note is correct, the prophecy preserved in Mk. xiii. 14 expected the appearance of Antichrist in the Temple court. On this the present passage seems to be based. It has been objected that neither Antiochus who set up a heathen altar, nor Caligula who ordered a statue of himself to be set up in the Temple, both of whom are in St. Paul's mind, actually attempted to sit in the sanctuary of God. This, however, is to deal with apocalyptic language in an impossibly literal manner. Both Antiochus and Caligula in some degree claimed divinity, and that is sufficient. Further, they were at worst only partial anticipations of Antichrist, who will carry their blasphemies to their full conclusion. Accordingly we reject the explanation that *the temple* here means the temple of heaven, or that there is a deliberate allusion to the old myth in which the dragon scaled heaven. If any such trait lies in the background, its survival is unconscious. Still less probable is that explanation that the temple of God here means the Church, an interpretation that facilitates the identification of Antichrist with heresy or the Pope. St. Paul speaks of Christians as the temple of God, or of the body as the temple of the Holy Spirit, but he makes his

metaphor perfectly plain. In this passage there is nothing to lead up to it. That this prophecy was not fulfilled exactly in the manner in which St. Paul expected, is no argument against the first interpretation. The same objection applies to the expectation of the immediate return of Christ in glory.

setting himself forth. The word is used in late Greek of nominating or proclaiming to an office. This is probably its meaning here. It includes a public and, as it were, an official claim to be God.

5. There is a touch of impatience in this verse. The misunderstanding is really without excuse. The verse throws light upon the place that such apocalyptic teaching had in the instruction given by St. Paul. It was clearly no occasional or casual detail.

6. *that which restraineth.* The translation and still more the application of this phrase is much disputed. It is to be identified with *one that restraineth now* in verse 7. Here it is neuter, there it is masculine. The conclusion to be drawn is that it signifies some power that may be regarded either as an impersonal force, or as a person, or at least is capable of personification. We may distinguish three general lines of interpretation, each of which includes a different translation of *restraineth*.

(a) Keeping the translation *restraineth*, which is a common meaning of the verb, we may hold that there is a hidden allusion to the Roman Empire. The forces of evil are already at work in the world (verse 7), but their full development in Antichrist is at present

restrained by the power of Rome under the Emperor Claudius. In support of this view we may point to the encouragement and protection afforded to St. Paul at Paphos by the proconsul (Acts xiii) and by his Roman citizenship at Philippi (Acts xvi. 37-9). Soon after writing this Epistle he was acquitted by Gallio at Corinth (Acts xviii. 12-17). All this suggests that at the moment he had every ground for regarding the Roman Empire as well disposed to himself and to Christianity, and as willing to protect him against the hostility both of the Jews and of pagan mobs stirred up by the Jews, in whom he may well have seen evidence of the working of Satan. Further, the very word used, *restraineth*, may be a play upon the name of the reigning emperor Claudius, since *claudio* in Latin means hold back or restrain. So, too, in Rom. xiii the imperial power is mentioned in terms of the highest respect and clearly regarded as favourable to Christianity. If this line of interpretation be adopted, we must suppose that the ambiguous language is partly due to the cryptic style common in apocalypses, partly to the danger of mentioning imperial persons or affairs in a letter that might fall into hostile hands. It is best to interpret the allusion as referring not so much to the Roman Empire in the abstract as to the empire as embodied in Claudius. The recent behaviour of Caligula was not calculated to encourage an indiscriminate reliance on the Empire, and there may already have been suspicions that the reign of Nero might be less auspicious, though we can hardly

suppose that St. Paul intended to hint at the identification of the future emperor with Antichrist. That was an identification to be made in the Revelation of St. John, but it could only be made after the event. The movement for emperor worship did not seriously interfere with Christianity till the time of Domitian, which explains the bitter hostility of Revelation.

(b) A second line of solution is to identify that which *restraineth* with some supernatural agency. Dibelius has collected evidence from apocryphal Christian writings and the Hermetic literature to support the rendering 'detain' or 'hold in bonds', in place of restrain. In a passage from the Acts of Pilate Christ hands over Satan to Hades with the command 'Take him and hold him in bonds till my second coming'. The evidence strongly suggests that some such binding of Satan or Antichrist was a regular feature of this type of literature (cp. Rev. xx. 1-3). On this view Antichrist is at present bound by some friendly power or angel, but in due time will have to be released, in order that all unwittingly he may fill his place in the purposes of God. To attempt to define more closely the power that holds him in bondage is precarious. It cannot be the Holy Spirit, since in time he is to be taken away. It might be somebody like Michael (cp. Dan. x. 13, 20-1), or Elijah. Or St. Paul may have inherited the belief that some angelic power was holding Antichrist in bondage, and be deliberately leaving it vague. In any case the explanation is to be found in traditional mythology.

(c) A third interpretation has been suggested. The verb *restraineth* might equally well be intransitive and be translated 'rules', 'holds sway'. If this rendering be adopted, then he that holds sway can be identified with Satan, who is called 'the god of this world' or 'age' (II Cor. iv. 4). The same general idea is to be found in Eph. ii. 2; Col. i. 13; Lk. iv. 6; Jn. xiv. 30; I Jn. v. 19, &c. It was in fact the common belief of the primitive Church that the present world-order is temporarily under the dominion of Satan till the end of the present age. In this case the appearance of Antichrist is delayed not by any hostile force, but by the will of Satan. The operation of Satan is now secretly going on and is to culminate in the open appearance of Antichrist as his instrument. The difficulty which is probably fatal to this line of interpretation, is to assign any intelligible meaning to *until he be taken out of the way*. The appearance of Antichrist would rather seem to be the supreme exhibition of Satan's activity in the world. Frame suggests the possibility that it refers to the expulsion of Satan from Heaven, such as that described in Rev. xii. 7 ff., the war in Heaven being the signal for the great apostasy on earth, or the conflict on earth being the revenge for the defeat in Heaven. But there is nothing in St. Paul's language here that even remotely suggests any allusion to all this. Therefore it is safer to adopt one of the other lines of explanation.

7. *the mystery of lawlessness.* *Mystery* here, as usual, means secret. The secret of lawlessness

is not the apostasy, but rather the secretly developing antagonism to God and the Gospel, which is to culminate in the apostasy. The evil power behind it is not Antichrist himself, but Satan, whose final instrument Antichrist will be. The language suggests that though the final conflict has not yet arrived it will not be long delayed. The second half of the verse contains an ellipse. R.V. and mg. suggest ways in which words may be supplied to fill up the sentence. Perhaps a better suggestion would be, 'Only the lawless one will not be revealed until'.

8. In apocalyptic writings supernatural deliverance always arrives at the supreme crisis, when to the human eye all is lost. So here the conflict leads up to the destruction of Antichrist by the arrival of the true Christ. The language is suggested by Is. xi. 4.

