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II. THESSALONIANS

Exposition and Homiletics
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Homilies by Various Authors

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THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE THESSALONIANS.

INTRODUCTION.

§ 1. THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE EPISTLE.

THE external evidence in favour of the authenticity of the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians is even stronger than that in favour of the First Epistle. In consequence of the prediction of the "man of sin," contained in the second chapter, which prediction made a great impression on the early Church, it is more frequently referred to and quoted by the Christian Fathers. The testimonies of Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Clemens of Alexandria, and Tertullian may all be appealed to. Justin Martyr (A.D. 140) unquestionably alludes to this Epistle when he says, "When also the man of apostasy, who speaketh great things against the Most High, shall dare to commit unlawful deeds against us Christians" ('Dial. cum Tryph.,' c. 110). And the following direct quotations are found in the writings of Irenæus (A.D. 178): "And again in the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, speaking of antichrist, Paul says, 'And then shall that wicked one be revealed whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the spirit of his mouth, and destroy with the presence of his coming' (ch. ii. 8)" ('Adv. Hæres.,' iii. 7, 2). And again: "Concerning whom the apostle in the Epistle which is the Second to the Thessalonians thus speaks: 'Except a falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition: who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped' (ch. ii. 3, 4)" ('Adv. Hæres.,' v. 25. 1).

Nor is the internal evidence by any means deficient. The character of Paul is impressed upon this Epistle; his lively sympathy with his converts, his gratitude to God for the increase of their faith and love, his joy in their spiritual welfare, his tenderness when censuring them, his assertion of his apostolic authority, his reference to his former instructions, his request for an interest in their prayers,—all these characteristics of the apostle are

found in this Epistle. The style is undoubtedly Pauline. We have the same form of salutation at the beginning and of benediction at the close, the same parallelisms, the same digressions and expansions, the same expressions and peculiarities of diction, which are elsewhere found in Paul's other Epistles.¹ The prophetic portion in the second chapter has indeed been adduced as an evidence of spuriousness. But this objection is partly founded on a mistaken interpretation of the prediction; and although it is admitted that there is here a striking peculiarity, yet this peculiarity relates only to the matter, not to the phraseology, which is undoubtedly Pauline. "The passage in question," observes Dean Alford, "will be found on comparison to bear, in style and flow of sentences, a close resemblance to the denunciatory and prophetic portions of the other Epistles. Compare, for instance, ver. 3 with Col. ii. 8, 16; vers. 8, 9 with 1 Cor. xv. 24—28; ver. 10 with Rom. i. 18, 1 Cor. i. 18, and 2 Cor. ii. 15; ver. 11 with Rom. i. 24, 26; ver. 12 with Rom. ii. 5, 9 and Rom. i. 22."² And although this passage has been much objected to by modern critics, yet hardly any scriptural passage has been more frequently referred to by the early Fathers, and that without any doubt that it formed a part of a genuine Epistle of Paul.

The undesigned coincidences noticed in this Epistle are few and unimportant. The obscurity of the prediction concerning antichrist has been adverted to as a proof of genuineness. No author, it has been remarked, writes unintelligibly on purpose; but it is to be observed that what is almost unintelligible to us was not unintelligible to the Thessalonians. They had a key to the interpretation of the passage in the oral instructions of the apostle given when he was at Thessalonica: "Remember ye not, that, when I was with you, I told you of these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time" (ch. ii. 5, 6).³ In the Epistle Paul observes: "Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable unto any of you" (ch. iii. 8). The apostle here asserts that he received nothing in the way of maintenance from the Thessalonians; and this fact is confirmed by a statement in the Epistle to the Philippians, wherein it is said that his wants in Thessalonica were at least partially supplied by the Philippians: "Now ye Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedoniz, no Church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again to my necessity" (Phil. iv. 15, 16). And the motive which induced the apostle to decline support from the Thessalonians, namely, to give them an example of honest labour and diligence in work (ch. iii. 9), was the same which actuated him to

¹ See author's 'Pauline Epistles,' p. 108; and also Jowett's 'Epistles of Paul,' vol. I. pp. 140—142, 1st edit.

² Alford's 'Greek Testament,' vol. iii., Prolegomena, p. 55.

³ Paley's 'Horæ Paulinæ: 2 Thessalonians, No. I.

pursue the same course of conduct at Ephesus (Acts xx. 34, 35). There appears also to be in this Epistle a reference to the First Epistle, where the apostle says, "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or in our Epistle" (ch. ii. 15).

§ 2. THE OCCASION OF THE EPISTLE

The persons to whom this Epistle was written were "the Church of the Thessalonians" (ch. i. 1), or the Christian converts in the city of Thessalonica. We have already fully discussed this point in the introductory remarks to the First Epistle.

In order to understand this Second Epistle, we must endeavour to ascertain the condition of the Thessalonian Church when the apostle wrote to them. Paul had been compelled to leave the Thessalonians only partially instructed in Christianity; they were defective both in the knowledge of its doctrines and in the practice of its precepts. He had written them an Epistle to correct abuses and to supply what was lacking in their faith (1 Thess. iii. 10). The intelligence brought back to the apostle by the bearer of the First Epistle, or through some other channel, was the occasion of this Epistle. The apostle received a good report of the Thessalonians, and is enabled to express his joy and thankfulness to God that their faith grew exceedingly, and the love of every one toward each other abounded (ch. i. 3). But still the erroneous views concerning the advent, and the consequent disorders to which he had adverted in the First Epistle, had rather increased than diminished. The Lord Jesus Christ had left the world only twenty years before. He had promised to return at an uncertain date, and therefore nothing was more natural than that the Church in general should have expected his immediate return. Various circumstances, both in the Church and in the world, heightened this expectation. Such a view of an immediate advent had taken possession of the minds of the Thessalonian converts. Their anxiety for the loss of their deceased relatives, who, they thought, would lose all the benefits occurring at the advent, had indeed been assuaged by the former Epistle, but the expectation of the immediate advent itself had grown in strength. The Thessalonians, it would seem, from misapprehending some passages of the First Epistle, considered that the day of Christ was at hand (ch. ii. 2). Mistaken and enthusiastic men had also nourished this deception by appealing to visions and to the traditionary sayings of the apostle; and it would even appear that an Epistle had been forged in the name of the apostle. The Church was thrown into a state of wild excitement; an impatient and fanatical longing for the instant when Christ would come seized upon one portion, whilst fear and consternation at the awfulness of the event overwhelmed another. The consequence was that many of the Thessalonians were neglecting their secular business and living idle and useless lives, conceiving that there was no use of working in a world which was so soon

to be destroyed, or of performing the duties belonging to a state of things which was so soon to terminate. Their only duty they felt was to be in readiness for the immediate coming of their Lord.

Accordingly the design of the apostle, in writing this Epistle, was to correct the error which the Thessalonians entertained concerning the immediate advent, and to rectify those abuses to which that error had given rise. The main object of the apostle was to warn the Thessalonians against thinking that the day of the Lord was imminent. The apostle reminds them of his former instructions on this point, and tells them that a series of events—the manifestation and destruction of the man of sin—would intervene. “Now we beseech you concerning the advent of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken from your mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is present” (ch. ii. 1, 2). And, along with this correction of error, was the correction of the disorders occasioned by it. There were among the Thessalonians some who walked disorderly, working not at all; them he enjoined to return to their employments, to do their work with quietness, and to eat the bread of honest labour (ch. iii. 10—12).

With regard to its contents, the Epistle is divided into three parts, nearly corresponding to the three chapters in our version; the first part is eucharistic, the second apocalyptic, and the third practical. The apostle, after saluting the Thessalonians, renders thanks to God for the good report which he had received of them, for the increase of their faith and love, and for their great patience under prolonged persecution; he comforts them under their sufferings by the prospect of rest and recompense at the advent of the Lord Jesus, and prays for their continuance in the faith, and for the glory of Christ's name through their steadfastness and holiness (ch. i.). He then proceeds to the principal object which he had in view—the correction of their error in supposing that the day of Christ was imminent. He admonishes them not to suffer themselves to be led away by excitement as if Christ would immediately appear, he reminds them of his former conversations with them on this subject, and he describes the coming of the man of sin which must precede the coming of Christ (ch. ii. 1—12). He then exhorts them to attend to the admonitions he had given them, whether by word or by his Epistle; he prays that the Lord might direct their minds to a patient waiting for the advent of Christ; he especially warns them against that unsteadiness and idleness which prevailed among them; he enjoins them to discountenance and admonish all those who would not be persuaded by his injunctions; and he concludes his Epistle by appending with his own hand his apostolic benediction, as a token of its genuineness (ch. ii. 13—iii.).

§ 3. THE DATE OF THE EPISTLE.

This Epistle was evidently written shortly after the First. Silas and Timothy, as in the First Epistle, are conjoined with Paul in the salutation, and were consequently still in his company when he wrote this Epistle. But when Paul left Corinth, we are not informed that these two fellow-workers accompanied him (Acts xvii. 8); nor, from what appears, were they ever afterwards both together with him. Timothy, we are informed, rejoined Paul at Ephesus (Acts xix. 22); but there is no further mention of Silas in the Acts of the Apostles. Besides, the relations and wants of the Church are similar to those which are presupposed in the First Epistle; similar commendations, warnings, instructions, and prayers are contained in both Epistles; the only difference being what the lapse of a few months might effect in the character and conduct of the Thessalonian Church. A closer indication of time is supposed to be contained in ch. iii. 2, where the apostle entreats the Thessalonians to pray for him that he might be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men—evidently from his unbelieving Jewish opponents—from which it has been inferred that the outbreak of Jewish hatred and fanaticism, when the apostle was dragged before Gallio, was about to take place. At all events, time must be allowed for further information concerning the Church of Thessalonica to have reached the apostle, for the progress which the Thessalonians made in faith and love, and for the further development of the error concerning the advent. We cannot be wrong in fixing the time of the composition of this Epistle to the later part of Paul's residence in Corinth, or to the close of A.D. 53. Calvin is undoubtedly mistaken when he supposes that this Epistle was written during the last journey of Paul to Jerusalem, supposing that the "unreasonable and wicked men" were the Judaizing Christians who dogged his steps.

Some—Grotius, Ewald, Laurent, Baur, Davidson (2nd edit.)—reverse the order of the Epistles, and suppose that this Second Epistle was in reality the First. But the reasons which they give for this opinion are without weight. The mark of genuineness, at the close of the Epistle, was given in consequence of the existence of a spurious Epistle (ch. ii. 2), and not because it was the first Epistle which the apostle wrote. The Second Epistle presupposes the First. The First Epistle describes how the Thessalonians received the Word of God, whilst the Second Epistle mentions their progress in faith, love, and patience. The First Epistle treats of the uncertainty of the advent; the Second Epistle corrects the misapprehension of the Thessalonians concerning that uncertainty. The First Epistle adverts to the spirit of disorder, the germs of which the apostle saw in the Thessalonian Church; the Second Epistle rebukes this spirit still more sharply, as these germs had developed and borne pernicious fruit. The First Epistle had given the Thessalonians commandments to be obeyed; and, in the

Second Epistle, the apostle exhorts them to hold the traditions which he had delivered to them, whether by word or his Epistle.

The place of writing was Corinth. The note at the end of the Epistle, "The Second Epistle to the Thessalonians was written from Athens," although found in very ancient manuscripts, is undoubtedly erroneous; so also are other statements which refer the composition of this Epistle to Berea, Laodicea, or Rome. This, then, is the second of Paul's extant Epistles.

§ 4. THE PECULIARITIES OF THE EPISTLE.

The great peculiarity of this Epistle—that which distinguishes it from all Paul's other Epistles, and imparts to it a peculiar importance, and at the same time renders its exposition a matter of great difficulty—is the prediction of the man of sin, contained in the second chapter (vers. 1—12). This section is distinguished from all the other writings of Paul, and is closely allied to the prophecies of Daniel and the apocalyptic visions of John. Here the apostle glances into the future, and predicts what is to happen in the latter days. There are other portions of his Epistles in which he refers to what will occur in the last days, and at the period of the manifestation of the sons of God (2 Tim. iii. 1—5; Rom. viii. 19—24), and he also foretells the full conversion of both Jews and Gentiles to the faith of Jesus (Rom. xi. 25); but this is the only passage in all his Epistles where a detailed prophecy is given. This prediction of the man of sin, as already observed, had peculiar attractions to the early Church suffering from persecution; and it has been the subject of numerous dissertations in modern times; its very obscurity being one cause of the interest attached to it, and of the amount of ingenious labour expended on its elucidation.

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE THESSALONIANS.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER I.

CONTENTS.—Paul, after the address and salutation, commences this Epistle by rendering thanks to God for the welcome intelligence he had received of the increase of the faith and love of his Thessalonian converts, so that he was enabled to boast of them throughout all the Churches of Achaia, on account of their steadfastness in the endurance of continued persecution. Their present suffering was an evidence of a future state of retribution, when the justice of God would be vindicated, and affliction would be rendered to their persecutors and rest to them the persecuted, on that great day when the Lord Jesus would appear in glory for the destruction of his enemies and the glorification of his people. The apostle expresses his constant prayer for the Thessalonians that God would enable them to walk worthy of their high vocation, so as to be made partakers of that glory which would be conferred on believers at the advent.

Vers. 1, 2.—Paul, and Silvanus, and Timothy. This Epistle, like the former, is written in their conjoint names, as all three were engaged in the planting of the Church in Thessalonica. Unto the Church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (For the exposition of these two verses, see remarks on 1 Thess. i. 1, where the address and salutation are almost entirely the same.)

