THE TEACHING OF PAUL IN TERMS OF THE PRESENT DAY.

XXII. The Gift of Christ.

Every line of thought and argument and personal experience—the last doubtless the most efficacious with him—led Paul to the same conclusion. Man cannot save himself: he cannot work out his own salvation through his own efforts: he always goes wrong. The force of circumstances and of his own nature are too strong: the flesh is more dominant than the spirit in his physical constitution.

The lifting power of some great enthusiasm, the driving force of some supreme idea, must come in to aid his personal efforts, and to strengthen in him the spirit in its struggle against the flesh. This God has provided from the beginning as part of the plan of creation which was originally formed in His mind: He did not bring in this device to remedy a defect that subsequently manifested itself in His creation: He had in view from the first the whole order of human history.

At some point in the life of every individual the consciousness is attained that one can do nothing of oneself for oneself; that one has failed to save oneself: that one's efforts have all been misdirected: that either one has been deliberately turning one's back towards God, and seeking after what was absolutely evil, or one's efforts to "keep justice and to do righteousness," [1] and to show the goodness which God desires in man, [2] have gone astray. Then one learns that only through Divine aid can one attain what one has longed for or ought to have longed for. The time is ripe: "the fulness of the time has come." [3]

[1] Isaiah lvi. 1.

[2] Hosea vi. 6. "I desire goodness, and not sacrifice; the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings."

[3] Galatians iv. 4.

Similarly, at a certain point in the history of the world as a whole, the collective consciousness of mankind seemed to Paul to have reached the same conclusion through the collective experience of all men.[1] The world had failed to save itself and to improve itself. It was on the way to destruction through a steady and ever accelerated deterioration. There was no possible aid for it through any human power, or device, or effort. No hope remained except in Divine aid through the coming of a Divine helper. When this conclusion was reached, then it seemed to Paul that the fulness of the time, the moment for the Divine purpose to complete itself, had arrived. The almost universal belief throughout the Mediterranean world in the time immediately preceding the life of Paul[2] and during the first half of his life was identical with his opinion, and appeared to him to attest its correctness.

This was the moment that the Divine will and purpose had found suitable to send into the world the Divine nature in human form, placed under the law with a view to rise above the law, made subject to human trials and weakness in order to prove superior to them, exposed to the temptations of man so that there might be exhibited a complete and glorious triumph of man over all temptations. That in Jesus the Divine nature was stronger than in simple man was true: otherwise, being a simple man, He could not overcome the limitations of human nature. Yet this does not, in Paul's philosophy of history, invalidate the fundamental fact that Jesus was man: He was man that He might be a

[1] "Mankind" and "all men" and "the world" here must, of course, be understood as meaning practically the Graeco-Roman world, *ἡ οἰκουμένη*, which alone was known to Paul. This sense is usual.

[2] Perhaps the solitary exception was Virgil, who was full of hope; but his hope was in a vague form connected with the birth of a Divine child. Some would see in the child an expected son of Augustus, which appears to me unjust to the poet, a petty idea such as Virgil could not and did not condescend to; see papers in the EXPOSITOR some years ago on this subject.

pattern: He was God in order that His pattern might be effective and final, absolutely conclusive once and for ever, sufficient for all men and for each individual man before and after Him.

That was what Paul called the supreme mystery. It had to be apprehended by each man for himself. It was a matter of faith. The highest test of human nature and will was the capacity to apprehend and believe this great mystery, to know that it was true and to base one's whole life upon it. This stage is reached by the individual man when—perhaps after long trial to achieve his own salvation, and work righteousness for himself—he has realised his helplessness and incapacity: when he has learned that he must trust to the God who is around him and outside of him, because the Divine element is too weak within him.

This supreme moment in the life of a man is regarded by Paul as the moment when the Divine power seizes him, grips him, reveals itself to him and in him.[1] The gift of salvation, therefore, is the free gift of the God who has taken hold of the man. The man himself has not earned it, has not deserved it, has done nothing to attain it. He is, as it were, compelled to the new course by the purpose and plan of God: he cannot do otherwise: it is impossible for him to strive against the Divine order, or to kick against the goad.