The breath of his mouth (perhaps a further allusion to Ps. xxxiii. 6) is probably intended to signify not a word of command, but the breath itself. Both *manifestation* (or epiphany) and *coming* denote the final appearance of Christ. The former is regularly used in Hellenistic writings, Jewish and pagan, for the manifestation or sudden intervention of a god, and is only found elsewhere in the New Testament in the Pastoral Epistles, once of the first coming of Christ, four times of the second coming. It adds here the idea of a conspicuous manifestation of God to help His people by His presence.

9. St. Paul gives no details of the final conflict and defeat of Antichrist, but reverts at once to the coming of Antichrist. He hastens

to reassure the faint-hearted by reminding them that his coming is in the divine purpose intended not for the faithful but for unbelievers, who will be deluded to their final doom. It is to be noted that, as always in the New Testament, miracles are not necessarily a proof of the working of God. They may equally be the work of the Devil. So the proof offered in the Gospels that the miracles of Christ are done in the power of the Spirit of God, is not their wonderfulness, but their moral quality (cp. Rev. xiii. 13 ff.; Mt. xxiv. 24). There is no suggestion in this passage that Antichrist wins men to himself by force, or anything like persecution of those who will not accept him. Rather he entices them by methods of allurement and deception. This is in sharp contrast with Revelation, where the methods of the Beast which include political pressure and persecution reflect those of the Roman Empire in later days.

10. *them that are perishing.* These are the emphatic words. To be deceived by Antichrist is the fate for those who have rejected the offer of salvation. Christians need not fear that they will yield to the temptation.

the love of the truth. We should have expected simply the truth, i.e. the Gospel. The longer expression which is only found here, implies that God had sent them the power to create in them the love of the truth, but that they had willfully refused to receive it or co-operate with it.

11. St. Paul writes as a Jew who ascribed all that happened to the direct personal action of God. We

bring in the idea of law. Thus here the delusion, the loss of power of perception, is the inevitable consequence of the refusal to attend to the offer of salvation. There is nothing arbitrary in the punishment. It is in accordance with the law of character. Salvation rejected must be judgement. Thus we get three stages. First, the obstinate refusal to see and welcome the truth, then the judicial

infatuation that falls upon them by the decree of God, lastly their final punishment. In the second stage they cease to be their own masters, but in the first stage they are personally responsible. Cp. Rom. ii. 24 and 26, where the moral decay that follows the rejection of the knowledge of the one true God is spoken of as the direct act of God Himself.

(b) *A reassurance of the faint-hearted based on their election, 13-15.* (c) *A prayer for their encouragement, 16-17.*

13 But we are bound to give thanks to God alway for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, for that God chose you ¹from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and ²belief of the truth: 14 whereunto he called you through our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 15 So then, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye were taught, whether by word, or by epistle of ours. 16 Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father which loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, 17 comfort your hearts and stablish them in every good work and word.

¹ Many ancient authorities read *as firstfruits*.

² Or, *faith*.

Now we as your pastors cannot help giving thanks always to God for you, brothers beloved not only by us, but by God. For God chose you from the beginning of creation to inherit salvation through sanctification by the Holy Spirit and faith in the Truth. To this end he called you through the Gospel which we preach in order that ye may obtain a share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then brethren do your part, continue to stand firm and stick to the traditions which ye were taught whether by word or letter of ours. But only God can enable you. So we pray that our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father who loved us and gave us abiding encouragement and good hope by an act of his free grace, put courage in your hearts and establish them in every good deed and word.

This section expresses in the simplest language St. Paul's doctrine of predestination and election, and exemplifies its evangelical power. All starts from God and God's love. His purpose in the creation of the

universe included from the beginning the salvation of the Thessalonian Christians. Salvation is used in the fullest sense, not only deliverance from hostile forces without and sin within, but complete soundness and health. This predestination to salvation also included predestination of the means by which alone salvation can be attained, the Word and the Spirit. It is part of God's plan that they shall accept the truth of the Gospel and receive the Spirit by incorporation into the body of Christ. The Word of the truth will do its work in their lives, the Spirit will progressively sanctify them, so that they may attain actual holiness. That this process might be enacted at a particular time God called them through the preaching of St. Paul. He gave them a knowledge of the Gospel. The final destiny that He has in store for them and to which all this is leading, is that they may partake in the glory of Christ Himself. That is God's purpose. He has taken the initiative. But the practical consequence is to be not quietism, or the passive acquiescence in His plan of salvation, but energetic and active response. In face of difficulties and persecution they must persevere and stick to their religion. Even here, however, the power to do this cannot be their own. They are dependent on the free grace of God to sustain them. But they may be sure that as He has given them the call, so He will bestow the power to live up to it. They have every reason for confidence and hope, not in themselves, but in God. Behind them is the purpose of divine love. They know what God has done for them. They must persevere in all holy living. (For the whole line of thought, compare the similar passages in Rom. viii. 28-30; Eph. i. 3-7.)

In considering the above teaching, we must bear in mind that it is religious, not philosophical. It aims at interpreting facts of moral and spiritual experience, not at providing material for a philosophy of the universe. Thus to ask what is God's purpose for those who have not been called is irrelevant. No doubt the whole idea of the divine purpose and foreknowledge raises metaphysical questions of the first magnitude. But we cannot treat the religious statements of St. Paul here as if they were detached scientific propositions. They glow with the fervour of one who has tasted of the redeeming love of God in his inmost heart, and expects to find and deepen a similar experience in the hearts of his converts. As a fact of religion nothing has greater power than the conviction that the Christian life is not the achievement of man's choice or strength, but the working-out of the divine will in dependence on divine grace. So here the aim of the paragraph is practical, to encourage the faint-hearted to persevere because they had behind them the infinite resources of God's wisdom and love. In theory, no doubt, this insistence on God's predestination and election might be expected to produce fatalism. That is because it is looked at from the wrong point of view, namely that of the systematic philosopher. When regarded as religious truth, rather than scientific truth, it is a stimulus to renewed energy. St. Paul is careful to combine it with an exhortation to use to the full the opportunities and the grace bestowed by God.

13. *But we.* In the Greek *we* is as emphatic as the language can well make it. The reason for this emphasis is not very clear. The verse resumes i. 3. Hence the stress on *we* is best explained as reiterating the fact that their founders are bound to thank God for their condition in spite of the discouragement of some of their converts. If further contrast is sought, it may be found in the sense of gratitude to God for the state of the Christians as compared with the doom of the unbelievers described in the previous verses. The word *but*, however, is probably not adversative, but introduces a new point.

beloved . . . chose. Both these words are taken from the Old Testament vocabulary which dealt with the privileged position of God's people Israel. Israel was an elect nation, specially loved of God. Christians as members of the new Israel now have inherited these blessings from the beginning. The whole context demands that, if this reading be adopted, it refers not to the beginning of the preaching of the Gospel in Macedonia, but to the beginning of God's plan in creation, what St. Paul elsewhere expresses by the phrase 'before the foundation of the world', Eph. i. 4, or 'before the worlds', I Cor. ii. 7, cp. Col. i. 26. If it had referred to the arrival of Christianity in Thessalonica or Macedonia, some words like 'of the Gospel' would have been added (cp. Phil. iv. 15).