Ver. 3.—We. Not to be restricted to Paul, the plural being used for the singular, as is elsewhere the case (1 Thess. ii. 8; iii. 1); but inclusive of Silas and Timothy, inas-

much as they are mentioned directly before (see note to 1 Thess. i. 2). **Are bound**; feel ourselves morally constrained. **To thank God always for you, brethren** (comp. 1 Thess. i. 2). The apostle first praises his converts for what good was in them, before he censures them for their faults, and in this manner he secures their attention. **As it is meet**; as it is right and proper in the circumstances of the case. The words are not to be considered as a parenthetical clause, far less as a tautological expression (Jowett); but they state that the reason of the apostle's thanksgiving arose from the spiritual condition of the Thessalonians; "with the acknowledgment of personal obligation, Paul joins a recognition of the circumstances of the case" (Hofmann). **Because that your faith groweth exceedingly—superabounds—and the charity of every one of you all.** The subject of the apostle's thanksgiving was the increase of the faith and love of the Thessalonians: faith here being faith in Christ, and love being love to man. Faith and love contain in themselves the whole of the Christian life; faith is its commencement, its source; love is not only its outcome, its spiritual action, but its completion; the climax of the Christian life is to be made perfect in love. Here, however, love is restricted by the context to love to believers, or brotherly love. Toward each other; that is, toward your fellow-Christians in Thessalonica. Love is not a mere general affection, but is to be specially manifested—"toward each believer." **Aboundeth; increaseth in intensity.**

Ver. 4.—**So that we ourselves.** "We"—Paul and Silas and Timothy, the founders of the Church of Thessalonica. "We ourselves," not merely we of our own accord (Hofmann), but we as well as our informants, who brought us this intelligence of the increase of your faith and love. **Glory in**

you in the Churches of God; that is, in those Churches with which we come in contact; namely, the Church at Corinth and the Churches in Achaia. It would appear from this that several Churches had been founded in Achaia, as, for example, the Church of Cenorea (Rom. xvi. 1). For your patience and faith; not to be weakened as a Hebraism for "your patient faith," or "for the patience of your faith;" nor is faith to be taken in the sense of faithfulness or fidelity (Lüncmann); but, as in the previous verse, it denotes "faith in Christ." Patience is steadfast endurance, which, in order to be of any value in the sight of God, must be combined with faith; stoical endurance is not here nor anywhere else inculcated in Scripture. In all your persecutions and tribulations—afflictions—that ye endure; or, are enduring; the persecution which arose when Paul was at Thessalonica being continued. The patience and faith of the Thessalonians shone the more brilliantly amid persecution and affliction, even as the stars shine brightest in the dark night. To be a true Christian in the time of peace is a great matter; but to be a true Christian in the season of persecution is a greater; faith is then tested in the furnace.

Ver. 5.—Which is a manifest token. A sentence in apposition, so that the words, "which is," printed in italics, ought to be omitted. By "token" is here meant pledge or proof. The reference is not simply to the Thessalonians, but to the whole clause—to the fact of the Thessalonians steadfastly enduring persecutions and affliction; in other words, to their sufferings for the sake of the gospel. Of the righteous—just—judgment of God. Not to be referred to the present state, and particularly to sufferings perfecting the Thessalonians and preparing them for the kingdom of God (Olshausen); but to the future judgment. These words imply that the sufferings of the righteous and the prosperity of their wicked persecutors was a clear proof that there shall be a future state of retribution, when the inequalities of the present state of things will be adjusted, when the apparent violations of justice will be rectified, and when matters will be completely reversed—when the persecutors will be punished and the persecuted rewarded (comp. Phil. i. 28, "And in nothing terrified by your adversaries; which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation and that of God"). That; in order that, indicating the purpose of God's dispensation. Ye may be counted worthy. Paul here finds, in the faith and patience of the Thessalonians amid persecution, an evidence of a state of reward, as well as in the cruelties of their persecutors an evidence of a state of punishment. The idea that man

can merit salvation as a reward from God is not contained in this passage. As all men are sinners, salvation can only be obtained through the merits and mediation of Christ. But with this grace of God, justice is not abolished; the righteous will be rewarded for their faith and patience (comp. Heb. vi. 10; also Heb. xi. 6; Luke vi. 35; 1 Cor. iii. 8; 2 John 8). Of the kingdom of God; namely, the Messianic kingdom which Christ will establish at the advent: here the heavenly state. For which; for the sake of which. Ye also suffer; or rather, *are suffering*; the sufferings being continued down to the time when the apostle wrote this Epistle.

Ver. 6.—Seeing it is; or rather, *if indeed it is; if so be that it is* (R.V.). A hypothetical sentence, not, however, introducing an uncertain or conditional fact, but an emphatic assertion—what is felt by all to be true. A righteous thing with God. Not only will the justice of God be displayed in the rewards of the righteous, in counting them worthy of the kingdom of God for which they suffer, but it will also be displayed in the punishments to be inflicted on their persecutors. To recompense tribulation to them that trouble you. We have here an example of one of the most common defects of our English Version in rendering cognate words by different terms, and thus creating needless perplexities and giving rise to erroneous interpretations; the words "tribulation" and "trouble" are cognate, and hence the verse ought to be rendered as in the R.V., "If so be that it is a righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict you."

Ver. 7.—And to you who are troubled—afflicted—rest. The word "rest" here is a noun in the accusative, not a verb, as English readers might at the first glance suppose. It literally denotes relaxation, ease. The meaning of the passage is that it is a righteous thing with God to recompense rest to you who are afflicted. The recompense of the persecutors—those who afflict, is affliction; the recompense of the persecuted—the afflicted, is rest (comp. Matt. xi. 28, 29). The rest or relaxation here mentioned is that which awaits believers, not in this world, but in the next, "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest" (Job iii. 17). "There remaineth a rest for the people of God" (Heb. iv. 9). The happiness of heaven on its negative side, as freedom from earthly affliction and persecution, is here stated. It is rest to the weary, freedom to the enslaved, release from sorrow, suffering, and pain, relaxation from toil, ease from noise and turmoil, the quiet haven of peace after being tossed about in the tempestuous ocean. With us; that is, not with us believers in general, or with us the

apostles, the champions of the faith, and still less with us Jews, the saints of Israel; but with us, the writers of this Epistle, namely, Paul and Silas and Timothy. When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed; or, more literally, at the revelation or apocalypse of the Lord Jesus. The advent of Christ is generally expressed by another word, *parousia*, denoting "presence;" here the word is *apocalypse*, bringing before us in a more vivid manner the visible manifestation of Christ. The advent of Christ is the period when he who has hitherto been concealed will be manifested as the supreme Ruler and Judge of the world. From heaven; where now he is concealed from human view, seated at the right hand of God. With his mighty angels; not with his host of angels, but, as it is in the margin of our Bibles, "with the angels of his power"—serving his power and proclaiming his might. It is the uniform declaration of Scripture that Christ will come to judgment attended by his holy angels (Matt. xvi. 27; xxiv. 31; Jude 14). And these angels are "the angels of his power," sent forth to execute his commands. By their instrumentality the dead shall be called from their graves, and the wicked separated from among the just (1 Thes. iv. 16; Matt. xiii. 49).

Ver. 8.—In flaming fire; not the instrument of punishment—"in flaming fire taking vengeance;" but a further description of the glory of Christ's appearance—"revealed in flaming fire." In the Old Testament God is represented as appearing in flaming fire, as when he manifested himself to Moses in the burning bush (Exod. iii. 2; Acts vii. 30); and especially his coming to judgment is represented as coming in fire (Ps. xcvi. 3). What is there asserted of God is here referred to Christ (comp. Rev. xix. 22). There is also a probable reference to the Shechinah or cloud of glory in which Christ will appear for judgment (Rev. i. 7). Some also suppose a reference to the fire of the universal conflagration which shall usher in the last day (2 Pet. iii. 10), and others to the fire which shall consume the ungodly, but it is best to restrict the expression to the glory of Christ's manifestation. Taking vengeance; literally, *giving*; that is, awarding or allotting vengeance, representing the act, not of a conqueror or of an avenger, but of a righteous Judge. On them that know not God—the unbelieving Gentiles—and that; or rather, on them that; a second class being here denoted. Obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; namely, the unbelieving Jews. The ignorance of the one and the disobedience of the other were the causes of their punishment.

Ver. 9.—Who; namely, the unbelieving (Gentiles and Jews. Shall be punished;

literally, shall pay the penalty; shall suffer punishment (R.V.). With everlasting destruction; or rather, *even everlasting destruction*; the words being in apposition. "Destruction" here denotes ruin, death; the word is only used in Paul's Epistles (1 Cor. v. 8; 1 Thes. v. 3; 1 Tim. vi. 9). The Greek word translated "everlasting," from dogmatic reasons, has given rise to much controversy. Here it appears to denote eternal—eternity to come. The eternal punishment of the wicked seems here asserted; a terrible declaration, which the mind shudders to contemplate. The observation of Olshausen is worthy of attention: "This is the only passage in Paul's Epistles in which everlasting damnation is openly declared, whereas not a few occur in which a bringing back of all the lost ones is apparently assumed as possible;" but he adds, "For the supposition that Paul did indeed in the earliest of his Epistles still teach everlasting damnation, but gave it up in later times, there exists no sufficient foundation, because the bringing back again is nowhere freely and openly declared."¹ From the presence (or, face) of the Lord. This clause has received a threefold interpretation. Some (De Wette, Hofmann) take the preposition "from" in a causal sense, denoting the efficient cause of the punishment of the wicked—that they will be as it were blasted by the face of the Lord. Others (Chrysostom, Theophylact) take it in a temporal sense, denoting the swiftness of the punishment of the wicked—that their punishment will rise directly on the appearance of Christ (Lünemann, Alford). And others take it in a local sense, denoting banishment or separation—that the wicked will be expelled from that joy and glory which reign in the presence of Christ; they shall be banished away from the presence of the Lord. This last interpretation seems to be the correct meaning; it gives to the preposition its full force. And from the glory of his power; not a Hebraism for "his mighty glory" (Jowett), but from that glory which has its origin in his power—the wicked will be banished from the manifestation of his power in the glorification of his saints. The punishment of the wicked on its negative side is here stated. As the presence of the glorified Jesus will constitute the happiness of heaven, so banishment from his presence will constitute the misery of hell, because the soul is then cut off from the source of all good and of all holiness.

Ver. 10.—When; defining the period when this judgment of the wicked will occur. He; namely, the Lord Jesus. Shall come to be glorified; the purpose of his coming. In; not "through," or "among," but "in," as

¹ Olshausen on Thessalonians, *in loco*.

the sphere or element of his glory. His saints; not the holy angels who will accompany him to judgment, but holy men whom he has redeemed with his blood. Christ will be glorified in his saints, inasmuch as their glory was the result of his sufferings and death, and their holiness is the reflection of his holiness; "They will reflect as in a mirror the glory of the Lord." And to be admired; wondered at, praised. In all them that believe; or, *believed*. The work of faith is past; the result of faith, the state of sight and glory, has commenced. The glorification of believers will thus become the glorification of Christ. The glory of Christ does not arise from the punishment of the wicked, but from the glorification of believers. Christ will indeed be glorified in the punishment of the wicked. His justice will be manifested and vindicated; but his glory will be especially seen in the manifestation of his mercy toward believers. Because our testimony; namely, the testimony of Paul and his associates, Silas and Timothy. Among you; or rather, *unto you*. Was believed; to be considered as a parenthesis. In that day; namely, the day of the Lord's advent, to be connected with the commencement of the verse, "In that day when he shall come to be glorified in his saints." Some, overlooking the parenthesis, render the words either, "because our testimony concerning that day was believed among you;" or, "because our testimony among you shall be believed on that day"—assented to by the whole universe; but the first rendering gives a false meaning to the preposition, and the second a false construction to the verb, as if it were future.

Ver. 11.—Wherefore; with a view to this consummation, in order that Christ may be glorified in you. We pray always for you

that our God would count you worthy of this calling; or rather, *of your calling* (R.V.). The calling was, properly speaking, only the commencement of the Christian life, but as it was the first link in a chain that terminated in glory, it is used to denote the whole Christian life—your vocation as Christians. And fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness. The pronoun "his" is not in the original. The words have been differently rendered: some render them "all God's pleasure in our goodness;" others restrict both words to mean "every desire of goodness" (R.V.). And the work of faith; that faith which is active, living, productive of good works (see exposition on 1 Thess. i. 3). With power; or, *in power*; to be taken adverbially, and to be connected with the verb "fulfil:" "That God would mightily fulfil in you all moral goodness, and a faith which is energetic."

Ver. 12.—That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; or simply, *of our Lord Jesus*, "Christ" not being in the original. The "name of our Lord Jesus" is not a mere periphrasis for the Lord Jesus himself, but the name denotes his nature and character. The second petition of our Lord's prayer is "Hallowed be thy Name," and this the apostle applies to Christ; he prays that his Name may be hallowed among the Thessalonians—an incidental proof of his divinity. May be glorified in you, and you in him; a twofold glorification: Christ is glorified in believers, when by their holiness they promote his cause and reflect his glory; and believers are glorified in Christ, when they receive out of his infinite fulness. According to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. Some suppose that the epithet "God" also belongs to Jesus Christ, but the construction hardly bears this meaning.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 4.—*Christian patience*. 1. *Its nature*. It denotes steadfast endurance. Negatively, not stoical endurance or apathetic fatalism. Positively, a spirit of calm submission to the providence of God and resignation to his will. 2. *Its source*. It has its root in faith; it is one of the fruits of the Spirit; and it is combined with hope. 3. *Means of acquiring it*. Pray to God as the Giver of patience; look to Christ as the Example of patience; submit to affliction as the cause of patience; cultivate faith as the support of patience; and meditate on heaven as the goal of patience.

Vers. 6, 7.—*A future state of retribution*. Rewards and punishments in this world are unequally distributed. The righteous are often persecuted and afflicted, whereas the wicked are often happy and prosperous. Herod sits upon the throne, and Christ expires on the cross. But this state of things shall be rectified. Christ shall recompense to the wicked tribulation—they shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord; and he shall recompense to the righteous rest—they shall be counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which they suffer.