That is, however, in no way inconsistent with Paul's other point of view that, in the judgment of God and of man, eternal life is the reward of what the man does in life (as has been shown by clear quotations), and that the man works out his own salvation. These are merely expressions from two different points of view. Both can be true. If one is true, the other must be true. A force that is ineffective is not a force. The power of God inevitably works itself out in the action of the man whom God has seized.

[1] Galatians i. 14 f.

The apparent inconsistency lay only in a narrow or false view of the nature of God and of man in their mutual relation. Man has in him the Divine spark: he is capable of movement towards God only through the fact that God is within him. The first stage in salvation is the quickening of the Divine element in the man. Thus the Divine in man recognises the Divine outside of him. The great revelation, the manifestation by God of Himself to man, takes place; and the man is remade, reconstituted, reborn, once and for ever. The rest of life crumbles into ashes, and disappears as if it were nought. This alone remains. From this life begins again.

Yet this new life is a hard life, a long strain, a continuous work, taxing the whole powers of the man from day to day, often seeming to be too hard, and yet always making itself possible to him through the grace of God. Each day brings a sacrifice of oneself, a death to the old and a birth to the new and the higher. Such was Paul's experience in his own life; and he pictures to his converts the Divine life as being necessarily the same for them.

XXIII. The Sacerdotal Metaphor.

In attempting to gauge the depths of Paul's thought from the language of his letters, we must distinguish between forms of expression which are intended specially as educative and those through which the inner nature of his ideas looks forth on the world more simply and clearly.

Intellectually, it was necessary for him to make the deep things of God intelligible to pagan converts, and he must use metaphors and images, which would help them to understand; he must start from their thought and train their minds to appreciate higher thought; he was always confronted with the difficult problem of expressing infinite and

eternal truths in the utterly inadequate language of finite experience; and in view of his audience he must use the words of ordinary educated speech and could not take refuge in technical or artificial terms. Morally, he had to raise his hearers' standard of judgment and of life, so that the higher morality should be appreciated by them and establish itself in their minds and life.

All the early Christian teachers were confronted with the same problem. They had to create a new language to express a new religion, and yet they must use the current words and moulds, filling them with a new content. Paul was the most creative and successful master of language; but the other Apostles were not mere followers of Paul, and in the beginning they had to speak without Paul's model before them. There was a Christian language in process of evolving itself before Paul became a Christian. It was, however, addressed only to Jews, and adapted to their thoughts and customs and beliefs. It was not without its effect on Paul.

Among forms of expression which were specially suited to elevate the conceptions of the Hebrews to a higher level were those which picture the work and the being of Christ, by starting from the ideas of priesthood and of sacrifice. Such forms also appealed more or less to almost all pagans. Among the ancient peoples generally the relation of man to God was conceived as in a very large degree conducted through the medium of sacrificial offerings by the instrumentality of a priest who intervened and mediated between the worshipper and the deity.

Already the greatest of the Hebrew prophets were gradually rising above that conception. Christianity rose wholly above it.[1] But the popular views had not attained to free-

[1] I do not mean that all people think so. I am only attempting to express what appears to be the mind of Paul.

dom in this respect; and it was necessary that the popular views should be elevated to the higher plane. In order to elevate them it was necessary to begin from them, to assume what was good in them, and to develop and strengthen this element of right.