The other reading, *as firstfruits* (R.V. mg.), has good authority and the word is Pauline. If it is adopted, it is best understood, not

as the firstfruits compared with others to follow, still less as referring to the converts from Judaism at Thessalonica as contrasted with later converts direct from paganism, but rather as belonging to the same vocabulary as 'beloved' and 'chosen', and being a title of honour originally referring to Israel and now transferred to the Christian Church. Dibelius quotes a passage from Philo where the word is thus applied to Israel as the firstfruits of all mankind.

in sanctification . . . truth. The Spirit and the truth (i.e. the Gospel) are the means through which sanctification is actualized. There is here, as often, a doubt whether Spirit refers to the Holy Spirit as sanctifying the human spirit or to the human spirit as sanctified by the Holy Spirit. The former is the more probable (cp. I Pet. i. 2). So too the Truth is regarded as a living force acting in the souls of those who receive it (cp. iii. 1; Rom. i. 16; vi. 17; Jn. viii. 32; Heb. iv. 12).

14. At this point, and not before, St. Paul passes to the beginning of the realization of the divine purpose in time by the preaching of the Gospel to the Thessalonians and their acceptance of it. Its final goal is the transformation of their character through the sanctifying Spirit into the likeness of Christ Himself.

15. In the meanwhile their immediate duty is to hold fast what they have received. There is the need for the co-operation of the human will. The word *traditions* at once suggests a comparison with the 'traditions of the elders' with which Saul the Pharisee had

been acquainted (Gal. i. 14). They included both oral and written teaching delivered by the Apostles which was treasured up by their converts and combined both moral and doctrinal instruction (cp. iii. 6). It is now coming to be generally recognized that something like credal statements and formal moral teaching came into existence in the very first days of the Church to meet an immediate need. There are abundant references to such official summaries of belief, doctrinal and moral (e.g. I Cor. xv. 1-11; xi. 2; Rom. vi. 17; xvi. 17; Phil. iv. 9). To these appeal is made against false teaching (e.g. Col. ii. 6-8). There never was a time when Christianity was an undogmatic religion. Cp. Acts ii. 42.

epistle of ours implies that at least one previous letter had been sent. Such we possess in I Thess. But the phrase does not imply that there may not have been one or more others which have been lost.

16-17. The prayer reminds himself and his readers that even such perseverance as is enjoined in the previous verse needs the help of God. *Through grace* emphasizes the undeservedness of this help. *Grace* even in a passage like this is not yet a technical term for the working of the Holy Spirit in the heart. We might translate 'as an act of free grace' (or 'by...'). Usually *word* precedes *work* (Col. iii. 17; Rom. xv. 18). Why the order is reversed here, it is impossible to say.

Additional Note on Antichrist.

The plain meaning of this passage, ii. 1-12, is, as we have seen, that St. Paul taught and expected that one of the signs of the return of Christ in glory to judge the world would be the appearance of a human person who would be the incarnation of wickedness, and who is commonly styled 'Antichrist'. This belief was clearly no invention of St. Paul, but in some form the common expectation of the Christian Church at this time.

The term 'Antichrist' does not occur in this passage. It is found in the New Testament only in the Epistles of St. John. In I Jn. ii. 18 and iv. 3 the writer assumes that his readers already hold the belief, and proceeds to reinterpret it. It is an example of the 'transmuted eschatology' which is found in the Johannine writings. Just as in the Gospel, judgement and the coming of Christ are shown to be not just distant events in the future, but present experiences in the life of the Church, so the coming of Antichrist is not simply a future event, but a present experience. It is already 'a last time'. Antichrist has arrived and begun his activities in the person of the false prophets and teachers who deny that 'Jesus Christ comes in the flesh' (II Jn. 7; I Jn. ii. 22). This, however, need not exclude the further expectation that this activity of evil will attain a final manifestation in the appearance of a supreme embodiment of Antichrist, any more than St. John's teaching about present judgement excludes the idea of a last judgement. It must be remembered

that anti-Christ means not merely one who is opposed to Christ, but a rival Christ. Many commentators hold that Jn. v. 43 refers to such a Messiah of evil. The Epistles of St. John are evidence for the belief of Christians at the close of the first century.

A similar belief plays a large part in the Revelation of St. John, which may be dated in its final form in the reign of Domitian, about A.D. 90. The book leads up to a climax in which the massed forces of evil deliver a final assault upon the city of God and are for ever defeated. At their head is the beast who receives his authority from the dragon (xiii. 1 ff.). But the imagery is far more complicated, and the difficulty of interpretation is increased by the probability that the final editor has worked over earlier sources containing not wholly consistent prophecies. For our present purpose, since the book is a generation later than the Thessalonian Epistles, there is no need to discuss its teaching in detail. It will be sufficient at a later stage to allude to certain passages which may reflect teaching parallel to that of St. Paul.

Far more important is the apocalyptic chapter in St. Mark's Gospel (xiii), which is repeated with some significant editorial modifications in Mt. xxiv. At once we are faced with an urgent critical problem. There are good grounds for doubting whether the chapter of Mark, as it stands, represents a discourse actually delivered by Jesus. That He employed apocalyptic teaching on occasions, few would dispute. But it is at least possible that His genuine apocalyptic teaching attracted to itself similar teaching whether based on current Jewish ideas, or including the utterances of Christian prophets who in the Spirit proclaimed what the Church acknowledged to be 'words of the Lord'. Nor again can we exclude the possibility that in transmission quite authentic sayings of Christ may have become sharpened and developed in the light of later happenings. It would not be easy to distinguish between the original teaching and the interpretations put upon it. Many critics hold that xiii, or the larger portion of it, had originally an independent existence as a fly-sheet, circulated at a time of crisis, and containing prophecies of which an immediate fulfilment was expected. St. Mark incorporated it into his Gospel, regarding it as compiled out of authentic teaching of Christ. In its present context it seems to look forward to the impending fall of Jerusalem. The note in verse 14, 'Let him that readeth understand' is equivalent to 'N.B.' in the margin. And for our present purpose the most important feature is that 'the abomination of desolation' is identified with Antichrist. It is no longer, as in the Book of Daniel, a thing, namely the heathen altar erected by Antiochus Epiphanes in the sanctuary, probably in conjunction with an image of Zeus, but a living person. This is shown by the fact that the participle 'standing', which agrees with it, is masculine and not neuter. This is no slip of grammar, but conscious interpretation. The phrase of Daniel is reinterpreted to mean Antichrist. The author or compiler of the passage believed that one of the signs of the last days, which he probably did not sharply distinguish from the destruction of Jerusalem, would be the appearance

of Antichrist in the Temple of Jerusalem, 'Where he ought not'. That is precisely the same idea as that of St. Paul. The inference is irresistible that St. Paul knew either of this prophecy, later incorporated into St. Mark's Gospel, or of some similar one, current in the Christian communities.