Vers. 7, 8.—*The manner of Christ's second coming.* 1. *He shall come in person.* Not merely in spirit or in power, but in a visible form; he shall be revealed from heaven every eye shall see him. 2. *He shall come in power.* He shall be accompanied by the angels of his might, who shall execute his commands, call the dead from their graves, assemble together the elect, separate between the righteous and the wicked, and consign the wicked to the abodes of woe. 3. *He shall come in glory.* "In flaming fire"—in the Shechinah, the cloud of glory. 4. *He shall come in justice;* punishing the ungodly and rewarding his faithful servants.

Vers. 9, 10.—*The coming of Christ for judgment.* 1. *Its reality.* The difference between his first and second coming. Then he came to save the world, now he shall come to judge the world. Then he came as Son of man, now he shall come as Son of God. 2. *Its purpose.* He shall come to award punishment to his enemies; they shall be for ever banished from his presence, the Source of all happiness, the Author of all holiness. He shall come for the salvation of his people—to conquer all their enemies, to rescue their bodies from the grave, to acknowledge them as his before an assembled universe, and to receive them into the abodes of eternal happiness.

Vers. 10, 12.—*Christ glorified in his saints.* 1. By their holy conduct they display his character. His image is impressed upon them; they mirror forth the glory of the Lord. 2. By their active exertion in well-doing they advance his glory. 3. Their future glorification is the glory of Christ. The glory of his work, in that he saved them; the glory of his grace, in that he redeemed them; the glory of his power, in that he has rescued them from all their enemies. Throughout eternity believers will be jewels in the Saviour's crown.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 3.—*Thanksgiving for the spiritual progress of the Thessalonians.* Timothy had brought the apostle tidings of their faith, their love, their sufferings, and their patience.

I. THE GROUNDS OF HIS THANKSGIVING. "Because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the love of each one of you all toward each other aboundeth." 1. *The marked growth of their faith.* At his last writing to them he had hinted at deficiencies in their faith (1 Thess. iii. 10), but he had now learned that it had grown exceedingly. (1) Growth is a sign of a living faith. (2) It is right to pray for the increase of faith (Luke xvii. 5). (3) Faith grows (a) in its strength (b) and in its range. The Thessalonians had been able to receive new truths, and to bear the shock of persecution with calmness. Their faith worked by love (Gal. v. 6), and the trial of their faith worked patience (Jas. i. 3). 2. *The marked growth of their love to one another.* He had prayed for an increase of love among them, and he was thankful that his prayer had been heard. (1) Their love had grown in fervour. (a) Their persecutions had endeared them the more to each other. (b) They "looked not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Phil. ii. 4). They "bore one another's burdens" (Gal. vi. 2). They were "kindly affectioned to one another with brotherly love" (Rom. xii. 10). (2) Their love had grown in its range. They had an individualizing solicitude in each other's welfare, no saint being outside the pale of their kindly regards.

II. THE OBLIGATION AND APPROPRIATENESS OF HIS THANKSGIVING. "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet." 1. *The apostle regards it as a positive debt which it would be injustice not to discharge,* for he feels that God is the true Author of all the blessings they had received. 2. *He regards it as demanded by the very proprieties of the case.* "As it is meet"—that this recognition should be made.—T. C.

Ver. 4.—*The apostle's interest in the Thessalonian Church as manifested by his praises of it to other Churches.* He had formerly listened to their praises from the lips of other Churches; he could now sound their praises at Corinth and elsewhere, ascribing all the while due praise to God.

I. THE GROUND OF HIS PRAISES. "For your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure." 1. *Afflictions, whether in the form of sharp persecution or of more general trouble, are the lot of God's faithful children.* They are "appointed thereunto" (1 Thess. ii. 3). 2. *It is the glory of a Christian to bear such afflictions with patience and faith.* The Thessalonians had not been "moved by these afflictions" (1 Thess. iii. 3). (1) Their patience was the result of their faith. "The trial of your faith worketh patience" (Jas. i. 3). Their trials did not uproot their faith. They had "the patience of hope." The faith and the patience are always closely allied. "I know thy faith and thy patience" (Rev. ii. 19). (2) It is for the glory of God and for the good of believers that "patience should have its perfect work" (Jas. i. 4; 1 Pet. ii. 20). (3) It is necessary to the inheritance of the promises (Heb. vi. 12; x. 36).

II. IT IS NOT UNLAWFUL, BUT EXPEDIENT, THAT A MINISTER SHOULD GLORY IN HIS PEOPLE. Not in their social rank, or riches, or numbers, but in the graces of the Spirit manifested in their life. The apostle elsewhere advises us not to glory in men, but in the Lord. But in this case the glory is given to God, not to man.

III. IT PROMOTES THE SPIRITUAL WELFARE OF CHURCHES TO HEAR OF THE SUCCESS OF THE GOSPEL IN OTHER CHURCHES. The example of faith, love, and patience at Thessalonica would stimulate the saints in all Greece.—T. C.

Ver. 5.—*The significance of these sufferings in relation to Divine judgment.* He comforts them with the thought of the certainty of the future judgment.

I. THERE WILL BE A RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT OF MEN. "Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth" (Ps. lviii. 11). The afflictions of the righteous and the prosperity of the wicked in the present world are not inconsistent with this righteous judgment. The problem is an old one, how to understand the mystery of Divine providence. The Book of Job sets forth its conditions and its mysteries. The disturbing effect of sin is not sufficiently considered in estimating the character of the Divine administration. It is the inequalities in Divine providence that lead us to expect a future rectification of wrongs; for God's judgment is righteous.

II. THE PATIENT HEROISM OF THE SAINTS IS ITSELF A SIGN OF GOD'S RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT. "Which is a token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer." 1. *It is not that believers suffer, receiving here their evil things, while the wicked receive their good things.* 2. *It is not because God is just and there must be a future judgment.* 3. *It is not that the persecution was an indication how the judgment would go at the last day.* 4. *It is that the patience of the saints accredited them, by the righteous judgment of God, as meet heirs of his kingdom,* while it was a presage of the coming judgment, when the future would bring its double compensation for the present. The idea is the same as in the Philippian Epistle: "And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God" (Phil. i. 28). It follows, therefore, (1) that God is not forgetful or indifferent to the sufferings of his saints; (2) that patience is a special qualification for the enjoyment of God's kingdom; (3) that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the future happiness of the saints, who will have an eternal weight of glory.—T. C.

Vers. 6—10.—*The future judgment as to its righteousness, time, circumstances, and results to the two classes concerned in it.* The apostle proceeds to set forth the certainty of the Divine judgment as affecting the saints and their persecutors.

I. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THIS JUDGMENT. "Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict you; and to you who are afflicted rest with us." 1. *An appeal is made to man's innate sense of justice.* A want of this element of justice in human character is regarded as a defect. A right-minded man is indignant at wrong, and delights in the retribution that falls upon wrong-doers. This sentiment of justice is but a reflection of Divine character, for we are made in the image of that God who hates sin with "a perfect hatred" (Ps. cxxxix. 22). 2. *God is "not unrighteous who taketh vengeance"* (Rom. iii. 5), for he has established in his government of the world an inseparable connection between sin and misery. Therefore we may expect to see a Divine retaliation upon transgressors—"affliction to them that

afflict you"—the penalty partaking of the very character of the sin. On the other hand, God is not "unrighteous to forget your work of faith and labour of love." The afflicted shall be recompensed with "rest," as well as reward for all their patience.

II. THE TIME OF THE JUDGMENT. "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven." 1. *There is a day appointed for the judgment of the world*; for God "hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom he hath ordained" (Acts xvii. 30, 31). 2. *The day is that which is to be the manifestation of the Lord from heaven.* He is now in heaven, "sitting at the right hand of God" (Acts vii. 56); but he shall then come forth in glory to those who "wait for him," to the judgment of the world. 3. *The time of the judgment is unknown to man.* The day of the Lord "shall come as a thief in the night."

III. THE SUBORDINATE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE JUDGMENT. 1. *The angelic retinue.* "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with the angels of his power." (1) They manifest his power and enhance his glory. They will be with him when he "shall come in glory, and shall sit on the throne of his glory" (Matt. xxv. 31). (2) They execute his purposes, whether of wrath or mercy. (a) They "gather together his elect from the four winds" (Mark xiii. 27). (b) They "shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire" (Matt. xiii. 41, 42). 2. *The flaming glory of his manifestation.* It shall be "in flaming fire;" not as the instrument of vengeance, but as enhancing the glory of the Divine presence. "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people" (Ps. l. 3, 4).

IV. THE RESULTS OF THE JUDGMENT TO THE TWO CLASSES. 1. *The class of persecutors.* "Those which afflict you." (1) Wicked men cannot endure the saints. It is with them as with Cain, who slew his brother. Wherefore? "Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous" (1 John iii. 12). (2) The cry of the saints rises to heaven against them. "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (Rev. vi. 10). (3) The persecutors are of two classes. "Them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." (a) The first class refers to Gentile persecutors. "They know not God." Ignorance is their great sin. They had resisted the light of nature. (α) It was wilful ignorance, for they had the truth brought to their doors in Thessalonica; (β) their ignorance made confidence in God impossible, (γ) as well as an intelligent worship of God. (b) The second class refers to Jewish persecutors—"that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." As ignorance was the sin of the Gentiles, disobedience was the sin of the Jews. They knew God, but rejected the gospel of Christ. They were fiercer persecutors of the saints even than the Gentiles. (α) Christ is the Author of the gospel as well as its theme. (β) The gospel is to be obeyed as well as received, and is therefore called "the obedience of faith;" for faith without obedience is dead, as obedience without faith has no value. (4) The judgment upon the persecutors. It is described first generally and then more definitely. The Lord Jesus shall take vengeance upon them. They "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." This represents "the wrath of the Lamb" (Rev. vi. 16, 17). (a) The judgment is everlasting destruction. This does not imply annihilation—an idea equally opposed to Scripture and to the facts of natural science. The term "everlasting" associated with it neutralizes the idea of annihilation, which implies a point of time in which the wicked cease to exist. The duration of the punishment will be as the duration of the blessedness (Rev. xvi. 26; Heb. ix. 14; Matt. xxv. 46). (b) It involves separation from "the face of the Lord, and the glory of his strength." It is heaven to "see Christ as he is," to be "with him where he is, that they may behold his glory." The sum of all woe is, "Depart from me." A great gulf is fixed between the saved and the lost (Luke xvi. 26). The wicked are to be outside the apocalyptic city of God. "Outside are dogs" (Rev. xvi. 14, 15). 2. *The class of saints.* The results of the judgment as affecting them are thus described. (1) They are to be accounted "worthy of the kingdom of God." (a) They are heirs of it, as children of God. (b) They are called into it. (c) The kingdom "shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High" (Dan. vii. 27). "The saints shall judge the world" (1 Cor. vi. 2, 3). They shall "inherit the kingdom"

(Matt. xiv. 34). This is "the grace that is to be brought to them at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. i. 13). (2) They shall receive rest—"rest with us," as the Lord's recompense for all their sufferings. It points to their release from persecutions. (a) There is a rest—a sabbatism—"for the people of God" (Heb. iv. 9). They "shall rest from their labours, and their works do follow them" (Rev. xiv. 13). (b) It is rest in the fellowship of all saints—"rest with us." (3) The effect of the Lord's second advent—"that he may be glorified in his saints, and be admired in all them that believe." (a) The Church is to be "the glory of Christ." Jesus said, "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them" (John xvii. 10, 22). "The beauty of the Lord God shall be upon her," and "his glory shall be seen upon her" (Ps. xc. 17); Isa. lx. 2). The Church is addressed thus: "There shall also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God" (Isa. lxii. 3). (b) Christ shall be an Object of wonder to believers in that day. "To be admired in all them that believe." The wonder will spring out of the extraordinary manifestations of his glory and power.—T. C.

Vers. 11, 12.—*Prayer for the Thessalonians in prospect of their glorification.* His wish was that they would undergo the necessary preparatory work in anticipation of their future glorification. It was a double prayer.

I. A PRAYER THAT HIS CONVERTS MIGHT APPROVE THE REALITY OF THEIR CALLING BY THEIR FAITH AND LIFE. "Whereunto we pray always for you, brethren, that God would count you worthy of his calling." 1. *The nature and intent of the calling.* (1) It is the effectual call of the Spirit in conversion (1 Cor. i. 24). (2) It is according to the Divine purpose (Rom. viii. 28). (3) It is (a) high (Phil. iii. 14); (b) holy (2 Tim. i. 9); (c) heavenly (Heb. iii. 1). (4) It is a call (a) to fellowship with Christ (1 Cor. i. 9); (b) to holiness (1 Thess. iv. 7); (c) to liberty (Gal. v. 13); (d) to peace (Col. iii. 15); (e) to glory and virtue (2 Pet. i. 3); (f) to eternal life (1 Tim. vi. 12). 2. *A walk worthy of such a calling.* "That God would count you worthy of this calling." How can any sinful man be accounted worthy of it? He is already called, and God's counting him worthy proceeds on the supposition of that pre-existing fact. It supposes: (1) That their life would be found at the last day in harmony with the call (1 Thess. v. 24). (2) That they would meanwhile "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they were called" (Eph. iv. 1), and "make their calling and election sure" (2 Pet. i. 10). (3) That they would have occasion to praise God for the call (1 Pet. ii. 9).