It is therefore not strange, but quite what was to be expected, that the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews—not Paul himself, but a writer who was in close relations and in hearty sympathy with Paul, not a pupil, but one who took an independent and authoritative view (probably Philip the Evangelist writing at Caesarea during Paul's imprisonment, and in frequent communication with him)[1]—lays far more stress on this idea than any other writer in the New Testament. The task which this author felt to be imposed on him was to explain to the Jewish Christian congregation of Jerusalem—as distinguished from their leaders (ἡγούμενοι) who are not addressed and who did not need such instruction—that, and how, Christ's teaching was the perfect, true, and finally complete religion. "The writer to the Hebrews," as Professor Paterson says, "deals with the Old Testament dispensation as pre-eminently a priestly and sacrificial system"; that dispensation was founded upon divine revelation; but it was imperfect and narrow in aims and results. The method of this writer, therefore, is to take the hopes and wishes current among the Hebrews, and show how they are more perfectly fulfilled by the doctrine of Christianity than by the old dispensation. In doing this, naturally, the writer lays very great stress on the sacrificial and priestly aspect. As the Hebrews wished for a priest, the only true priest in the highest sense is Christ. If the Hebrews considered that sacrifice is needed or desired by God, then the one true and perfect sacrifice was Jesus;

[1] See a paper on the authorship of Hebrews in *Luke the Physician*. Acts xxiv. 23 touches on this freedom of communication.

this sacrifice was offered once and for all time; and there should be no thought of any need for the imperfect and unworthy sacrifices of the Hebrew ritual, after that supreme and perfect offering has been made.

The fact that the ideas of the ordinary Jews of Palestine had to be carried upwards to a nobler level should not be taken as any proof that either Paul, or even the writer to the Hebrews, regarded the priestly functions of Christ and the sacrificial character of His death as being in themselves of real and essential importance, or that this aspect of Christ's work indicated the deepest truth regarding the relation between man and God. The minds of the people had to be trained by working on their past experience and acquired habits of thought. A modern missionary to savages would, if he be wise, take hold of their ideas in his teaching and develop them, and he would refrain from destroying any germs of good that lay in their conceptions of deity and divine demands.

Paul does not insist much on this sacrificial and priestly side of the relation of man to God, partly because he regards the old Hebrew dispensation more as a system of law than as a system of sacrifice by priests, partly because he approached the Greeks rather on the side of their philosophic and educated thoughts than through their pagan religious practices and ideas. Yet the ordinary pagans also regarded the relation of man to God as a system of gifts and sacrifices performed with the aid of a priest, who knew the proper rites and accompaniments; and Paul sometimes approaches the minds of his hearers on this side.[1] Generally, however,

[1] Ignatius is far more addicted to appeals of this character. He pictures the life of the Christian as a religious procession in which the sacred symbols are borne through the streets of a city; and his mind had been powerfully affected by the pagan Mysteries, as his language often shows. This subject has been briefly touched in one of the early chapters of the writer's *Letters to the Seven Churches*.

the context and the character of such allusions in Paul makes it clear that they are only illustrative and not essential; and it is unfortunate that so much stress has often been laid on them, as if they touched reality and as if they were not largely symbolical. So for example Ephesians v. 2, "Christ gave Himself up for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for an odour of sweet smell." One might have thought that the allusion to sacrifice and ritual is plainly metaphorical; but prepossession and the analogy of the Epistle to the Hebrews cause many scholars to quote this passage as a proof that Paul classed the death of Jesus as literally and in the deepest sense a sacrifice, similar in character and purpose to the sacrifices of animals in the old Hebrew ritual. The comparison of 2 Corinthians ii. 14, "the savour of his knowledge in every place," shows that the allusion to sweet smell is wholly figurative.

The expression of Paul that Christ "gave Himself up" for man does not (as is often maintained) necessarily, or even probably, involve the thought of a ritual sacrifice. The word παραδοῦναι does not in itself suggest that, and the thought is introduced into Ephesians v. 2, not by this verb, but by the quotation from the Old Testament which follows, "an offering and a sacrifice for an odour of sweet smell." In such a passage as Galatians ii. 20 the thought of sacrifice does not come in, though the same verb is used.

When the blood of Christ is referred to in such passages as Ephesians i. 7, 1 Corinthians x. 16, Romans v. 9, the guiding tone of the passage is not necessarily the idea of sacrifice; and in some cases the thought is probably of quite different character. In Romans viii. 3 the idea of sacrifice is introduced into the English version by interpolating the words "as an offering," which have nothing in the Greek to correspond to them or to justify them: the context here shows that Paul's thought is moving

entirely in the sphere of law, and not in the sphere of ritual.