If this idea was current in A.D. 50 it cannot have originated in view of the expectation of the fall of Jerusalem which took place in A.D. 70 and which had not yet appeared on the horizon. It must be earlier than the writing of this Epistle to have attained general currency. Dr. Bacon (*The Gospel of St. Mark*, v-xi) has put forward a most attractive view of its origin, a view which happily is separable from the theories about the late origin of St. Mark's Gospel with which it is associated in his writings. Dr. Bacon adopts the suggestion of Professor Torrey that the whole passage in Mark reflects the situation of A.D. 39-40. At that time the Jews, and doubtless Jewish Christians as well, were horrified at the attempt made by the mad Emperor Caligula to place in the Temple of Jerusalem a statue of himself. To them the threat foreboded a repetition of the profanation of the Temple by Antiochus Epiphanes, and the prophecy of Daniel which had received a first fulfilment in Antiochus seemed about to receive a new fulfilment in Caligula. If he had persisted in his plan, without doubt there would have been an outbreak of war and the catastrophe of A.D. 70 would have been anticipated. The action was delayed by the intercession of Herod Agrippa I, who dared to write to the Emperor a letter of protest, and by the delay of Petronius, Governor of Syria. Caligula relented so far as to command that nothing should be changed in the Temple at Jerusalem, but gave permission for the erection of a temple or altar to the Emperor by any one who desired to do so outside Jerusalem. Only the fact that no one at the time took advantage of this permission saved Judaea from riots. The danger was averted by the murder of Caligula in January 41. The new Emperor, Claudius, put an immediate stop to the policy of desecrating the Temple. Out of gratitude to Agrippa, for past friendship, he initiated a policy of extraordinary favour to the Jews. Agrippa received additions to his kingdom. His arrival in Jerusalem as king about the time of the Passover of 41 was probably the occasion of the persecution of the Church recorded in Acts xii. As we saw in the notes on I Thess. iv. 15-17, this hostility may well have been regarded by the Christian Church as the beginning of the final breach with the Synagogue. It was also probably the cause of the dispersion of the Twelve from Jerusalem. An early tradition affirms that Christ gave them a command to wait in Jerusalem for twelve years. The tradition is perhaps an inference from the actual facts. In any case the events of A.D. 41 in affecting the attitude of Christians to Judaism were more important than is always realized, and may well have coloured the language of St. Paul in this Epistle.

But we must return to the question of Antichrist. If we date the prophecy of Mk. xiii. 14 about A.D. 40, we must admit that it was not immediately fulfilled. Caligula's project did not mature. The 'abomination

that makes desolate' did not appear in the Temple. Hence, in accordance with regular custom, its fulfilment was postponed. In face of criticism the prophecy could not be withdrawn, nor could it be admitted that it had been proved to be untrue. Christians were obliged to resort to the process known as 'putting back the clock'. It was reinterpreted so as to refer to the future. Thus St. Paul in the passage before us applies it to an unknown time in the future. Antichrist will come in due time, but the hour has not yet arrived. Certain forces that restrain his advent will first have to be removed. In Mark on the other hand it seems, on the most probable interpretation of the passage, to be reapplied to the visibly impending fall of Jerusalem. There can be no reasonable doubt that Christ had foretold the destruction of the city and the Temple. Indeed that was turned into a charge against Him, and later against St. Stephen. The Antichrist belief was easily combined with this. In Mt. xxiv. 15, a passage based on Mk. xiii, the prophecy is once again modified and reinterpreted. By the time that Matthew was written, Jerusalem and the Temple had been destroyed, but Antichrist had not appeared in the Temple. The editor therefore not only adds the explicit reference to Daniel, but changes the participle from masculine to neuter. The 'abomination' is no longer a personal Antichrist, but once again a defiling object, and 'a holy place' is designedly vague. Probably the reference is to the defilement of the holy city or the holy land by the pagan armies of Rome with their idolatrous emblems. Bacon makes it refer to the profanation of a synagogue at Caesarea, which, according to Josephus, was the occasion of the outbreak of the final rebellion against Rome. This is less probable.

Can we form a more definite picture of Antichrist, as St. Paul here conceived him? He appears to be the incarnation of the powers of evil, Satan's parody of the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. He is no mere man who opposes God, as in some earlier representations. He is a supernatural figure, the counterpart of Christ. He claims worship as Christ claimed it. He is not just the enemy of Christ, but a rival Christ. There is nothing political about his demands. It is spiritual allegiance that he seeks. He is for St. Paul no longer a tyrant who opposes the true worship of God by force, as did Antiochus, but a seductive agency who attracts men by signs and wonders. There is no mention of violence or persecution, but rather of the fascination of the Jews who have now finally rejected the claims of the true Messiah, in order that they may be won over to the worship of the false Messiah. The whole is spiritualized. The figure of the Antichrist attains a non-political, ideal significance. There is a marked contrast to the Revelation of St. John, where the Roman Empire is identified with the figure of Antichrist. On the other hand, the Pauline transmutation of the idea is continued in the Epistles of St. John where, as we have seen, Antichrist is viewed as already present in the persons and activities of false teachers, who substitute a Docetic or Cerinthian Christ for the true Christ, even Jesus who came in the flesh.

So we are on safe ground if we conclude that the belief in the coming

of Antichrist was generally held in the apostolic Church as an inheritance from Judaism. Whether it was endorsed by Christ and, if so, in what form, it is impossible now to ascertain. The prophecy in Mark may well be an interpretation of what He said, in the light of current apocalyptic expectation, rather than a record of His actual words. When we raise the further question, whence did Judaism derive its expectation of Antichrist, we are on less certain ground.