II. A PRAYER THAT HIS CONVERTS MIGHT FULLY REALIZE THE BLESSED PROCESS THROUGH WHICH THE APOSTLE'S OBJECT MIGHT BE SECURED. The process is twofold. 1. *That God would work in them every delight in moral goodness.* "Fulfil every good pleasure of goodness." (1) Good men delight in goodness and in doing good. (2) It is God who implants this delight in them; for they are "his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Eph. ii. 10). They are, therefore, to be "zealous of good works" (Titus ii. 14), and to provoke one another to "good works" (Heb. x. 24). This goodness is one of the Spirit's fruits (Gal. v. 22). 2. *That God would fulfil the work of faith with power.* (1) Faith is an operative grace; it "worketh by love;" it justifies itself by good works. (2) It is a Divine work. Therefore, as something may have been lacking therein, the apostle prays that he who is the Author of their faith would be the Finisher of it (Heb. xii. 2). (3) It is a work done with power. At their conversion, the Thessalonians felt the "greatness of his power to us-ward who believe" (Eph. i. 19), and the same power is needed to make it triumphant as a principle of action and as a principle of endurance. "Our sufficiency is of God;" we are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation" (1 Pet. i. 5).

III. THE ULTIMATE OBJECT OF THE APOSTLE'S PRAYERS FOR THE THESSALONIANS. "That the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him." 1. *The very Name of Christ is to be glorified in the saints.* (1) Because it is "a Name that is above every name, at which every knee should bow" (Phil. ii. 10). (2) Because it is the Name for the sake of which the saints are now "hated of all nations" (Matt. xxiv. 9). (3) Because it is the Name by which the saints are called (Jas. ii. 7). (4) It is glorified in the saints (a) in their holiness of life; (b) in their victory over the world and sin; (c) in their steadfast loyalty to him; (d) in their final exaltation to "his kingdom and glory." 2. *The saints will be glorified in Christ.* (1) In his wear-

ing their nature on the throne; for "he is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Heb. ii. 11). (2) In their being clothed with his righteousness—"comely with the comeliness he has put upon them." (3) In their "reigning with him," and "being glorified together" (2 Tim. ii. 12; Rom. viii. 17). They shall be "partakers of his glory." 3. *The spring or source of all the blessings of the saints.* "According to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ." (1) The whole work of salvation till it ends in glory illustrates "the exceeding riches of his grace." (a) The purpose of the Father is of grace; (b) the mediation of the Son is of grace; (c) the blessings of the new covenant are all of grace. (2) This grace has a unity of source—"in our God and the Lord Jesus Christ;" implying oneness of essence and the coequal Godhead of Father and Son.—T. C.

Vers. 1—4.—*The introduction.* I. THE ADDRESS. 1. *The description.* St. Paul repeats the opening words of the First Epistle. He addresses the same Church; he describes it in the same sacred words. It is "in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." He could say of it nothing higher, nothing holier. To be in God, in Christ, is of all positions the loftiest, of all blessings the most precious. None are so highly exalted as those who are nearest to Christ; none have such rich store of heavenly treasure as those who abide in him, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead. There is but one slight variation. In the First Epistle he said, "the Father;" here it is "our Father." The pronoun implies a close, endearing, affectionate relationship. The Church is in God our Father, in the embrace of his fatherly love, chosen by his electing grace; in the Lord Jesus Christ, saved by his precious death, living in that life which flows from Christ, which is Christ. 2. *The salutation.* He uses the same words as in the First Epistle; he could find no more suitable terms to express his good wishes for his converts. He could desire nothing better for them than grace, and peace; grace, the origin, the source, of every highest blessing; peace, the sweet and holy end, the very crown, of the Christian life. It is from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ that these and all other blessings flow. St. Paul joins together the two Divine Persons; they could not be thus associated as the one ultimate source of grace and peace, were they not both alike Divine. Peace is the fruit of the Spirit; with the Holy Spirit whom the Lord Jesus sends unto us from the Father comes the sacred gift of peace. Grace and peace come from God the Father by the incarnation, atonement, intercession of God the Son, through the indwelling presence of God the Holy Ghost. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God flow into the Christian heart through the fellowship of the Holy Ghost. All that the Christian can desire for himself, for his friends, for the whole Church, comes from God; he seeks it of God in prayer; he knows that God will hear. "This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us."

II. THE THANKSGIVING. 1. *The duty.* Thanksgiving is a debt which we owe to God, a debt which we must always acknowledge, which we can never fully discharge. It is very meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks for all things unto God. We must thank him for his grace given to ourselves; and if that grace abides in us, we shall feel ourselves bound to thank him for the working of the same grace in others. We shall regard every true conversion, every increase of grace in others, as a blessing granted to the whole Church and to ourselves. We shall feel a keen, living interest in each soul that is gathered into Christ's flock, and so share the angels' joy over one sinner that repenteth. For the welfare of each member affects the whole Church; when "one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it." Such was the feeling of St. Paul. "We are bound," he says—we owe it as a debt—"to thank God always for you." He fulfils his own precept; he gives thanks always. The thanksgiving of the faithful Christian must be continuous, never-ending. 2. *The ground of St. Paul's thanksgiving.* (1) The faith of the Thessalonians. He had gladly recognized their faith and love in his First Epistle; he had again and again exhorted them to abound more and more. Now, writing a second time after a short interval, he thanks God for the growth of their faith. It had increased "exceedingly;" he uses one of those strong words which his ardent feelings so often suggested. "Lord, increase our faith," is a prayer which we cannot make too often. Faith must grow if it is true and living; for it is the evidence of things not seen: it

brings the cross of Christ, the presence of God, within the range of our mental view. That holy vision will draw us nearer ever by its constraining power, quickening and deepening in our hearts the faith which first brought us by the leading of the Spirit to the Saviour. The faith of the Thessalonians was growing exceedingly; so it will be with us, in spite of the unbelief and indifference which so fill the air, if we persevere in prayer, and try, in humble dependence on the grace of God to fashion our lives according to our prayers. (2) Their love was abounding also. Love is the fairest ornament of a Christian Church. Faith is the root, love is the fruit. The tree that grows downwards will grow upwards also; the fair growth of foliage, flower, and fruit will bear some proportion to the unseen depth and strength of the root below. The Thessalonian Church was rich in the fruit of the Spirit. And their love was not only increasing in fervour, but in range also. It was not partial, not limited to this man or that man according to natural tastes and similarities of disposition. It extended throughout the Church; the love of each one of them all was abounding toward one another. It is a bright picture. Indeed, the Thessalonians were not without their faults, as we find in ch. ii. and iii.; but the apostle, in his love and thankfulness, gladly dwells on the spiritual progress of the Church before he proceeds to notice the shortcomings of individual members. It shows his love and his wisdom. The encouragement of the opening verses would dispose the Thessalonians to receive in a good spirit the few reproofs that follow. 3. *The expression of his thankfulness.* He not only gives thanks to God; he glories before men. "We ourselves," he says—"we glory." Though his deep humility might have withheld him from glorying over a result which was due, under God, to his own zealous labours, the rapid growth of their faith and love so filled him with exuberant gladness that he could not refrain his lips. "God forbid," he says elsewhere, "that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." But he is really glorying in the cross now; he glories, not in his own achievements, but in the triumphs of the cross. It was the work of God in real truth, not his work; he knew it well. Indeed, he had laboured abundantly—that he knew, he could not help knowing it; but he gladly explains the abundance of his labours by the abundance of grace that was vouchsafed unto him. "Yet not I," he says, "but the grace of God that was with me." The faith, hope, and love of the Thessalonians proved, as he said in the First Epistle, their election. God had chosen them to be his own; his grace worked mightily in them. And now St. Paul was glorying in the faith and patience of his converts. They were in great affliction; he sympathized with them, he comforted them; but yet he rejoiced over them. Their affliction by the grace of God was turned to a blessing; it proved the steadfastness of their faith and their patience, and it strengthened them.

LESSONS. 1. Thankfulness is the Christian's duty; thank God always. 2. Especially thank him for his grace working in his people. 3. Glory in the victories of grace, not in worldly successes. 4. Pray for continual progress in faith, love, patience.—B. C. C.

Vers. 5—7.—*The persecutions of the Thessalonians.* I. **THE MEANING OF AFFLICTION.** 1. *It does not mean that God is angry with us.* Job's friends thought so. So did Asaph once; but when he went into the sanctuary of God his eyes were enlightened; he understood then that God himself is the Portion of his people; that there is nothing upon earth to be desired in comparison with him; that though heart and flesh may fail, God is enough, and more than enough, for his chosen in this world, and in the world to come will receive them to glory. God's dealings with men are often misinterpreted; people use the word "judgment" carelessly and without knowledge. Affliction would be almost intolerable, if it were indeed always a proof of the Divine wrath. But, God be thanked, he himself has told us it comes in love. 2. *It is a trial of our faith.* Satan said, "Doth Job serve God for nought?" The world often says so now; it imputes lower motives; it refuses to believe in unselfish goodness. The man who can say in the midst of troubles, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord," is a living proof of the reality, of the sustaining power, of the presence of God; one of those miracles of grace which, thank God, are still daily wrought around us in the world. These things are among the facts registered by the observer of spiritual truths—facts as real as the facts of external nature, and of far deeper and more abiding moment. 3. *It worketh patience.* The trial of God's saints

is more precious than that of gold which perisheth. Gold is tried by fire; God's people are tried in the furnace of affliction. Affliction, meekly borne, hath a refining power; it elevates and refines the whole character; "it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby." Faith is strengthened by trials; patience is acquired by the habit of enduring affliction. Without endurance, without suffering, there is no opportunity of developing the grace of patience.

II. THE ULTIMATE ISSUE OF PERSECUTION. 1. *To the persecuted.* Rest—rest with all saints; with St. Paul who had been the means of their conversion, who was then writing to comfort them. The weary and heavy laden who come to Christ, as he bids them, find in him rest for their souls even in this present life. There is an inner rest of the spirit, amid outward unrest and trouble, which is the pledged possession of the soul that hath found Christ and resteth in faith on him. "Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength;" or rather, as in the margin, "the Lord Jehovah is the Rock of ages." The only rest for the penitent, for the sorrowful, is on the breast of Jesus. We find rest there now; but the truest, deepest rest is yet to come in the kingdom of God. "Requiescat in pace," we say of the departed. They are found worthy of that rest in the kingdom of God who have endured affliction in faith and patience. God is pleased, in his gracious condescension, to call them worthy. "They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy." That worthiness is of God; it is his gift; he makes them worthy by his grace. He called them not because they were worthy, says St. Augustine; rather by his choice he makes them worthy. It is not their merit but his election, not their goodness but his grace, that makes them what they are. They have not chosen him, but he hath chosen them that they should bring forth much fruit. They are not wise, or strong, or holy; but Christ their Lord is all. He is present with them, abiding in them by his Spirit, purging away their sins, communicating to them more and more of his own holiness and love. As he is, so are they in this world; and they know that, when he shall appear, they shall be like him, for they shall see him as he is. For his sake they are counted worthy of the kingdom of God, and in the hope of that kingdom they are willing now to suffer. But these present sufferings are not worthy to be compared with the coming glory. They know it, and they suffer patiently, for they recognize that great truth that only by the way of the cross can we enter into the kingdom of heaven. 2. *To the persecutors.* God will recompense persecute the Lord himself. It pertains to his justice that such must receive the due reward of their deeds. It is right; and because it is right, it must be so. Christians must pray for their persecutors; they must do what lieth in them to soften their hearts, to save their souls, to avert the coming judgment. But when the judgment comes they can but stand by, and recognize in solemn awe the justice of the most holy God.

LESSONS. 1. Chastisements are sent in mercy; be patient, be thankful. 2. Chastisement is only grievous if we do not understand its meaning; accept it as sent from God; take it as a cross; be careful not to lose its blessed fruits. 3. Think of the great joy of those who are counted worthy of the kingdom of God; let that high hope be your comfort in trouble. 4. Envy not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways.—B. C. C.

Vers. 7—10.—*The great day.* I. THE JUDGMENT OF THE WICKED. 1. *The revelation of the Judge.* It is the Lord Jesus, who once was despised and rejected of men; he is ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. He shall come as God once came down on Mount Sinai, in the like awful glory. (1) With the angels. They shall gather the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire. The angels will be the ministers of his justice—the blessed angels who are now the messengers of his love and grace. Now they rejoice over each sinner that repenteth; then they will cast the impenitent into the everlasting fire. We think of the angels as gentle, loving, holy, as our friends and guardians; they are so, so far as we are Christ's. They desire to look into the mysteries of redemption; they announced the Saviour's birth; they ministered to him in his temptation, his agony; they celebrated

his resurrection and ascension. Now they are sent forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of salvation; they encamp round about those who fear the Lord, and deliver them. They help in carrying on his blessed work of love. But they are holy; they hate evil; they must turn away from those who have yielded themselves to the dominion of the evil one; they must execute at the last the awful judgment of God. Fearful thought, that the blessed angels, loving and holy as they are, must one day cast the hardened sinner into hell, as once they cast Satan out of heaven. (2) In flaming fire. The Lord shall be revealed in flaming fire, in that glory which he had before the world was. His throne is fiery flame (Dan. vii. 9). He himself is a consuming fire. The sight will be appalling to the lost, full of unutterable terror; "they shall say to the rocks, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us." "By thine agony and bloody sweat, by thy cross and passion, good Lord, deliver us." 2. *The lost.* Two classes are mentioned here. (1) Those who know not God—the heathen. They might have known him. Some of them did know him. They had not the Law, the outward Law, but it was written in their hearts; God spoke to them in the voice of conscience. They listened; they did by nature the things contained in the Law. Such men, we are sure, God in his great mercy will accept and save. But, alas! the fearful picture drawn by St. Paul in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans represents with only too much truth the general state of the heathen world in the apostolic times. Their blindness was criminal; it was the result of wilful and habitual sin; their ignorance was without excuse. (2) Those who obeyed not the gospel. All, whether Jews or Gentiles, who had heard the preaching of Christ. They had heard, as we have, all that the Lord Jesus had done and suffered for us; they had had the opportunity of hearing his holy precepts. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light." To know the gospel and not to obey it, to have the light around us and not to admit it into our hearts, not to walk as children of light—this must bring the judgment of God upon the disobedient. The greater the light, the heavier the responsibility of those who sin against light and knowledge. 3. *The punishment.* The Lord Jesus will award vengeance. "Vengeance is mine; I will recompense, saith the Lord." Terrible thought, that vengeance must come from him, the most loving Saviour, who loved the souls of men with a love so burning, so intense in its Divine tenderness! But it must be so. The exceeding guilt of sin is manifest in this; it turns the chiefest of blessings into an increase of condemnation; the cross is utter death to the impenitent and the ungodly. And that vengeance takes effect in destruction. The destruction is eternal; then it is not annihilation. It is the destruction of all gladness, hope, all that makes life worth living; it is the exclusion from the face of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. Only the pure in heart can see God. The lost souls cannot see his face. The exclusion is eternal; is it endless? It continues through the ages; will those ages of misery ever end in restoration? Can a soul, once so hardened in guilt that it must be shut out of the presence of God, ever repent in that exclusion? It sinned obstinately against light during its time of probation; can it recover itself now that the light is withdrawn? It is hardened through the deceitfulness of sin and the power of evil habits; can it break those chains of darkness now? These are dark, awful questions. We may ask, on the other hand, how can "God be all in all," if sin is to exist for ever? how can it be that "in Christ shall all be made alive," while there is still a hell in the universe of God? The subject is beset with difficulties and perplexities; it excites bewildering, harrowing thoughts. We must leave it where Holy Scripture leaves it. We would gladly believe, if it were possible, that there is hope beyond the grave for those who die unblessed; but such an expectation has no scriptural authority beyond a few slight and doubtful hints. Who would dare to trust to a hope so exceeding slender? No; if we shrink in terror from the thought of being one day shut out of God's presence into the great outer darkness, let us try to live in that gracious presence now.