There are other places, however, such as Romans iii. 25, where an allusion to the Hebrew ritual is probable or certain: especially 1 Corinthians v. 7 is a case in point. But certainly metaphor, not philosophic insight, is the character of these allusions.

All such passages may therefore be set aside as giving no proof or indication of the deeper movement of Paul's thought. They are educative and illustrative; they are used in order to rouse the minds of his readers to think, and do not spring from the philosophic basis of Paul's religious ideas, or serve as more than a mere index pointing towards it.

The one great exception probably is that to Paul Christ was the Paschal Lamb sacrificed for the people. This idea lay deep in the thought of the first century. It strongly affected the mind of John, as of Paul. It had great effect in moulding religious symbolism and imagery. It originates from the fact that Jesus was on the Cross at the time when the Paschal lamb was being slain in preparation for the Passover feast.[1] But it is characteristic rather of early Christian thought and symbolism in general than of Paul in particular. That is true of the whole Pauline doctrine and practice of the Eucharist. So far from being an invention of Paul's (as has sometimes been maintained) or from having been seriously modified by Paul, the Eucharist in its entirety was taken over by Paul from earlier ritual. He found it in the Church, and he transmitted it to the Church as he found it.[2] Its value and its efficacy lay in the

[1] Perhaps He was taken down from the Cross a little before the exact time of the slaying of the lamb; but this is immaterial, and was certainly considered immaterial in the early Church. The preparations for the Festival, and the providing of the lamb, had occurred earlier.

[2] A series of papers in the *Expository Times*, 1910, states the writer's view.

unchanged and pure preservation of the rite in its simplicity as it had been created by the Founder in His life, practised often by Him, and finally consecrated in the Last Supper.

After weighing these considerations we must conclude that the conception of the death of Christ after the image of the sacrifice of the Paschal lamb was early Christian, not specifically Pauline. It was, therefore, imposed on Paul from without, and not originated by him.

The priestly and sacrificial form of expression was really alien to Paul's most characteristic line of approach to this subject. It involved the idea of a priest as intervening, occupying the position of a mediator between man and God. The intervention of a priest was prescribed in the priestly law. The law "was ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator." [1] To Paul, however, and to all early Christian thought, the relation of man to God is direct, and not through a mediator. There can be no mediator between God and man except God Himself or the man himself. "To us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things and we unto Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and we through Him." [2]

The essential contrast between the Pauline and the sacrificial idea is so strong that the fashion of speaking about Christ as the priest and mediator must be regarded as simply a concession to Jewish feeling. In this matter the Christian doctrine does away wholly with the function of the Hebrew priest. It is merely a device of instruction, a way of illustrating the preparatory and paedagogic character of the Jewish dispensation, to say that the place of the priest in that system is filled by Christ Himself in the Christian system. To the Jews this form of expression meant much in that early age of Christianity: it gathered up their ideas

[1] Galatians iii. 19.
[2] 1 Corinthians viii. 6. Compare also 1 Timothy ii. 5.

of ritual, brought them to a focus, and thus made the new doctrine intelligible to them in the light of the old. But in modern time there are many minds to which the priestly function seems alien and irrelevant, a mere relic of primitive and undeveloped and wholly inadequate religion; and the idea that the Pauline teaching or the essential nature of Christianity attaches any sacrificial value or any priestly character to the work of Christ takes figure and symbol for reality, and is a profound error, which, besides being erroneous in itself, alienates the modern mind because it is incomprehensible to that mind.

It is more in accordance with Pauline thought to say that the narrow official priesthood of the old Hebrew system was merged in the universal priesthood of the Christian system. The intervention of the priest was no longer required, when each Christian felt his own direct relation to God and "worked out his own salvation." This idea of universal priesthood was strongly held in the earliest Church: "ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood" . . . "to offer spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God."[1] The union of the offices of king and priest in the person of every Christian appears also in John, Revelation i. 6, v. 10, xx. 6: "they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."