Within the Old Testament we find several anticipations of such a belief. Thus Ps. ii depicts a general rebellion of the nations against the anointed king whom Jehovah has consecrated to be His son and to whom He has promised the dominion of the world. The date of this psalm is disputed, and it is uncertain whether the psalmist had in mind an actual or ideal anointed king. Kirkpatrick dates it early, and applies it to Solomon, and to an actual rebellion against his rule. Most commentators date it quite late and regard it as an ideal picture expressing the Messianic hope. In any case it contemplates a spirit of antagonism to him whom God has appointed as King, and the quelling of that antagonism by irresistible force. Some critics regard this psalm 'as the real source of the later Antichrist legend', but the uncertainty of its date makes this precarious. Again Ps. xciv, one of a group that celebrates the sovereignty of God, speaks of evil rulers as 'a throne of lawlessness' (LXX), with whom Jehovah can have no fellowship (20) and upon whom their own wickedness shall recoil. In Ezek. xxxviii-xxxix, we find for the first time the idea of a final assault of the hosts of evil, Gog and Magog, upon the restored Jerusalem, and their destruction. If these chapters are really part of the genuine writings of Ezekiel, it is difficult to see the connexion of thought between them and the ideal picture of the future already given. Gog and Magog seem to be brought upon the stage merely that they may by their destruction afford an object-lesson of the might of God. A similar idea appears in the late chapters Zech. xii-xiv, but the interpretation is most obscure, and the chapters may be a collection of fragments.

Of special importance for our present study is the Book of Daniel, from which, as we have seen, much of St. Paul's language is borrowed. There Antiochus Epiphanes, the persecutor of the Jews and the defiler of the Temple, is described in terms which seem at times almost to go beyond what could be said of any merely human wickedness. The language applied to him recalls, consciously or unconsciously, the old myth in which the dragon attempted to scale heaven. Thus in viii. 10 the little horn, i.e. Antiochus, 'waxed great even to the host of heaven; and some of the host and of the stars it cast down to the ground, and trampled upon them'. The symbolical language represents the outrages committed against heathen gods and their temples. This is more plainly expressed in xi. 36-7. 'And the king . . . shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods: . . . Neither shall he regard the gods of his fathers, nor the desire of women' (i.e. the Babylonian god Tammuz) 'nor regard any god:

for he shall magnify himself above all.' We must also remember that he claimed himself to be divine. The title Epiphanes means 'God made manifest'. Thus Antiochus represents the typical human opponent of God. He could serve as a model for Antichrist. But with it all Antichrist still remains 'a god-opposing being of human origin' (Charles).

In the Psalms of Solomon, a Pharisaic work composed 48-40 B.C. Pompey, who after his conquest of Jerusalem had dared to enter the Holy of Holies to the great horror of the Jews, is described as 'the sinner', that is, the personification of sin (cp. the reading 'the man of sin'). He is also described as 'the dragon', which again suggests a reference, conscious or unconscious, to the old dragon myth. He is styled 'the lawless one' and the same epithet is given to his soldiers. This suggests that it means no more than 'heathen', who did not observe the Law of Moses (cp. Acts ii. 23; I Cor. ix. 21).

In two Jewish apocalypses dating from about A.D. 70, the Apocalypse of Baruch and IV Ezra, the same idea reappears. In the former a leader of the enemies of Israel is destroyed by the Messiah on Mount Zion. In the latter there is a veiled allusion to a ruler 'whom they that dwell on the earth look not for', who is usually supposed to be Antichrist. In both Antichrist seems to represent the Roman power.

A second element which has entered into St. Paul's picture of Antichrist, is the idea of Beliar, or Belial. There is a direct allusion to this in II Cor. vi. 15, where it is to be noted that Beliar is placed in direct opposition to Christ. In the Old Testament Belial is not a proper name, and its derivation is disputed. Some ancient writers, Jewish and Christian, make it mean 'without the yoke', i.e. lawless. Others support the derivation 'without profit'. In any case the phrase 'sons of Belial' means wicked and worthless persons. The frequent use of such a title encouraged the tendency to personify Belial. Hence in post-canonical literature Belial has become a personal name for Satan, or some leader of the forces of evil. In the Book of Jubilees, a Jewish work of the second century B.C., we find the prayer: 'Let thy mercy, O Lord, be lifted up upon thy people . . . and let not the spirit of Beliar rule over them to accuse them.' There Beliar performs the function characteristic of the Satan in the Old Testament, that of the accuser (cp. Zech. iii. 1-2; Rev. xii. 10). So too in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, a pre-Christian Jewish work with later interpolations, there are similar references to Beliar as a Satanic spirit, who e.g. has authority to send seven evil spirits against man to work his ruin, and who will in the end be bound. Again in a passage of the Sibylline Oracles which is dated in the second century B.C., Beliar is depicted as coming of the race of Augustus, i.e. probably the Samaritans, and as accompanied by all the portents that in other sources belong to Antichrist. In short the evidence is well summed up by Charles: 'At the beginning of the Christian era, if not much earlier, Beliar was regarded as a Satanic spirit.'

If we ask what is the relation between Antichrist and Beliar, our authorities give somewhat divergent answers. Charles holds that

II Thess. gives clear evidence that the Antichrist idea and that of Beliar had become fused in Christian thought before A.D. 50. In this passage we have the earliest instance of 'the humanization of the Beliar myth through its fusion with that of Antichrist'. Conversely Antichrist has lost all political significance and become a purely religious figure. (Contrast Rev. xiii. 1-10; xvii.) But originally the two ideas were quite distinct, Antichrist being a God-opposing man and Beliar a Satanic power. On the other hand, Bousset argues that Antichrist was from the first a humanized devil. But he agrees that for St. Paul the idea of the God-opposing tyrant has been transformed and raised farther into the realm of the superhuman.

At a later date the Antichrist myth became fused with that of Nero redivivus. This is found in Rev. xiii and xvii. 8-11, and further Nero is identified with the blasphemous might of the Roman Empire. On the other hand in Rev. xi. 7 we still find the older form of the Beliar Antichrist, and the whole passage has probably been taken over from an earlier source. At a later date still the legend of Nero lost its interest, and in the Fathers of the second century the anti-Jewish conception of II Thess. dominates their expectations of Antichrist.

If we trace the origin of the idea even farther back, it is very probable that the roots of both the human Antichrist and of Beliar are to be sought in a primitive myth of the battle of God with a dragon-like monster, such as is found in Babylonian folk-lore. This myth represented in the way natural to the primitive mind the contest between order and disorder, the victory over primitive chaos. Further, since it came to be held that the end must be as the beginning, it was believed that the end of the world would be marked by a final contest between the forces of order and disorder, and that the dragon would make a last attempt to gain supremacy and be for ever overcome. Meanwhile, in the present age, he is for the time bound, or in some kind of captivity. Traces of such beliefs are found in parts of the Old Testament. We find mention of Rahab who is the raging sea-monster imprisoned beneath the waves, but destined to be slain at last by the sword of Jehovah (Is. xxvii. 1; li. 9; Job ix. 13; xxvi. 12; Ps. lxxxix. 10; Amos ix. 3). In certain passages Rahab is taken as a symbol of Egypt and the conquest of Rahab as a symbol of the destruction of the Egyptians. The two ideas are blended in Ezek. xxix. 3. Though in later developments of the Antichrist or Beliar idea its ultimate mythological origin was doubtless forgotten, it is important for us to remember the general background.