II. *THE GLORY OF THE RIGHTEOUS.* 1. *Its time: when he shall come.* They suffer now; sometimes they are persecuted, their name is cast out as evil. But they have their consolation; they see indeed through a glass darkly, but yet they do see by faith the glory of the Lord; they are changed into the same image from glory to glory as by the Lord the Spirit. They have a glory now; but it is an inner spiritual

glory derived from the indwelling of the blessed Spirit whom the world seeth not, neither knoweth. Now they are the sons of God; when he shall appear, they shall be like him, for they shall see him as he is. 2. *Its nature: the unveiled presence of Christ.* He shall be glorified in his saints. "I am glorified in them," he said, when about to leave them. When he comes again, that glory shall shine forth in all its radiant splendour. He shall be admired in all them that believe. The glory of his presence abiding in them shall arouse the wondering admiration of all. The lost spirits will wonder; they will be amazed at the strangeness of the salvation of the blessed. "This is he" (Wisd. v. 3, 5) "whom we sometimes had in derision . . . how is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints?" The very angels will wonder at the exceeding glory of the Lord shining in his saints. For he will change the body of their humiliation, and make it like the body of his glory.

LESSONS. 1. We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; let us keep that awful day in our thoughts. 2. Think on the fearful misery of eternal separation from God; live in his presence now. 3. We hope to be like him in his glory; let us take up the cross.—B. C. C.

Vers. 11, 12.—*St. Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians.* I. ITS PURPOSE. 1. *He prays that God's favour may rest upon them.* That he may count them worthy. We feel that we are all unworthy—unworthy of his grace and presence. We are not worthy that he, the blessed One, should enter under our roof, into our heart. But whom he loves, those he makes worthy of his love. He counts them worthy, though they are in themselves unworthy; his grace makes them worthy in Christ. He calls them; they through grace obey the calling. He calls them ever higher, nearer to himself, till they reach at length the prize of the high calling. 2. *That God who began the good work in them would complete it.* He prays (1) that God would fulfil in them every desire of goodness. He had used the same word of himself (Rom. x. 1): "My heart's desire and prayer for Israel is, that they might be saved." His heart's desire (*εὐδοκία*) was a good desire; it issued from goodness—goodness given by God, inwrought into his heart by the working of the good Spirit of God. All holy desires come from God; he prompts them; they issue out of the goodness which comes from him, from his grace. He will fulfil such desires, for he has promised, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." The holy desire will issue, if we persevere in prayer, in the good counsel, in the just work. He prays (2) that God would fulfil the work of faith. In his First Epistle he spoke of his affectionate remembrance of their work of faith; now he prays that God might fulfil that work in power. Faith is itself a work, "the work of God"—a work which issues from God, from his grace; a work which is pleasing to God, for it is his will; a work which ends in God, in the contemplation of God, in the glory of God. And faith works; it is a living principle, an active energy. It will lead on to ever more earnest prayer, to a closer walk with God. And that prayer, that communion with God, will continually deepen and strengthen faith; for in answer to faithful prayer the Holy Spirit is given, and the Spirit is power—power from on high.

II. ITS FINAL END—THE GLORY OF GOD. 1. *That the Name of the Lord Jesus might be glorified in the Thessalonians.* That men might see their good works, and glorify the Lord that bought them, the Father that called them. We say in our daily prayers, "Hallowed be thy Name." We have been baptized into that great Name; that holy Name is upon us. Very weak and sinful as we are, that great Name may be hallowed, glorified in us, if we do all things, great or small, in the Name of the Lord Jesus; if we always give thanks to the Father by him; if we show in our daily walk before men the power of his grace. It is the great end of the Christian life. "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." 2. *That they might be glorified in him.* His saints share his glory. "The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them." He dwelleth in them, and they in him. His glory is theirs, for they are his. "Ye are Christ's." And he is theirs. The Father gave the Son, the Son of God gave himself for us, to us. Hence it is that his true people, beholding (though now in a glass darkly) his glory, are changed into the same image from glory to glory. And that according to the grace of our God and Lord Jesus Christ. All our blessings come from his grace; he is our God, therefore we can trust in him. He is able to save to the uttermost, for he is

Almighty. He is our Lord Jesus Christ, therefore we may cast all our care upon him, for he will save us; he loveth us even to the end.

LESSONS. 1. Our salvation is of God; its beginning, course, end—all is of grace. 2. Every good desire comes from him; ask him to strengthen the desire, to develop it into action. 3. Seek power from him—power to fight the good fight of faith, and win the victory at last. 4. Let the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ be the one great aim above all other motives.—B. C. C.

Vers. 1—12.—Manifestation of solemn interest. Address and salutation. “Paul, and Silvanus, and Timothy, unto the Church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ; Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” The address is the same as in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, with the exception of the substitution of “our Father” for “the Father.” The salutation is also the same, with the addition of the twofold source from which grace and peace are invoked, which is the same as in many of Paul’s Epistles, with the exception of the substitution of “the Father” for “our Father.”

I. RECOGNITION OF THE SATISFACTORY CONDITION OF THE THESSALONIAN CHURCH.

1. **Before God.** “We are bound to give thanks to God always 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.” We are to understand that information had reached Paul and his companions from Thessalonica since the despatch of their first letter to that place. It was information of faith and love on the part of the Thessalonian converts, of such a nature as to make Paul (taking him as representative) feel inwardly bound to thank God always for them. This inward feeling answered to an outward fitness of circumstances. In the previous letter he had shown a deep interest in the perfecting of the lacking elements in their faith. We may think of a tree that has not come to its full proportions. It could now be said of them, after an interval of less than a year, that their faith was growing exceedingly. It was exhibiting such increase as a healthy faith always exhibits, and this in a marked degree. For such large realization of his wishes in the time it was only meet that he should thank God. He had also expressly prayed that the Lord would make them to abound in love one toward another. It could now be said that this was in the way of fulfilment. Their love was in process of enlargement as all love should be, and in a marked degree as the word would seem to imply. Their love was markedly *individual*. There was love toward the circle as a whole which was real and commendatory, but there was also personal attachment between the various members of the circle, individual toward individual. Their love was also markedly *universal* within the circle. The abounding was in the love of each one of them all toward one another. That testified to a harmonious circle. “When we love in part,” says Theophylact, “this is not love, but division. For if it is for God’s sake thou lovest, see that thou love all.” There is a symmetry in love which requires that, loving our heavenly Father, we should love all his children; that, loving Christ, we should love the whole Christian circle. In the Thessalonian circle no exception is made of the busybodies afterwards referred to as loved or loving. In being busybodies they were not doing their duty by the other members of the circle; but the obstacle thus presented to their brethren loving them was commendably surmounted. As for the love of the busybodies themselves, it was not sufficiently characterized by wisdom, and did, therefore, contain something to be subtracted. Still, his prayer had been in so large a degree answered that it was only meet that he should give thanks to God for them. What obstacles there are to our loving in the Christian circle let us try to surmount, and let us not ourselves present any obstacles. And let us be thankful before God for what harmony is enjoyed. 2. **Before the Churches.** “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.” Formerly there was no need to say anything of their faith to God-ward. Their conversion to Christianity, with joyfulness in attendant persecution, was widely known. It was not now that others were behindhand; for they had warm friends, and these not a few, who gloried in them. But Paul and his companions were so overjoyed that they were moved to join with others in glorying in them. The sphere of glorying was the Churches of God, *i. e.* Corinth, from which this letter was written, and

other Churches with which they had correspondence. What they especially gloried in was the patience of the Thessalonians. Persecution had come upon them after persecution; they were then enduring afflictions. But they had nobly stood their ground. Their patience was sustained by faith—faith in a kind and wise Providence that was watching over them, that made use of their afflictions for the spread of the gospel, that would not leave them in the end unrewarded. This patience sustained by faith, Paul and his companions held up before the Churches for their encouragement in like circumstances. This being their motive, there was no breach of modesty in the instructors of the Thessalonians *themselves* glorying in them.

II. RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT OF GOD. 1. *With reference to the Thessalonians.* "Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God; to the end that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer." The patience sustained by faith, which was held up for the encouragement of the Churches, is now used for the encouragement of the Thessalonians themselves. Let them think of the judgment of God that was coming. That judgment would be righteous in dealing with men according to character. The character they possessed left no doubt as to what the righteous judgment of God would be. It looked forward to their being in the end counted worthy of the kingdom of God. For that kingdom they were suffering; but let them know that they who thus suffered would also reign. 2. *With reference to their persecutors.* "If so be that it is a righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict you, and to you that are afflicted rest with us." The persecutors had no source of encouragement in their character. They also had to pass under the judgment of God; but what could righteous judgment mean to them? Their character was that of cruelly afflicting God's people. Could it be a righteous thing with God to place them alongside of patient sufferers as worthy of the kingdom? That would be to have no regard to distinction in character, to make God the friend of cruelty as much as of patience, and in that way to contradict the very idea of righteous judgment. The incontestably righteous thing could only be that with what measure they meted it should be measured unto them; that, giving affliction, there should be given back to them affliction; while, to the afflicted Thessalonians, the righteous opposite would be release from the strain of affliction—release in company with Paul and Silas and Timothy in like manner afflicted.

III. JUDICIAL PROCEDURE UNDER WHICH DEALING WITH THE THESSALONIANS AND THEIR PERSECUTORS FALLS. 1. *Toward the ungodly.* (1) *Judge and time of judgment.* "At the revelation of the Lord Jesus." The righteous judgment of God is now associated, as in other Scriptures, with the Second Person of the Godhead. It is as Jesus, or Saviour, that he is to fill the lordly office, and to exercise the lordly prerogatives of Judge. He is now concealed from human view, upon which the ungodly presume. But one day he shall appear upon this earthly scene, and not in the lowly form in which he before appeared, but in a form that shall mark his Divine sovereignty. (2) *Place from which revealed.* "From heaven." When before he appeared there was no impression of his coming from heaven. He was born upon this earth; he wore the earthly form of our humanity until, having made atonement for our sin, he ascended into heaven and sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. The heaven which then opened to receive him will again open, that he may reveal himself on earth for judgment. It will be observed that this revelation from heaven is identical with the descent from heaven described in 1 Thessalonians. (3) *Manner of revelation.* *First circumstance.* "With the angels of his power." In the former description the Lord appeared, attended by the archangel and (by implication) his angelic host. The old translation here is "mighty angels." Their attendance, as of an army upon an earthly sovereign, is intended to give an impression of his power. This they give by their numbers; they may also give it by the personal might, more than human, with which they are endowed. *Second circumstance.* "In flaming fire." In the former description it is the clouds that are mentioned. Here the Lord appears encircled with a flame of fire. The clouds conceal and moderate for the saints that have been acknowledged. The uncreated splendour displayed before men in view of judgment is as fire. In 1 Cor. iii. 13 fire is associated with judgment; "Each man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed by fire; and the fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is." As separating from it all impurity

this judicial fire must have a fearful aspect to the ungodly. The description here bears a close resemblance to what is found in Dan. vii. 9, 10: "I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened." The description is here transferred from the Ancient of days to him who is there styled the Son of man.

(4) *Judicial action toward two classes of the ungodly.* "Rendering vengeance." Judgment is the manifestation of the justice of God. When men are convicted before a human tribunal they have to give an equivalent for the wrong they have done to others. Society in that way not only protects itself, but expresses its indignation against their crimes. The Lord is to take his seat as Judge, first convicting and then pronouncing sentence. In this there is implied no revengeful feeling; but there is implied holy indignation, in the name of the highest Authority in the universe, against all the ungodly for all their works of ungodliness which they have ungodly wrought.

First class of the ungodly. "To them that know not God." This is a description of the heathen. And it is to be noticed that vengeance is to be rendered not merely to the wicked world-rulers (Pharaohs and Neros), to those who have traded in their fellow-men, to those who have been covenant-breakers, to those who have taken away the life of the innocent, but to the heathen as a whole. On the other hand, it is to be noticed that they are not regarded historically, but from the point of view of the writers as those who have had to do with their not knowing God. In so far, therefore, as it can be justly said that, from their bad environments, they have not had to do with this not knowing God, vengeance shall not be rendered to them. But, in so far as they have not followed their light, there shall not any of them escape. *Second class of the ungodly.* "And to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus." Our Lord Jesus is identified with gospel as well as with Law, with mercy as well as with judgment. What is the gospel but the good news of the Son of God coming into our nature, and suffering vengeance, just indignation and death, in room of the transgressors? And when he comes forward now in the ministration of the gospel, and commands men everywhere to repent of their sins and to accept of mercy, has he not a right to be obeyed? And will the most humanitarian maintain that he who obeys not should go unpunished?