In the latter quotation the conjunction of kingdom and priesthood shows that the idea is totally unlike Paul's conception of the saint as king.[2] Paul's conception is caught from the Greek philosophy: the saint is king, because he has been placed above the storms of worldly life. The union of priesthood and kingship in one person is oriental and theocratic. It carries us back into primitive oriental society, when the god ruled his people through his priest and representative on earth. In Peter the idea is expressed

[1] 1 Peter ii. 9 and 5.

[2] See Section xviii.

in quotations from the Old Testament, but it is moral and symbolical; while in Revelation it has hardened into an external fact placed within the limits of time. That is characteristic of the latter book; in it moral ideas are pictured as if they became facts of the temporal universe; and this relation shows that the ideas of early Christianity have been dwelt on in meditation by John until they externalised themselves and are so thought about by him.[1]

In Paul this priestly character of the saint is wholly unimportant. As to Peter, so to Paul, all the elect are saints and holy; but the latter is content to regard this as a fact of purity and morality, the elect are in the image of Christ, while to the former it conveys the implication that the elect are consecrated as priests of God.

The contrast between the different points of view which Ignatius and Paul respectively occupy in regard to this matter is the contrast between a person who, having himself grown out of paganism into Christianity, takes the best forms and thoughts he had known in his own paganism and gives them a Christian connotation and development, and another who, growing up a Jew, with a horror of paganism, yet in long contact with the education and philosophic thought of the pagan world, expounds Christian teaching to the pagan world by using the best forms and thoughts of pagan education and elevating these to the level of Christian life, while he tends rather to shrink from using any specially religious form or idea of paganism. In saying this we implicitly dissent from the theory (which has become fashionable recently but which will soon pass away) that the evolution of Paul's thought was stimulated or guided in any degree by the pagan Mysteries. That theory appears

[1] Incidentally we note that this relation stamps the book as later, and is not consistent with a date under Nero. The Hebraic and adopted element in the book is of course earlier.

fundamentally false. Any resemblance is due to the fact that the Mysteries in the time of Paul were developed in answer to the popular need for religious stimulation and guidance, and that Paul presents Christianity as the only complete fulfilment of the popular need.

XXIV. Metaphor and Truth.

Between metaphor and philosophic truth one must always distinguish in studying Paul. The purely religious writer, indeed, may always safely adopt the metaphorical language, confident that it will rouse the emotion and stir the spirit and affect the life of the hearers; but if he has to satisfy the intellectual judgment he must distinguish. Even the terms "Father" and "Son," as used of the Godhead, are metaphorical: in their literal sense they denote a human relationship, which cannot have any place in the Divine nature: they suggest to the human mind a certain tender, close relationship which is analogous, yet different. In the Divine nature the Father and the Son are one person: in human nature they are two. In the Divine nature they are co-existent from the beginning, co-eternal, of the same substance: in the human nature one originates from the other at a certain time. The very word "substance" is metaphorical, when applied to the Divine nature, for God is spirit.

The expression of Divine things, "the deep things of God," has always to struggle with the utter inadequacy of human language addressed to the finite intelligence, and drawn from finite and partial experience. Yet it has to suggest a "knowledge" that shall be perfect and non-finite, the real "wisdom" or "knowledge of God." Man has to grope and to force his way on along the path of knowledge. He gathers to himself detail after detail, and part

after part, taking them into his mind, making them portions of himself by realising for himself the spiritual reality and law, eternal, constant, infinite, that lies in or under the finite detail or metaphor. Such knowledge, according to Paul's vivid expression, is only "piecemeal" or partial knowledge. It has to be done away, and real knowledge substituted for it. The mind of man at last sees the truth stand open and bare and clear before it, and knows instantaneously: it leaps over the infinite[1] chasm that divides the finite from the infinite, and reaches its inheritance of divine knowledge. Then the partial knowledge falls away, after the mind has seen. In the human life "we see in a mirror, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know fully even as also I was fully known." So says Paul to the Corinthians, xiii. 12.