To sum up, St. Paul's language in this Epistle, so unfamiliar to us, represents a development of an idea perfectly familiar to the Jews, and passing from them into the Christian Church. He deals with it in his own way, reapplying it in a manner commonly used in the reinterpretation of past prophecies, to meet the needs of his own day. He spiritualizes it and looks for, not a political conflict, but a final contest between the Gospel of Christ and the allurements of a false Christ, the embodiment of the power of Satan, who shall win the hearts of those who have

rejected the true Christ. The appearance of Antichrist he regards as the necessary prelude to the coming of Christ in judgement and the end of the world.

It now remains to assess the permanent value of the passage for Christian thought. St. Paul's expectation has not been fulfilled. Antichrist has not arrived, and the world has lasted for centuries longer than St. Paul expected, at least at the time when he wrote this Epistle. There has been a constant attempt on the part of Christians to apply the prophecy to their own day. We have seen that in the New Testament itself this process of thought can be discerned. It was continued in the Fathers and in the Middle Ages. The natural temptation was to identify Antichrist with any individual or cause which seemed specially to threaten the purity or the existence of the Church. In the Eastern church he was readily identified with Mohammed. In the West there was a tendency from quite early times to discover Antichrist in some occupant of the Papal chair, or to expect him under the guise of some false Pope. Wycliffe seems to have been the first to apply it to the Papacy as such. This became the dominant view of the Reformers, and was the traditional interpretation of Protestant commentators until quite recent times. In 1606 Convocation condemned any one who should deny 'that the intolerable pride of the Bishop of Rome . . . doth not argue him plainly to be the Man of Sin'. Modern research has shown the futility of this line of interpretation, but it still lingers on among the less educated. There are still those who find Antichrist in the Church of Rome. Others again find him in some unpopular personage. Napoleon and the Kaiser have been both candidates for the post. The only cure for this kind of speculation lies in a more enlightened view of the nature of inspiration, and the functions of prophecy.

Putting aside fantastic attempts to regard this passage as a key to the prediction of the future in detail, we may still find in it the assertion of spiritual truths of abiding value.

First, it emphasizes the absolute opposition between good and evil, as against those who assert that evil is the mere negation of good, or that moral distinctions are ultimately transcended, or again that evil is really good, if you only look at it from the right angle. Christian teachers are always bound to affirm that good and evil are contrary the one to the other. It is our duty to treat evil as evil, and do all in our power to fight against it and subdue it. It may indeed be true that even moral evil may be transmuted and be made the means by which a greater good is achieved, but that can only come about if it is treated as evil. So the figure of Antichrist represents in a mythological form the vital truth of the utter enmity between right and wrong.

Secondly, the myth contains what is the teaching of the New Testament as a whole, namely that there is no automatic moral and spiritual progress. The idea that the world must get better as it gets older is now generally recognized to be a vain hope. What such a parable as, for instance, that of the Wheat and the Tares rather suggests, is that as

time goes on the distinction between good and evil becomes more clear. They stand out in sharper contrast. The decision between them is more easily made. What we are to expect is not that the world will get automatically better, or that evil will be outgrown and disappear, or that the tares will somehow turn into good corn, but rather that the full implications both of righteousness and unrighteousness will become clearer and clearer. There will be ever less excuse for confusing the wheat and the tares. So the way will be prepared for their final separation in a way that we cannot now understand. Antichrist stands for the final embodiment of evil in its sheer antagonism to all that is good and holy. The expectation of Antichrist prevents a shallow and unscientific optimism. It contradicts popular views of evolution which in effect deny the need for moral decision. It asserts that the progress of the world is not just a progress in good, or a progress in evil, but a progress through which both good and evil are attaining to maturity.

Thirdly, in the course of this development the forces of evil embody themselves both in individuals and in institutions. Such embodiments are in a real sense partial fulfilments of St. Paul's prophecy. That does not mean that the Apostle foresaw them, or consciously predicted them in detail, but that the general spiritual principle which he reaffirmed in his restatement of the Antichrist idea is being expressed through them in the world in which we live, and we are called to show our loyalty to his teaching by using our powers of spiritual discernment to recognize and avoid the seductions of evil and by facing the reality of the antagonism to the will of God. The form in which the Antichrist idea is depicted in this Epistle belongs to an age that is past, but the warning to expect false philosophies and tempting substitutes for the Gospel of the one true Christ is still needed.

(On the doctrine of Antichrist, see Bousset, *The Antichrist Legend*, or his article in the *Encyclopaedia Biblica*; also Charles's edition of *The Ascension of Isaiah*.)

CHAPTER III

C. PRACTICAL INSTRUCTIONS AND WARNINGS

(a) *A request for their prayers, together with an expression of confidence, 1-5.*

III. 1 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run and be glorified, even as also *it is* with you; 2 and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and evil men; for all have not ¹faith. 3 But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and guard you from ²the evil *one*. 4 And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and

¹ Or, *the faith*.

² Or, *evil*.

will do the things which we command. 5 And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of Christ.

Finally, brothers, go on praying for us, that the word of the Lord may have a triumphant course and be received with honour, as happened in your case: and that we may be rescued from the outrageous and evil men of whom you know. For it is not everybody who has the faith to accept the Gospel. But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and protect you from the Evil one. Now prompted by the Lord, we have faith in you that you are doing and will do what we enjoin. May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's endurance.

The opening words make plain that this section is to be taken as an introduction to what follows. It prepares the way for the stern commands of the next verses. The request for their prayers, the commendation of their faith and obedience, and the reminder of the strength which God will supply, all create an atmosphere of sympathy and good will. Notice especially verse 4. On the other hand, the construction of the whole section is jerky, and it is not easy to see the sequence of thought between the verses. Possibly *faith* in 2 may have suggested *faithful* in 3, and that again his own faith in them in 4. Or the apparent disconnexion may be due to the fact that he had their letter before him and was dealing with remarks made by them.

1. *pray*. The position of this word in the Greek, and the use of the present imperative, suggest that they were already praying for him, and had told him so in their letter. Clearly they knew the circumstances at Corinth.

run and be glorified, probably a metaphor from the races. The Gospel is represented as a competitor, and it is prayed that its course may be unimpeded, and it

may attain the prize. In any case the inherent missionary character of the Word is stressed. *Run* may be suggested by Ps. cxlvii. 15, or even Ps. xix. 5.