(5) *Their punishment in its contents.* "Who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might." Such being their character (as "who" implies), they shall suffer punishment. The suffering of punishment by them corresponds to the rendering of vengeance by the Lord. The punishment is declared to be destructive. This may mean, and in some of its applications does mean, annihilation. But there is not good reason for supposing that it means annihilation in its application to the punishment of the ungodly. It seems to involve a low conception of the nature of man and of the moral government of God, to suppose that human beings are to be placed under trial, and to work out a moral history, and that after their failure they are in multitudes to be quenched in the darkness of non-existence. It seems more reasonable to take the meaning to be that they shall be destroyed, in being consigned to a state of misery for which in their creation they were not intended. Their nature (unlike that of Christ's people, 1 Thess. iv. 23) being disintegrated by sin, their peace shall be completely broken. The epithet "eternal" which is applied to destruction is of terrible import. It points to the punishment as stretching away into the eternal world. It may be doubted whether by itself it is decisive for the absolute eternity of future punishment. It is not so decisive as if the form had been endless. On the other hand, it is not decisive against the endlessness of future punishment that the word means age-long. It needs to be considered in connection with the subjects to which it is applied. Eternal sin, as the right reading now is in Mark iii. 29, apparently means sin for which there is no escape from punishment. Eternal punishment does not mean that judgment is eternally proceeding, but that its issues reach into eternity. The similar word which in the Old Testament is applied to the mountains from the nature of the case imports a limited eternity. The eternal times through which the mystery was hidden can only mean limited times into which the past eternity was regarded as divided. Applied to God,

as the word is in the same sentence at the close of Romans, it indicates the absolute eternity of God. Applied to life, as it very frequently is, from the nature of life and from the Divine guarantee, it means life that is endless and, as it is expressed in one place, indissoluble. It still remains a question whether, from the nature of spiritual death and from the character of God along with other teachings, destruction is to be regarded as eternal in the sense of being endless. It certainly is a word which is fitted to strike terror into the ungodly. The destruction is further represented as the greatest of all deprivations. It is to be away from the face of the Lord. The supreme pleasure of Christ's people is to be their beholding his face of infinite benignity turned toward them. "As for me," says the psalmist, "I will behold thy face in righteousness." "And they shall see his face," it is said in the last chapter of Revelation. So the bitterest element in the case of the ungodly will be that no look of love, no look of the infinite benignity of the Saviour, will be turned toward them. As the earth without sunshine, so must it be to be away from the face of Christ. It is also to be away from his glory. Three disciples were taken up to the Mount of Transfiguration to see his glory. He also encouraged the eleven at the last by the prospect of their seeing his glory. "That where I am they also may be with me, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me." It is particularly here the glory of his might. He who has the look of infinite benignity gives also in his appearance the impression of infinite might. How glorious a Being to be privileged, without fear, yet with solemn awe, to look upon! To be eternally destroyed, then, from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might, such will be the terrible punishment awarded to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 2. *Toward the saints.* "When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and be marvelled at in all them that believed (because our testimony unto you was believed) in that day." Contemporaneous with his judicial action toward the ungodly, is to be his judicial action toward his own. They are here called his saints, answering perfectly to that description then as they only imperfectly do now. As his saints, they shall be acknowledged on the day of judgment; and their reward shall be to have their outward condition brought into perfect correspondence with their inward character. This is called their *glorification*. The Lord, having given grace, will also give glory. We may think of the glory as the blossoming forth of the grace. As the flower comes to beauty of form, so they shall be made beautiful to look upon in their higher order of being. Their glorification is here presented under the special aspect of the glorification of Christ in them. As Judge, he is to carry out his own word. "And the glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them." As he is in them as the source of their holiness, so is his beauty to shine forth in their outward form. From heaven we "wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subject all things unto himself." This glorification of Christ in the saints shall call forth the wonder of the assembled universe. They shall marvel at the infinite benignity and power of him who out of darkness has made light, who upon rebels against his Father's authority has stamped his own glorious image. In connection with the marvelling, is brought in the condition of our future glorification. With a look back from judgment it is said, "in all them that believed." And believing is taken up and connected particularly with the Thessalonians—"because our testimony unto you was believed." In keeping with this language, faith is defined by Bishop Pearson "as an assent unto truths credible upon the testimony of God delivered unto us by the apostles and prophets." Let us give cordial assent to the facts and truths of the gospel, which we have upon the best of testimony, that we may not come short of the glorification which shall be the marvel of the universe. There was not needed further predication of time, but it is emphasized by the addition of the words, "in that day." The day when the Lord is to render vengeance to the ungodly, that is to be the day when he is to be glorified in his saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believed.

IV. PRAYER IN CONNECTION WITH THE GLORIFICATION OF THE THESSALONIANS. "To which end we also pray always for you, that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfil every desire of goodness and every work of faith, with power; 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." Toward their glorification the wishes,

and not only the wishes but the prayers also, of Paul and his companions were directed, and always directed. As believing, God was calling them to glory. Our God, say the petitioners, grant to the Thessalonians at the last to be counted worthy of their calling. For this end let power sufficient be granted to bring to completion every inward desire and the outward work appointed them. They had aspirations after goodness; let these receive fulfilment. They had a life to live before the world according to the faith by which they were actuated; let it be as a finished piece of work. Thus, having real excellence, would they be adjudged worthy of glory. The final end of their glorification is emphasized by repetition, with some modification of form. There is brought in "the Name of our Lord Jesus," i.e. as he is revealed to men as Saviour, exalted to sovereignty. And, as they are to be the element in which his Name is to be glorified, so reciprocally is he to be the element in which they are to find their glorification. Thus is identification with Christ in glory made clear as clear can be. This final end of glorification is looked for in prayer on behalf of the Thessalonians, not according to their deservings, but, say the petitioners, according to the grace (undeserved and rich) of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ (in his superabundant merits).—R. F.

Ver. 2.—Grace and peace. St. Paul opens his Second Epistle with the expression of the same good wishes which he expressed in his earlier Epistle. There is no need of a spiritual parsimony for reserving highest benedictions. The best can be breathed freely, because there is no end to the resources of God. But we need not fear to repeat them, inasmuch as they are always suitable to Christian needs. Though we may tire of the words, "grace and peace," and shall do so if we do not enter into the spirit of them, we can never tire of the things themselves, for they are large as the universe and fresh as eternity. Grace and peace represent the origin and the perfection, the foundation and the pinnacle, the root and the fruit, of Christian prosperity. It begins in grace and rests on grace and draws its supplies from grace; it grows into round, ripe fulness in peace.

I. GRACE IS THE SOURCE OF CHRISTIAN PROSPERITY. 1. *Christian grace is essentially God's free favour.* This is the first characteristic of the new covenant. It starts with mercy to the sinner; it continues with grace to the saint. It is beyond nature which leaves us to our own devices, and law which directs but does not aid, and justice which rewards according to our works, because it offers its blessings to the undeserving "without money and without price." Grace is the key-note of the anthem of the Bethlehem angels. 2. *Christian grace is an active energy of God.* It is not the bare negative mercy that lets off penalties, that withholds the hand of justice from striking the blow of doom. Nor is it only a kindly disposition. It is the highest Divine energy and the most vigorous fruitful activity. God works upon us in grace. 3. *Christian grace works through the whole of the Christian life.* We do not simply depend upon God's grace for the pardon of our sins and the renewal of our hearts at the commencement of our better life. We continue to live upon grace. It begins by delivering us from our Egyptian bondage; it continues by supplying our daily bread. Christians would as surely perish without these supplies of grace, even after the first forgiving act of salvation, as the Israelites would have perished without the manna even after they had crossed the Red Sea.

II. PEACE IS THE CROWN OF CHRISTIAN PROSPERITY. 1. *Peace is the first interest of a nation, a Church, a soul.* We cannot enjoy wealth, pleasure, or comfort if we have not peace. For peace we pine and yearn. 2. *Peace is the most perfect of blessings.* When this is rich and full we want little else. We can afford to suffer if we bear our interior peace. It may be said of peace, as it is said of love, it "suffereth long." 3. *Peace is the greatest outcome of grace.* It cannot be had without grace. Grace restores us to peaceable relations with God, gives us peaceable dispositions to bear and forebear one with another, and breathes into us a spirit of content, submission, and holy calm. We may advance far in activity, etc., before we gain this precious gem of grace. Inward serenity in all weathers of outward circumstance is the last product of spiritual culture.

III. GRACE AND PEACE ARE ENJOYED THROUGH OUR UNION WITH GOD AND CHRIST. The twofold benediction has a twofold reference. 1. *Grace originates in the Father.* The first thought of redeeming the world arose in the bosom of God. The secret of

these wonderful blessings is a Father's love. 2. *Peace is found in union with God.* We enjoy the peace that is never absent from the Spirit of God when we approach his holy, serene presence. 3. *Both are received by us through Christ.* He is the incarnation of God's grace. He makes a way by his sacrifice for us to enjoy it. He is also "our peace." When we learn the "secret of Jesus" we shall have the peace of God which passeth all understanding.—W. F. A.

Ver. 3.—*Growing faith.* In his former Epistle St. Paul congratulated the Thessalonians on the fruits of faith, love, and hope which he saw among them (1 Thess. i. 3), and he prayed for the increase of their love (1 Thess. iii. 12). Now he is thankful that their faith continues to grow, and that their mutual affection is full and overflowing. Let us consider the first of these two signs of progress. (For the "increase of love," see on 1 Thess. iii. 12.)

I. THE SIGNS OF GROWING FAITH. Faith is an invisible spiritual grace. How, then, did St. Paul know that it was increasing in the distant Church of the Thessalonians? We need not suppose that he possessed any supernatural insight for reading the hearts of men. If faith grows the fruits of faith grow. A feeble faith makes a feeble life. When the whole heart is faint the whole head is sick (Isa. i. 5). Faith is always known by its works, and the health and vigour and stature of faith by the character and measure of Christian activity. Note some of the signs of growing faith. 1. *Brighter cheerfulness.* We are less distressed with doubt, have little torment of fear, bear present ills patiently, when we trust the goodness of God more fully. 2. *Deeper devotion.* Slight faith means cold prayer. We are near to God just in proportion as we have faith in him. 3. *Fuller activity.* We work half-heartily when we believe half-heartedly. A strong trust in the grace of God gives a strong energy for doing the work of God. 4. *Warmer love.* Faith worketh by love (Gal. v. 6). When we trust Christ more truly we feel the force of his love more deeply and love him more warmly in return, and then our love to Christ shows itself in love of the brethren.

II. THE SECRET OF GROWING FAITH. Faith flows from the grace of God. It is a gift of God (Eph. ii. 8). Nevertheless, God is always willing to bestow this gift, and our reception of it depends on what we do. Faith will not grow without cultivation. Two most important truths, too often ignored, help us to the secret. 1. *Faith grows by means of what it feeds on.* This is in harmony with a law of all growth. Nothing can come from nothing. If a child is not fed it will die, certainly it will not grow. Growing plants take nourishment from air and soil. Faith will not grow by our wishing it to grow, nor by any manipulation with it. Yet people, so to speak, take out their faith and try to do something with it in order to improve it. The great mistake is to think of increasing our faith by any consideration of the faith itself. We must forget our faith and look at Christ, and then our faith will grow unconsciously. We have too much introspection. An intelligent consideration of the grounds of faith, especially a study of Christ, reading of Scripture, prayer, "means of grace," etc., help faith to grow. 2. *Faith grows by exercise.* This is also natural. Children need exercise that their bodies may grow. Unused limbs shrink and shrivel up. The arm of the blacksmith is strong with work. The intellect grows by being employed. The torpid intellect becomes stupid. So faith must be used in order that it may grow. Instead of deploring our little faith, let us use it and it will grow larger. This is Christ's own advice; for when his disciples said, "Lord, increase our faith," instead of doing as they wished by a miracle, he almost rebuked them by saying that if they had faith as small as a grain of mustard seed, even that when fully exercised would be enough to remove a mountain; and, like the seed which is a living thing, it would grow when planted. It is as foolish not to use our faith because it is small as it would be not to plant the seed for a similar reason. Thus we keep faith small. It must be employed if it is to grow.—W. F. A.

Ver. 5.—*A token of righteous judgment.* St. Paul regards the patient endurance of persecution by the Thessalonian Christians as "a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God." Here is one of those paradoxes of triumphant faith in which the apostle delighted. To the superficial observer the aspect of affairs told the very opposite story to that which St. Paul read in it. Good men were persecuted, and they bore

their persecution patiently; yet nothing was done for their redress. Was not this a break-down of justice? The case is like that of the psalmist, who was perplexed at the prosperity of the wicked till he went into the sanctuary, and then, by faith and the knowledge of unseen Divine law, understood their end (Ps. lxxiii. 17). His faith in the supremacy and justice of God leads the apostle to put the contrary construction on passing events to that which would be laid upon them by unbelief.

I. THE PATIENT ENDURANCE OF PERSECUTION IS A TOKEN OF GOD'S COMING JUDGMENT OF REWARD. The judgment has two sides. There are sheep as well as goats. To those who groan under the yoke of present injustice the coming of a future judgment must be hailed with joy. Then the cruelty will cease, the calumny will be repudiated, the wrong will be righted. But how is the patient endurance of persecution a token of the coming judgment? 1. *It shows the necessity of it.* Of course, this argument is only addressed to faith. If we believe in God and his righteousness we cannot suppose that he will permit wrongs to remain unredressed. If justice were done on earth we need expect no further rectification. But the postponement of justice makes the future coming of it certain. Here is a reason for looking forward to a future life. If this life were rounded into perfection we should not have so much occasion for expecting another life. But now that it is broken and not justly completed there must be a future. If the wages of God's labourers are not paid to-day there must be a morrow when they will be paid. 2. *It permits the persecuted to look forward to a happy issue from it.* They will not be counted worthy of the kingdom of God simply because they endure persecution. Suffering is not merit. Heaven is not bare compensation. But the patient endurance is a sign of character, and it reveals a fitness for the future award of blessings. The untried may be uncertain of their fate. The tried and faithful have reason for more confidence.