There is no room for hesitation or doubt regarding this perfect knowledge. When the mind of man sees it, it knows at once and for all time: it recognises its true self, for it recognises the Divine, and the end of man is to recognise his true nature in the Divine nature. And so Paul says, "then I shall know fully even as also I was fully known." This perfect knowledge is the knowledge which God possesses, and it will in the moment of insight be exercised as God exercises it—"as I also was fully known" by the mind and purpose of God.

To fall back from this knowledge is fatal: it amounts to the denial of God after having seen Him: it is "the sin against the Holy Spirit," irremediable and unpardonable. Yet to fall back from this knowledge is not possible. Because this sin is unpardonable, therefore this sin is impossible; for the love of God is infinite, and there is nothing that it cannot conquer, and nothing that it cannot pardon. Here again we are face to face with one of those apparent, but

[1] Infinite; yet it has to be crossed.

only apparent and not real, self-contradictions. This sin is unpardonable; yet there is nothing that God cannot wash away. The finite intelligence in face of the infinite, owing to the partial, piecemeal, finite, character of its knowledge, is always exposed to such contradictions: it states what seems a fact, and then it sees the other side of the fact, and in trying to express this other side it contradicts its first statement.

Yet, while this perfect knowledge is gained finally as the end and crown of life—in other words, is a possession towards which we move, and which we attain only in putting off the human nature and attaining unto God—and while it is gained instantaneously and absolutely and for ever as a permanent possession; yet it is equally true to say that it is involved in every step that we make along the path of knowledge and of real life. In the growth of knowledge, there is more than the adding of detail to detail and of part to part. The resulting knowledge is far more than the sum of the parts. It is a new thing. The parts are, so to say, done away and annihilated. One reaches truth for the moment. One recognises the truth, the Divine truth, one's own nature, one's real self. There is felt for the moment the glow of the fire of reality and the Divine. The past, the details, have perished: one's former self has died: a new self springs into life. This is true in the moral and spiritual life (as was pointed out in a former Section): it is true also in the intellectual life on its highest side, for on that highest side the intellectual and the religious life are merged in one another.

In studying Paul it is always necessary to penetrate beneath the metaphor to the reality. What is adoption, as we find the term in his letters? The word adoption in contemporary society described a legal and social process, whereby a family which came to an end so far as blood was

concerned was perpetuated by a species of legal fiction through the introduction of a stranger. The process was alien to the Jews: the term adoption carried no meaning to them, except as an exotic idea which they learned among the Gentiles. They attained the same purpose in another way. It was familiar to the Greeks and to the Romans, and it roused warm emotional ideas in the minds of many. The term was therefore highly suitable in addressing such people as the congregations of South Galatia, for they knew it in the Græco-Asiatic law.[1] But it is only a metaphorical expression, and not literally true. It expressed the process of bringing into the family an alien to inherit the religious duties and the property of the family, and this process presented a certain analogy to the process of bringing in the Gentiles to share or to possess the glories promised to the Jews. Yet the analogy is only an incomplete one: there are many points of difference between the two processes. Paul seizes the points of similarity, and slurs over the differences. His readers did the same thing; and therefore they learned to see what Paul had in mind. If, however, one takes the inheritance of the Gentiles, and argues that, because the sinner is adopted as a son of God, therefore everything that can be predicated about a legal process of adoption among men can be predicated about the bringing of sinners into the inheritance of God, one would be led into endless blunders.

Now many arguments against the Pauline teaching are founded on misapprehension of his language, which was necessarily figurative. His expression, owing to the bent and character of his mind, was largely legal and commercial. If the legal aspect is pressed, extreme inferences can be

[1] That the legal processes referred to in the Galatian Epistle are Græco-Asiatic, and differed from the analogous, but not identical processes of Roman law, has been proved in my *Historical Commentary* to the satisaction of the highest authority, Professor Mitteis.

drawn, and have been drawn; and these inferences, which by some have been drawn in good faith, and with a profound belief that was able to blind itself to much of the erroneousness, have been by others condemned and misjudged as absurdities. They become absurdities, because they are looked at from the wrong point of view. Looked at in their proper character, as mere aids to understanding, the metaphors are wholly free from the absurd consequences which have been imported into them.