2. *unreasonable* hardly gives the meaning. The word means originally 'out of place'. In LXX and New Testament, except once, in Acts xxviii. 6, it has the sense 'morally amiss'. In the papyri it is used of outrages against property. In any case the Greek has the definite article, showing that the outrageous and evil men are a single class and one known by repute to the Thessalonians. That St. Paul was in real danger in Corinth, at the time of writing, is shown by the narrative in Acts, where the instigators of trouble are the Jews, not the pagans (xviii. 6, 12-17).

all have not faith. Again faith should have the definite article. The faith means not the Gospel, or a body of truth to be believed, but rather the attitude of receptivity that the Gospel demands. The statement is simply a record of fact. We know that the unbelief of the majority of Jews was a great problem to the mind of St. Paul and the Church, but we cannot base on a statement of this kind

the conclusion that God intended the majority of mankind for perdition. Cp. Rom. x. 16.

3. *the evil one* (mg. evil). The Greek may be masculine or neuter. Most commentators take it as masculine. Cp. Eph. vi. 16, which is indisputable. If so, there may be an allusion to the Lord's Prayer. On the other hand, in Rom. xii. 9 it is clearly neuter, and a similar use of the neuter is found in the Didache. The contention that 'the Evil one' was a common Jewish title of the Devil is strongly disputed.

4. *love of God* is ambiguous. In St. Paul it always means God's love for us, not ours for Him. The prayer is that they may be led to a fuller appreciation of the divine love as manifested in Christ.

5. *patience of Christ* cannot mean 'patient waiting for Christ' (A.V.), since another word is used for that. This word always means endurance. The endurance of Christ may mean the endurance which Christ Himself exhibited in His earthly life and now inspires in believers, or simply endurance like that of Christ.

(b) *More detailed injunctions against the idlers, and an exhortation to loyal members to admonish them, 6-15.*

6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which ¹they received of us. 7 For yourselves know how ye ought to imitate us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; 8 neither did we eat bread for nought at any man's hand, but in labour and travail, working night and day, that we might not burden any of you: 9 not because we have not the right, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you, that ye should imitate us. 10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, If any will not work, neither let him eat. 11 For we hear of some that walk among you disorderly, that work not at all, but are busybodies. 12 Now them that are such we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. 13 But ye, brethren, be not weary in well-doing. 14 And if any man obeyeth not our word by this epistle, note that man, that ye have no company with him, to the end that he may be ashamed. 15 And yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

¹ Some ancient authorities read *ye*.

Now we enjoin you, brothers, speaking with the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep aloof from every brother who is a loafer, instead

of following the tradition that he received from us. For you know yourselves the right way of imitating us. For we did not loaf among you, or take maintenance without paying for it from anybody: but we worked for our living toiling and moiling night and day rather than be a burden to any of you. Not that we have not the right not to work, but that we might give ourselves as a pattern to you to copy. For when we were with you, we kept enjoining on you this rule, 'If a man won't work, he shall not eat.' For we are informed that some among you are loafers, busy only in being busy-bodies. Such we enjoin and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to go on with their work in all quietness and earn their own living. As for yourselves, brothers, do not tire of doing the right thing. But if any one does not obey our message in this letter, make him a marked man; do not associate with him, that he may be ashamed of himself. And yet regard him not as an enemy, but correct him as a brother.

In this section St. Paul passes on to a second practical question closely connected with the first. The eschatological excitement and mistaken idea that the Day of the Lord had arrived was the occasion, if not the cause, of much idleness. This unhealthy condition had developed since the writing of the First Epistle. There are hints of it in iv. 10 and v. 14, but we should never have gathered from the single clause, 'admonish the disorderly' or rather 'the loafers', that the evil was so serious. This idleness was a matter that called for the concern of the whole Church. There is no question yet of formal ecclesiastication or even ecclesiastical discipline in the strict sense. Rather the community was to show by its attitude to the loafers that it disapproved of their conduct. There was to be social ostracism, and even perhaps they were to be named at the weekly gatherings, till they showed that they had come to a better mind. Having nothing better to do, they seem to have fomented unrest, perhaps by spreading rumours or interfering with those who were

working. Thus they were a social danger, a source of infection to the life of the community. This measure of discipline had therefore a twofold object, first the bringing of the loafers to their senses, and secondly the safeguarding of the health of the society. The whole manner of treatment emphasizes the social nature of the Christian life and the duty of the Church to exercise discipline by spiritual means. The community is responsible for doing all that it can for the spiritual welfare of its individual members. The conduct of the individual member is the concern not only of himself and God, but of his fellow Christians.

6. *in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.* This is not the same as the use of the phrase elsewhere, and has a different shade of meaning. It means using the name, that is, the authority of Christ. The command is not simply the Apostle's, but Christ's through the Apostle (cp. I Cor. v. 4). It must be recognized as such.

withdraw yourselves. The word meant originally 'furl sail', and then came to be used generally for

'draw back'. Here it means 'hold aloof'. It refers to informal action. The brother is still a brother even though brotherhood itself compels a temporary withdrawal of brotherly intimacy. On *disorderly* see I. v. 14, and on *tradition* ii. 15.

7. On St. Paul holding himself up as a pattern, see I. i. 6.

8. *eat bread* is a Hebrew phrase for eating generally (cp. 10), and has the broader sense of receiving maintenance. *For nought* here simply means without paying for it. The loafers plainly claimed to be supported at the expense of others. St. Paul's motive for earning his keep was twofold, first that he might not embarrass his host, secondly that he might show the dignity of work.

10. *if any . . . eat*. This is not to be taken as a solemn and original ethical pronouncement. It is rather a piece of workshop morality, probably Greek in origin and belonging to popular ethics. The quotations from Jewish sources given by Lightfoot are much later and at most prove that it commended itself to the Jewish mind generally as it did to St. Paul. It could be illustrated from Gen. iii. 19. There is no ground whatever for the conjecture that it was a saying of Christ.

11. The Greek contains a play on words 'doing no business, but being busybodies'. This was the natural result of idleness. Cp. I Tim. v. 13. Apparently they interfered both with the peace and the industry of their neighbours, perhaps suggesting that they were not thinking sufficiently about the

immediate return of Christ, but were too much occupied with the concerns of this world.

12. *quietness* probably is in contrast not to the meddlesomeness of the idle, but to the restlessness of mind that they fostered in themselves and in others.

13. *be not weary*. The emphasis on *ye* suggests that the meaning is you must not be idle as they are. We should expect it to be followed by 'in your work', but a more general term is used, not so much *well-doing*, as doing the right. The use of the present imperative is unfavourable to the suggestion that they were beginning to get tired of doing the right thing. Rather they were nobly persevering. Hence Frame's idea that the words convey a hint that the others had not been tactful with the loafers, seems to be without foundation. Nor is there much to be said for the idea that *well-doing* means keeping the loafers in food, conferring benefits on them.

14. *note*. The Greek is as vague as the English. It may mean mark the offender down in your own mind so as to keep aloof from him, or it may mean some form of public censure as by bringing his name before the gathering of the community on the Lord's day.