II. THE UNAVENGED INFLICTION OF PERSECUTION IS A TOKEN OF GOD'S COMING JUDGMENT OF PUNISHMENT. The blood of Abel cries to God from the ground. The meek, patient endurance of the martyr demands future retribution more powerfully than the loudest cry for vengeance. The better the character of the persecuted is, the less they deserve their ill treatment and the more patiently they bear it, the greater will the guilt of the persecutors appear. Thus this condition of affairs is a token of a coming judgment of wrath. 1. *It shows the necessity of it.* If justice were already done, guilty men might have some excuse for denying the probability of a future judgment. But now they cannot speak of it as an idle threat of the Church. Justice demands it. 2. *It warns the wicked to expect a dreadful doom.* It reveals the guilt of their sin; and it makes so glaringly apparent the contrast between their conduct and that of their victims that a difference of destiny of corresponding magnitude may be expected.—W. F. A.

Vers. 6—10.—*The judgment-day.* This vivid description of the judgment-day begins with an appeal to the justice of its awful events: "If so be that it is a righteous thing," etc. The details of the great day can only be revealed by Divine inspiration. But the great outlines of its proceedings may be predicted by our own consciences.

I. THE SEPARATION OF DESTINIES. Destinies are now apparently mixed and disarranged without any evident regard to justice. They will not be so then. There will be a clear division between the sheep and the goats. 1. *Suffering to the persecutors.* They who give affliction shall suffer affliction. There is a law of nature as well as a principle of fairness in the *lex talionis* when it is rightly applied. A bad man's doom is to be the recoil of his evil deeds upon his own head. 2. *Rest to the persecuted.* The specially coveted reward of the afflicted is rest. To the weary sufferer that alone is an immeasurable blessing. There is some compensation in the fact that rest, which to the idle and comfortable is itself a weariness, becomes the most happy solace to the suffering. Note: (1) This rest is the more enjoyable because it is shared with beloved friends (Paul, Silas, etc). (2) It is not given to all the afflicted, but to afflicted Christians.

II. THE TIME OF THE JUDGMENT. It is here synchronized with the second advent of Christ. He is King and Judge as well as Friend and Saviour. His repudiation of the office of Judge during his earthly humiliation (Luke xii. 14) should only make us feel how surely the exercise of his rightful judicial functions must be reserved for some

future occasion. Jesus Christ cannot endure eternal injustice. He is strong to execute as well as righteous to desire judgment.

III. THE PERSONS CONDEMNED. Two classes are named. 1. *Those who are ignorant of God.* The heathen world seems to be here referred to. Why should these benighted people be punished for their ignorance? Because they might have known God (Rom. i. 18—20). But they can only be punished in so far as their ignorance was wilful and came from moral causes, i.e. in so far as they "held down the truth in unrighteousness." Doubtless there have been good heathen men who have not committed that offence. 2. *Those who obey not the gospel.* People of Christendom are now referred to. It is of no use to live in a Christian nation, nor to belong to a Christian Church, nor to believe in the truths of the gospel, if we do not obey the gospel. Obedience is the one test. Heathen are only condemned for wilful neglect of God, Christian nations for disobedience to the Christian gospel.

IV. THE DOOM OF THE GUILTY. 1. *They are to suffer punishment.* Their doom will not be purely privative, nor will merely natural consequences follow their evil conduct. Distinct penalties will be imposed. 2. *The punishment will chiefly consist in "eternal destruction."* This dreadful phrase certainly cannot be taken as an equivalent for everlasting torment. Is not sin everywhere destructive? The wages of sin is not pain—though pain does follow it—but death. This destroying process, left to itself, will go on for ever. All hope of a far-off end to it must be in some interference with its action by the Divine mercy, which is also eternal. 3. *The punishment will be increased by the measure of the glory that is missed.* The eternal destruction involves separation "from the face of the Lord." In his presence there is fulness of joy. Spiritual destruction includes the killing out of the spiritual eye that beholds the beatific vision.—W. F. A.

Ver. 11.—*Worthy of the Christian calling.* Here is a prayer with two aspects. It looks to heaven and to earth. It is concerned with God's estimate of his people and with their own spiritual successes.

I. THE HEAVENWARD ASPECT OF THE PRAYER. St. Paul has just been describing the great and terrible judgment-day in language of fire and thunder. Now he expresses his anxiety that all may be well with his readers on that day, when they will be called to account to ascertain how far they have walked worthily in respect of their vocation. 1. *Christians have a calling.* We are called to be Christians, and being Christians, to enter the pilgrimage of the heavenly life. The object of this general calling is to follow Christ. But we are also each of us called to some specific individual vocation. 2. *The Christian calling involves high obligations.* It is no light matter to be found worthy of it. When a great trust is put upon a man a heavy responsibility accompanies his discharge thereof. So is it with every Christian. 3. *God watches us in the pursuit of our calling.* We are observed of God, neither escaping his eye in our most secret hours, nor disregarded by him in our least important actions. 4. *God will bring us to account for our fulfilment of our calling.* It is most important that he should reckon us to have worthily discharged our vocation because "his favour is life." But he who calls us to the Christian life can give us grace to discharge its obligations. We can pray that we may be accounted worthy.

II. THE EARTHWARD ASPECT OF THE PRAYER. 1. It seeks the fulfilment of *every desire of goodness.* These are the desires which spring out of the good disposition of a Christian heart. (1) It is not every desire of a good man that is to be fulfilled. Good people may have foolish wishes. The desires to be prayed about are those which spring directly out of goodness. (2) Good desires may be unsatisfied. We may wish well and not have opportunity or power for executing our wishes. The spirit may be willing while the flesh is weak, or the spirit may be weak in energy while it is good in intention. 2. It seeks the fulfilment of *every work of faith.* St. Paul agrees with St. James that faith shows itself by works. But he sees deeper into the difficulties of weak human nature. Though our trust and fidelity prompt us to obedient service, innumerable hindrances intervene and frustrate our energies. We need that God should establish the work of our hands. Even when we sow and water well he must give the increase. 3. The accomplishment of these ends depends on a *gift of power.* Goodness without strength is futile. But the strong God infuses strength (Ps. lxxiii.

26). The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of power. The Church should pray more earnestly for the grace of energy.—W. F. A.

Ver. 12.—*Glorified*. I. THE GREAT END OF THE CHRISTIAN VOCATION IS TO GLORIFY THE NAME OF CHRIST. The blessings for which St. Paul has been praying are to lead up to this great result. 1. *The Christian lives for Christ*. Christ is the chief Cornerstone of the finished temple as well as the Foundation with which the building is begun. He is the Omega as well as the Alpha. We begin with him; in him, too, we end. Receiving all our grace from Christ, we are to devote our lives to him. 2. *The Christian lives for the glory of Christ*. We cannot minister to his wants directly as did those women who gave of their substance during his earthly humiliation—though we can do so virtually when we give to his brethren. But we can minister to his glory as directly as did those disciples who cast their garments in his path and hailed his entrance into Jerusalem with shouts of praise. 3. *The Christian honours Christ by glorifying his Name*. The Name is not merely the distinctive appellation, but the descriptive characteristic. To Jesus there is given "the Name which is above every name" (Phil. ii. 9). His Name is what is known of him and praised in him, i.e. his fame. So we speak of one making a name. We cannot add to the greatness and gloriousness of our Lord. But we can make his fame to be more widely spread and more highly exalted among men.

II. WHEN THE NAME OF CHRIST IS GLORIFIED HIS PEOPLE SHARE THE GLORY. 1. *There is a prospect of glorification for Christians*. The doleful plaint of the despised sufferer is not to be the only song of the Church. Not only will joy follow sorrow, but exaltation will succeed humiliation. The Thessalonian Christians were a despised and persecuted community living among cruel, scornful neighbours. This trying condition was not to be permanent. For their shame they would have double glory in the end. 2. *Christian glorification follows the glorification of Christ*. The first point is the glorifying of our God's Name; that of his people comes second. The order is significant. (1) We must not seek our own glory, but in seeking Christ's ours will follow unsought. (2) Until the master is glorified the servants must remain in obscurity. The great glory of the second advent will be followed by the exaltation of the Church. 3. *Christian glorification depends on union with Christ*. We are to be glorified in him. (1) All that makes the Christian glorious comes from Christ. Without him we are shamed and dark and dead. (2) Glory comes to us through our sharing Christ's glory, as the clouds are glorified in the light of the rising sun.

III. THE GLORIFICATION OF CHRIST AND HIS PEOPLE ARISES FROM A WORTHY FULFILMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN CALLING ACCORDING TO DIVINE GRACE. 1. *It arises from a worthy fulfilment of the Christian calling*. St. Paul prayed that God would count his people worthy of their calling for this express purpose, that they might glorify Christ, etc. (ver. 11). We glorify Christ by our lives. Songs of praise go for little if our conduct dishonours our Lord. The richest anthem of praise rises from the silent living of a pure and useful Christian life. Our own glory is also only possible when our life in Christ has been fruitful. 2. *It depends on Divine grace*. It is "according to the grace," etc., i.e. the glory corresponds to the grace. The more grace we have the greater will be the glory. Fulness of grace brings fulness of glory.—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER II.

CONTENTS.—The apostle now proceeds to the principal object which he had in view in writing this Epistle. The Thessalonians had adopted erroneous notions concerning the advent; they supposed that the day of the Lord was imminent, and, in consequence of this belief, they were thrown into a state

of excitement and alarm. The apostle reminds them of his former instructions on this subject; how he had told them that before the coming of the day of the Lord there should be a great apostasy, and the man of sin, whose nature and characteristics he had described to them, should be revealed; but that at present there was a restraining influence which prevented his appearance.

When that restraining influence was removed, the man of sin would be revealed, accompanied with powers and signs and wonders of falsehood, and would succeed in deceiving those who were destitute of the love of the truth. Then would the Lord Jesus Christ come and destroy him by the breath of his mouth and the appearance of his presence. The apostle thanks God that the Thessalonians, on the contrary, were chosen to salvation and to a participation of the glory of the Lord; he exhorts them to stand fast in the instructions which he had delivered them; and he concludes with a prayer for their consolation and confirmation.

This chapter is involved in difficulties; it is the obscurest passage in the writings of Paul; it is pre-eminently one of those things in his Epistles which are hard to be understood (2 Pet. iii. 16). But it is to be observed that the description of the man of sin, though obscure to us, was not necessarily obscure to the Thessalonians. They had information on this point which we do not possess. The apostle, when at Thessalonica, had instructed them in this subject, and to these instructions he refers in the description which he here gives (vers. 5, 6). Nor was the information which he imparted to them indefinite and general, but definite and precise. He had described the nature of the apostasy, the characteristics of the man of sin, and the influences which retarded his manifestation (vers. 3, 4); and if these points were known to us, as they were to the Thessalonians, most of the obscurity which rests on this prediction would disappear. At present we give the exposition of the passage, reserving the discussion of the various theories concerning its interpretation to an excursus at the end of the chapter.

Ver. 1.—*Now*; literally, *but*; a particle of transition. *We beseech you*. Passing from what he besought God for them to what he beseeches them. *Brethren, by*. Considered by some, as in the A.V., as a form of adjuration. Thus Calvin: "He adjures believers by the coming of Christ; for it is customary to adjure by those things which are regarded by us with reverence." But such a construction is unknown in the New Testament, and is besides unnatural. Others render the preposition "in behalf of" or "in the interest of," "as though he were pleading, in honour of that day, that the expectation

of it might not be a source of disorder in the Church" (Jowett); but such a sense is too artificial. It is best to render it "concerning," or, as in the R.V., "touching." The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Some (Whitby, Hammond) suppose that by the coming of the Lord Jesus was here meant his coming in spirit at the destruction of Jerusalem, and that the apostasy was the revolt of the Jews from the Romans; the restraining power being differently interpreted. But this is a forced and extravagant interpretation, and is completely overthrown by what the apostle says in the next verse, for the destruction of Jerusalem was imminent. Besides, the Thessalonians, who were chiefly Gentile converts, were too distant from Jerusalem to be much troubled by the destruction of that city. By the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, then, is here meant, as is the uniform meaning of the phrase in the writings of Paul, the second advent. And by (or, *concerning*) our gathering together unto him. The word translated "gathering together" occurs only once again in the New Testament, where it is used with reference to the assembling of Christians for worship (Heb. x. 35). Here it is used with reference to the assembling of believers to Christ, when he shall be revealed from heaven; it refers, not to the raising of the dead, but to the gathering together of those who are then alive (see 1 Thess. iv. 17).