So, to take another example, the Christian term "redemption" acquires a connotation very different from the act of redeeming a slave or a captive, and must not be judged as if it were identical. The analogy may be seized, and the difference left out of mind.

One example may be added of false view and inference regarding the position of Paul: this will form our next Section.

XXV. The Beginning of Sin in the World.

In regard to the origin of sin in the world there is in Paul's teaching the same seeming, but only seeming, contradiction that has so often met us already. After man and the world had come into existence, sin began in the world at a particular moment through an act of the man. "Through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin."

It has sometimes been rashly inferred by unphilosophic speculation that there must have existed a state of sinlessness and moral perfection before the first act of sin was committed. Paul did not hold or teach such a doctrine; and the inference from what he did state is unjustifiable. On the contrary, he says that "the first man is of the earth, earthy,"[1] i.e., the potentiality of evil was involved from

[1] 1 Corinthians xv. 47.

the beginning, and sinfulness was implicit in the nature of the first man. Sin begins when man begins.

It would be merely senseless to argue that, in a literal interpretation of the story of Adam (which Paul indubitably regarded as true both historically and spiritually), the first man was sinless until the first sin was committed. This is a literalism too painful and too gross. In the evolution of man's history under conditions of time and space, the man exists and then sin enters. But the sin is potentially present in man from the moment of his creation. There is a moment when the potential becomes actual; but those who argue that Paul thought of a state of human sinlessness as reigning until Adam committed his first sin are incapacitating themselves from comprehending Paul.

As has already been stated, the permanent possibility of sin and the position of man as exposed to the temptation of sinning and as ultimately triumphing over this temptation and attaining to re-union with God, are the Divine order of creation and the law of the universe. This possibility of sinning is the measure of what we have figuratively termed the distance separating man from God. The distance is entailed in the act of making man, and the giving to him of a distinct individuality, in which he may exercise his separate powers; and his life ought to be the gradual overcoming of the temptation to sin, the traversing of the distance that divides him from God, and finally the attaining to God once more. It is not too strong—though it is a statement that is liable to be misinterpreted and requires to be read with sympathy to distinguish between the good and the bad in our imperfect expression—to say that man is an imperfect Jesus, and as it were a Christ who has failed to realise the end of his being and the purpose of his creation; that Jesus is the expression of the Divine purpose in the creation of man; and that the life of Jesus is the guar-

antee that this purpose can be realised, will be realised, and (as one might almost say) must ultimately be realised. The nature of Christ is the idea of Salvation, which takes possession of the man,[1] and works in him in the way of driving him on to work out his own salvation. It is merely another one among the many imperfect ways of describing the relation of man to God to say that, unless man is capable of sinning, he is not divided from God, and there can therefore be no complete creative act, until the new creature stands apart from the Original Creative Power, able and free to choose for himself and to act for himself, i.e., to sin or to avoid sinning.

XXVI. The Possibility of a "Super-Man."

It may be asked, Is not this too awkward, too roundabout, too complicated a process; and therefore is it not unfair to man and unworthy of God? Why not make man so that he will come right and be righteous of himself and through his own unaided activity?

We might reply that, if man is such that he can (and therefore must) rise free from sin through himself alone, he is not really man: he is not divided from God, and there would have been in that case no act of creation, and nothing but God would exist: there would be no man. Let us, however, look at it in another way. If man were so made, he would in that case be (in modern phrase) a "Super-man." Ancient thought seems to have dallied with this idea, and worked it out to its consequences. If we assume that such beings exist, freed from the fetters and imperfections of humanity, able to know and to act, the result must be (and has actually been, according to that ancient theory) that these beings are not reminded through their own

[1] Galatians ii. 20, Philippians iii. 12, 1 Corinthians xiii. 12.

failure that they must lean on God and trust to Him ; in other words they naturally trust themselves and fail to keep Him in regard, and thus they are merely led into sin in another form : they are the wicked angels, the lost spirits, the devils of popular superstition.