Have no company with him. Slightly stronger than the former phrase, but stopping short of the command in I Cor. v. 11, 'With such a one, no, not to eat'. That would have involved exclusion from the common meal, which was the pledge and symbol of brotherhood.

D. FINAL PRAYER, SALUTATION, AND BLESSING, 16-18

16 Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in all ways. The Lord be with you all.

17 The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write. 18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

Only may the Lord from whom all peace comes Himself give you peace always, whatever befalls you. The Lord be with you all.

The salutation of me, Paul, in my own hand, which is the mark of genuineness in every letter. This is my handwriting. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

16. This prayer forms the link between the previous exhortations and the final salutation. It is prompted by the situation. The peace that supervenes upon the engaging of all energies in work and fellowship must be the gift of God. Only His grace can restore the loafers to usefulness and enable the rest of the community to deal with them in the right spirit. Notice the emphatic *all* at the end.

17-18. These verses afford valuable evidence that St. Paul conformed to the customs of the day, as illustrated by the papyri. After dictating the bulk of the letter, he wrote the last few sentences with his *own hand*. It is this fact that they are in a writing that can

be recognized as his, not any form of words or turn of expression, that is to guarantee the authenticity of this letter. We are not to conclude that he only finished up with his own hand those letters where he expressly says that he did so. Instances can be quoted from papyri where writers have done this without actually saying so. Here the part in his own hand may only have been 18, or more probably 17-18. The deliberate manner in which he draws attention to it may be due to the suspicion that forged letters were being sent out in his name (cp. ii. 2), or simply to refute in advance a possible objection on the part of the loafers that the letter was not genuine.

Additional Note on St. Paul's attitude to work.

In I Thess. iv. 9-12 and again in II Thess. iii. 7-13 St. Paul adopts a definite attitude to work which must have appeared strange to the Greek mind, but is in accord with Jewish ideas. He insists that work is honourable since it supplies the necessities of life and makes a man independent of others (I. ii. 9; iv. 12; II. iii. 8-10). Also it provides the means for showing love by helping others who are in need (Eph. iv. 28; I Tim. v. 8). This idea is suggested by the context in Thess., but not explicitly drawn out. We must also remember the universal Christian duty in the primitive Church of entertaining Christians from other churches. More than this, work not only keeps idle hands and tongues

from mischief and occupies the mind (I Thess. iv. 11; II Thess. iii. 11-12; I Tim. v. 13), but it develops character and impresses favourably the outside world (I Thess. iv. 12; Tit. ii. 9-10). So, too, St. Paul himself, though he claimed the right to be kept by the Church, worked with his own hands, partly not to burden his converts, partly to preserve his own independence and prove that he was not mercenary (I Thess. i. 9; II Thess. iii. 8-9; I Cor. iv. 12; ix. 4 ff.; II Cor. xi. 8-10). This conduct would cause no surprise to Jews, since many famous Rabbis worked with their own hands. In Palestine there were no teachers with fixed salaries and no regular trade in books. Hence it was advisable to combine the study of the Law with some remunerative occupation.

But behind the difference of fact there also lies a difference of principle. The Greek ideal did not include manual work of any kind. The Greek gentleman did not work with his hands. Nature had provided races who were intended for slavery in order that as a result of their labours the Greek might have leisure for self-culture. Any form of manual work was therefore despised, and left to slaves and the lower orders. The idea of the dignity of labour was unknown.

Among the Jews, on the other hand, agriculture and handiwork were held in the highest esteem. The simplicity and innocence of agricultural life is praised in the Testament of Issachar (Test. of XII Patriarchs). In the Talmud there are many sayings that reinforce this. 'Live on the Sabbath as on a work-day' (i.e. do not have any better food) 'and need no one's help.' 'Let a man hire himself out even for the most repulsive work, and he will need no one's help.' 'There is no handicraft which is not necessary to the world, but happy is he whose parents have set him an example by choosing an excellent calling.' 'The man who teaches his son no trade, teaches him highway robbery.' 'Flay dead cattle on the highway and do not say, I am a priest, or I am a great man, and cannot abide the task.' Again there is the recognition that all work worthy of the name is of God. The world is a whole in which all things act and react. Man's exaltation over the beasts is found in the fact that his livelihood is a reward deliberately attained by his own efforts. Thus though there is a difference in rank and worth between various handicrafts, even the meanest is no disgrace because it ministers to the needs of men. The story is told of the speech made to a Rabbi, a disciple of the famous Hillel, by a man who dug wells. 'I am no less necessary to the commonwealth than you. If a man comes to you and asks after ceremonially clean drinking-water, you say to him, "Drink out of this fountain, for its waters are pure and cold." Or if a woman asks where there is good water for bathing, you say to her, "Bathe in this or that tank, for its waters cleanse from impurity."' That is to say, the labours of the artisan were as necessary for the due observance of the laws of purification as the decisions of the Rabbis. On the other hand, it is to be observed that little or nothing is said in honour of trade. There is much pointing out of the dangers of money-making and a wandering life. That is not what we should expect from the popular idea of the Jew.

On the other hand instances can be found of a certain contempt for all professions in the world felt by students of the Law. In Ecclus. xxxviii stress is laid on the superiority of the scribe over the labourer and artisan. The earlier scribes at the time when the book was written belonged for the most part to the wealthy classes. Apparently they were relieved from the necessity of earning their bread, and enjoyed leisure to study and direct public affairs. There is indeed explicit recognition of the essential place of the craftsman in the state (31-2), but their occupation unfits them from filling the highest offices (33-4). But in later Judaism it came to be recognized that study of the Law and work to earn the necessities of life were not incompatible, though it was maintained that if Israel did the will of God, the time would come when menial duties would be performed by aliens as foretold in Isaiah lxi. 5. The following proverb is said to come from the family of Gamaliel: 'It is good to combine the study of the Law with some trade, for the earnest following of both callings weans from sin: but all study, unaccompanied by labour with the hands, ends in vanity and brings forth sin.' Once more we can recognize the similarity to the argument of St. Paul.

We do not, however, find any real anticipation of the modern view that all useful work involves a divine 'calling' and is itself a fulfilling of the divine will. This teaching appears to be a product of the Reformation, and is a consequence of the rejection of the distinction between 'Precepts' and 'Counsels'. The Reformers taught that the elect were to please God, not in the asceticism of the Monastic life, but in their daily calling. Salvation was to be obtained not merely in their vocation, but through their vocation. St. Paul does not teach the Reformation doctrine of service to God through secular work, but rather the need of honourable independence, for which work is indispensable. He speaks as a good honest citizen rather than as a Christian. Yet the principles which he asserts have a definite place in Christian social ethics. (Cp. Delitzsch, *Jewish Artisan Life in the Time of Christ.*)

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