In every supposition that either ordinary man, or " super-man," or powers and beings intermediate between God and man (such as the " angels and principalities and powers " of Jewish belief), can through their own nature and power know the truth and attain it of themselves, there is involved the consequence that the conscious memory of the Divine nature outside of them and the Divine goal in front of them dies out, and that " knowing God, they glorified Him not as God, neither gave thanks," and therefore that " their heart was made senseless and darkened." Thus their wisdom becomes folly ; and their conception of the Divine nature is distorted ; and the career of evil sketched by Paul to the Romans [1] ensues. Sin thus comes in by another way and in another form even more serious.

Ancient religious thought in an almost unconscious way developed this line of speculation to the ultimate issue that these higher beings become powers of evil, separate permanently from God (except in so far as they repent, master their pride, and seek humbly to return to Him), hostile to God, foes to man as the work of God, and bent on preventing man from fulfilling the purpose of God. The fanciful theory of the " super-man " was worked out by ancient thought in this form, and was thus disproved by reducing to an absurdity. You cannot have the " super-man " without finding that you have merely got the " devil."

If, therefore, the division from God involved in the act of creation is real, the possibility of sinning is inevitably involved in it. If that division is not real, then there is

[1] Romans i. 21 ff.

nothing except the Divine, and no creation of human nature has occurred.

The consciousness of God in the human mind as continued, complete and eternal, as possible, is the condition of the higher life and the aim of human nature. Man attains towards this end by living it and making it real in his character: as he learns to swim by swimming, so he learns to realise God, to be conscious of God, to know God, by doing so and being so. If he attempts to do right and to be righteous through himself and his own power, he is thereby forgetting God; his consciousness of God is interrupted through his own "senseless" exaltation of himself into the place of God; and he has turned his back and moved in the contrary direction away from God. The element of delicate action and perverse choosing is involved in his conduct. Now, whereas the aim of life is re-union with God, i.e., absolutely unbroken, continuous and unending thinking with God and like God, it is purely absurd if men were to try to attain this end by forgetting Him and giving themselves the glory.

In the passage of Romans, which has just been mentioned,[1] if our interpretation is right, Paul is just stating the converse of his own words to the Galatians defining the true life, [2] "It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me": i.e., he thinks continuously and always with God, sees God in everything, has no consciousness except of the Divine purpose and will that moves and rules in every act of nature and of history, and thus his own individual will has been merged in the will of God, not by losing its distinct personality, but by attaining to its full development: he has not been absorbed and annihilated in the Divine, but in the Divine consciousness has attained the perfection of his own true individuality. He is re-united with God,

[1] Romans i. 2 ff. [2] Galatians ii. 20.

and yet remains his individual self in glorified form and in spiritual body. But yet—"not that I have already attained or am already made perfect; but I press on . . . toward the goal unto the prize of the upward calling of God in Jesus *who is the* Messiah." The way of this Salvation is, and must inevitably be, the passionate enthusiastic whole-hearted recognition of the real nature of Jesus as the message of God, the merging of one's own nature in the recognition of this message, the living of the Christ-life, i.e., being "crucified with Christ," the sacrifice of one's older false self in order to attain to one's true self, the seizing of Christ as one has been seized by Him. This is the law of growth: the process is defined by its ultimate and perfect stage. The completion of the process is involved already in the first step onwards, because the first step marks the guiding law of the whole. The Christian is already perfect, because he will be perfect; and yet immediately and always comes the instantaneous recognition that in all this process he himself has done nothing, but Christ and the message and purpose of God are working in him: not for one instant may he forget to give God the glory and render to Him the thanks,[1] otherwise the whole process is vitiated and turned to self-glorification, arrogance and deterioration. In each moment of growth all the process and the law are involved: one attains and yet one has not attained, but only grown a stage; and God remains in front, outside, beyond oneself! and the Divine in the man has still to press onwards towards reunion with the Divine which stands before. The re-union is ever in the process of being consummated, and yet is not consummated. Such is the law and the nature of Christ. What then is Christ, and what is the knowledge of Christ and of God?

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[1] Romans i. 21.