Ver. 2.—*That*; to the end that, the purpose for which the apostle besought the Thessalonians. *Ye be not soon*; *quickly*. This has been variously interpreted, "so soon after my exhortation," or "so soon after my departure from Thessalonica," or "so soon after your reception of the gospel," or "so soon after this opinion of the imminence of Christ's coming was promulgated." Others refer it to manner rather than to time—"soon and with small reason" (Alford). *Shaken*; agitated like the waves by a storm, as the word signifies. *In mind*; or rather, *from your mind*; *from your sober reason*. Or be troubled; a still stronger expression; "terrified." *Neither by spirit*; not any falsely understood prophecies of the Old Testament, nor any mistaken revelations, whether by visions or dreams; but prophetic discourses delivered by members of the Church in a state of excitement, announcing the immediate coming of Christ, and which were mistaken for Divine communications. There does not appear to have been any intention to deceive; the Thessalonians erred in neglecting "to try the spirits" and to "prove the prophecies." Nor by word; not any traditional word of Christ, nor any misinterpretation of his prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, nor a calm discourse in distinction from prophetic utterances; but the

report of some of the apostle's words, either erroneous or misunderstood. Nor by letter. Not the apostle's former Epistle to the Thessalonians, the passages in which concerning the advent had been misinterpreted (Paley): for, if this were the case, the apostle would have expressed himself more plainly and would not have repudiated it; but some letter, either forged in the apostle's name or pretending to inculcate his views. As from us. These words apply to the last two particulars: "Let no pretended saying or pretended letter of mine disturb you in this matter." As that—to the effect that—the day of Christ; or, as the best manuscripts read, of the Lord. Is at hand; literally, is present, so R.V. The verb is so translated in the other passages where it occurs (Rom. viii. 38; 1 Cor. iii. 22; Gal. i. 4; Heb. ix. 9), except in 2 Tim. iii. 1, where it ought also to have been so rendered. It is, however, difficult to conceive how the Thessalonians could think that the day of the Lord was actually present. We cannot imagine that they thought that Christ had already come for judgment. To escape the difficulty, some conceive that "the day of the Lord" is not identical with "the coming of the Lord," but that, besides the actual advent, it includes the events which are its antecedents and concomitants (Eadie). It appears, however, best to suppose that the word is a strong expression for the imminence of that day; that the hour of the advent was about to strike. The Thessalonians ought always to be living in a state of preparation for the day of the Lord, as that day would come suddenly and unexpectedly; but they were not to be so impressed with a sense of its imminence as to be deprived of their sober reason.

Ver. 3.—Let no man deceive you by any means; in any way, not only in any of the foregoing methods, "by spirit, or word, or letter," but in any way whatever. For (*that day shall not come*). The bracketed words are not in the original, but are correctly supplied for the completion of the sense. Except there come a falling away; or, the apostasy; namely, that apostasy about which the apostle, when in Thessalonica, had instructed his readers. The falling away here alluded to is evidently religious, not political. Hence it cannot be the revolt of the Jews from the Romans, or any of those revolts and disturbances which then occurred in the political world. Nor must we conceive that the man of sin himself is here meant; for this apostasy precedes his coming—prepares the way for his advent; it is not the result, but the cause, of his appearance. The word, then, is to be taken generally to denote that remarkable "falling away" from Christianity concerning which

Paul had instructed the Thessalonians (comp. 1 Tim. iv. 1—3). First; namely, before the coming of the day of the Lord. And that man of sin; in whom sin is, as it were, personified, as righteousness is in Christ. Be revealed. The apostle considers the man of sin as the counterpart of Christ; as Christ was revealed, so shall the man of sin be revealed. The son of perdition; whose sin necessarily conducts to perdition; not here the perdition of his followers, but his own perdition. The same name which was applied by our Lord to Judas Iscariot (John xvii. 12).

Ver. 4.—Who opposeth; or, the opposer, taken substantively. The object of opposition is not so much believers, as Christ; he is antichrist, the opponent of Christ. And yet antichrist is not Satan, the great adversary (1 Pet. v. 8; Rev. xii. 10), for he is expressly distinguished from him (ch. ii. 9), but the instrument of Satan. As Satan entered into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of perdition, so does he take possession of the man of sin. And exalteth himself above; or rather, against, in a hostile manner. All that is called God; not only against all the false gods of the heathen, but also against the true God (comp. Dan. vii. 25; xi. 36). Or that is worshipped; that is an object of worship. The same word that is used in Acts xvii. 23, "As I passed by and beheld your devotions"—the objects of your worship. So that he as God. The words "as God" are to be omitted, as not found in the best manuscripts. Sitteth in the temple of God. According to some, the temple of Jerusalem (De Wette, Lünemann, Eadie), either as it then existed or as restored according to the prophecy of Ezekiel. But it appears more correct to refer the expression metaphorically to the Christian Church. It is a favourite metaphor of Paul to compare believers in particular, or the Church in general, to the temple of God (comp. 1 Cor. iii. 17; vi. 19; Eph. ii. 20—22). Showing—exhibiting—himself that he is God. His sitting in the temple of God was an assertion of his divinity; he claimed to be regarded and worshipped as God. This was the crowning act of his impiety; not only, like the Roman emperors, he demanded to be worshipped as one of many gods, but he claimed to himself the prerogative of the Godhead, not only to the exclusion of the false gods of heathenism, but even of the true God.

Ver. 5.—Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things! These words contain a reproach. Had the Thessalonians remembered the instructions of the apostle, they would not have been so soon shaken from their sober reason or troubled. The apostle, when he was in

Thessalonica, had told them of these things; he had instructed them concerning the nature of the apostasy and the coming of the man of sin; so that, as already observed, this description, so obscure to us, was not obscure to the Thessalonians,—they possessed the key to its interpretation.

Ver. 6.—And now. The particle “now” has been variously interpreted. Some connect it with the restraining influence: “And ye know what now withholdeth;” but if so, there would have been a different arrangement of the words in the original. Others consider it as a mere particle of transition: “Now, to pass over to another subject;” but there is no transition, the apostle continues his description of the man of sin. It is rather to be considered as a particle of time: “Now ye know, because you have been instructed on this point.” Ye know; Paul having told them when he was at Thessalonica. What withholdeth; hindereth. The hindrance does not refer to the prevention of the apostle from speaking freely on this subject, lest he should involve himself in political difficulties; nor to any delay in the coming of Christ; but to a restraint upon the appearance of the man of sin: “Ye know what prevents his open manifestation.” That he; namely, the man of sin. Might be revealed in his time; literally, *in his season*; in his proper time, the time appointed by God. Events were not yet ripe for his appearance. Just as there was a “fulness of time” when Christ should appear (Gal. iv. 4), so there was a “fulness of time” when the man of sin should be revealed; there was a series of events going on which would culminate in his revelation. The nature of this restraining or withholding influence will afterwards be considered; whatever it was, the Thessalonians were formerly explicitly informed.

Ver. 7.—For the mystery. “Mystery” here denotes something which was unknown or secret before it was revealed (comp. Eph. iii. 3—5). So also one of the names of Babylon, the seat of the antichristian power, is Mystery (Rev. xvii. 3). Of iniquity; rather, of lawlessness; namely, this apostasy which shall precede the coming of the man of sin. The genitive here is that of apposition—“that mystery which is lawlessness,” whose essence and sphere of operation is lawlessness. Doth already work; or, *is already working*. The mystery of iniquity even now works in secret; but the man of sin himself will not appear until the restraining power be removed. Even at the time the apostle wrote the seeds of apostasy were already sown; the leaven of lawlessness was fermenting inside Christianity; the foundations of a false Chris-

tianity were being laid. Thus the apostle warned the Ephesians that false teachers would arise from among themselves; to Timothy he writes of those perilous times which were then present; and, in his Epistles, mention is made of false practices and doctrines, such as the worship of angels, abstinence from meats, bodily mortifications, and the honour conferred on celibacy. So also John, in his First Epistle, refers to this working of this antichristian power when he says, “Little children, it is the last time; and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists. . . . Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world” (1 John ii. 18; iv. 3). “Antichrist does not step on the scene suddenly without any preparations; on the contrary, a stream of antichristian sentiment and conduct pervades the whole history of the world” (Olshausen). Only he that now letteth; or, *restraineth*, the old meaning of the word “let.” *Will let*. These words are not in the original, and ought to be omitted. Until he be taken out of the way. The whole clause ought to be rendered, “The mystery of lawlessness is already working, only until he who restraineth is removed;” when that takes place, when the restraining influence is removed, the mystery of lawlessness will no longer work secretly, but will be openly manifested.

Ver. 8.—And then; namely, so soon as he that restraineth is taken out of the way. Shall that Wicked; or, *that lawless one*, in whom the mystery of lawlessness is realized; not different from, but the same with, the “man of sin, the son of perdition.” Be revealed; appear unveiled in all his naked deformity. No longer working secretly, but openly, and in an undisguised form; no longer the mystery, but the revelation of lawlessness. The apostle now interrupts his description of the man of sin by announcing his doom. Whom the Lord; or, as the best-attested manuscripts read, *whom the Lord Jesus*. Shall consume; or rather, *shall slay* (R.V.). With the spirit (or, *breath*) of his mouth. Various interpretations have been given to this clause. Some refer it to the Word of God, and others to the Holy Spirit, and suppose that the conversion of the world is here predicted; but this is evidently an erroneous interpretation, as the doom of antichrist is here announced. Others refer the term to a cry or word, and think that the sentence of condemnation pronounced by the Lord Jesus on the wicked is intended. But the words are to be taken literally as a description of the power and

irresistible might of Christ at his coming—that the mere breath of his mouth is sufficient to consume the wicked (comp. Isa. xi. 4. “He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked”). And shall destroy (or, *annihilate*) with the brightness (or, *appearance*) of his coming. The two words, *epiphany* and *parousia*, which are elsewhere used separately to denote the coming of Christ, are here employed. There is no ground for the assertion that the first is the subjective and the second the objective aspect of Christ's coming (Olshausen). The brightness of Christ's coming is not here expressed; but the meaning is that the mere appearance of Christ's presence will annihilate the wicked.

Ver. 9.—The apostle resumes his description of the man of sin. *Even him*; not in the original, but necessary for the sense. *Whose coming*. The use of the same term, *parousia*, employed to denote the coming of Christ exhibits the counterpart of the man of sin. Is *after the working*—according to the energy—of Satan. Satan is the agent who works in the man of sin; he being the organ or instrument of Satan. *With all power and signs and lying wonders*. The adjective “lying” ought to be rendered as a substantive, and applied to all three: “With all powers and signs and wonders of falsehood;” whose origin, nature, and purpose is falsehood. Here, also, the counterpart to Christ is manifest; for the same terms—“powers,” “signs,” and “wonders,” are employed to denote his miracles (Acts ii. 22; Heb. ii. 4). The miracles of Christ were miracles of truth; the miracles of the man of sin would be miracles of falsehood. There does not seem to be any essential difference between powers, signs, and wonders; but the words are employed as a mere rhetorical enumeration. It is not to be supposed that the man of sin will be enabled to perform real miracles; they are the wonders of falsehood; but still by them his followers will be deceived (comp. Matt. xxiv. 24).

Ver. 10.—And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness; or rather, *with all deceit of unrighteousness* (R.V.); either with all deceit leading to unrighteousness or with all deceit which is unrighteousness. The man of sin works by deceit and falsehood; and by means of imposture and wonders and high pretensions he will succeed in imposing on the world. The energetic power of the man of sin is, however, by no means irresistible; only they who perish will succumb to it. *In them*. In the best manuscripts the preposition “in” is wanting; therefore the words are to be translated *for them or to them*. *That perish* (comp. 2 Cor. ii. 15); because they received not the love of the

truth. Not only did they not receive the truth when it was offered them, but what was worse, they were destitute even of a love of the truth. By the truth here is meant, not Christ himself, as some expositors think, but primarily the Christian truth, and secondarily the truth generally. There was in them a want of susceptibility for the truth, and thus not only were they prevented embracing the gospel, but they were led astray by numerous errors and delusions. *That they might be saved*. The result which naturally would arise from the reception of the truth.

Ver. 11.—*For this cause*; on account of their being destitute of a love of the truth. *God shall send them*; or rather, *God sends them*; the present being chosen because the apostasy had already commenced, the mystery of lawlessness was already working. *Strong delusion*; or, *a working of error* (R.V.). These words are not to be weakened, as if they meant merely that in righteous judgment God permitted strong delusion to be sent them; the words are not a mere assertion of judicial permission, but of actual retribution. It is the ordinance of God that the wicked by their wicked actions fall into greater wickedness, and that thus sin is punished by sin; and what is an ordinance of God is appointed by God himself. *That they should believe a lie*; or rather, *the lie*, namely the falsehood which the man of sin disseminates by his deceit of unrighteousness. Being destitute of the love of the truth, they are necessarily led to believe a lie—their minds are open to all manner of falsehood and delusion.

Ver. 12.—*That; in order that*. The statement of purpose depending not upon “that they should believe a lie,” but upon “God sends them a strong delusion”—denoting a still more remote purpose of God. God, as the moral Ruler of the universe, will pronounce sentence of condemnation against them, this sentence being the necessary result of their receiving not the love of the truth. Its reception would have been the cause of their salvation; its rejection results in their condemnation. *They all might be damned*; or rather, *judged* (R.V.). The verb employed does not here, or elsewhere, express the idea of condemnation, though this is implied by the context. *Who believed not the truth*; namely, the Christian truth; their unbelief of it was the consequence of their want of love of the truth, and was the cause of their being judged. *But had pleasure in unrighteousness*. Their delight in unrighteousness was wholly incompatible with their belief in the truth; their want of faith arose, not from any defect in their understanding, but from the perversion of their moral nature.

Here the description of the man of sin concludes, and hence the second division of the Epistle closes. The succeeding verses should have been attached to a new paragraph, being the commencement of the third or hortatory portion of the Epistle.

Ver. 13.—But; this may be considered as a simple particle of transition, or as containing a contrast to those alluded to in the previous verses. I thank God that you are not exposed to the delusions of the man of sin and to the destruction of his followers. We. By some restricted to Paul, and by others as including Silas and Timotheus (ch. i. 1). Are bound to give thanks always to God. Notwithstanding the disorders which had arisen in the Church of Thessalonica, Paul had abundant reason to thank God for his great grace vouchsafed to the Thessalonians, in retaining them in the gospel, and in enabling them to abound in faith and love. For you, brethren beloved of the Lord; that is, of Christ. In the former Epistle he calls them "beloved of God" (1 Thess. i. 4), here "of Christ;" one of the numerous indirect proofs in these Epistles of the Divinity of Christ. Because God hath from the beginning. Some valuable manuscripts read, "because God hath chosen you as first-fruits," and this rendering has been adopted by several eminent expositors (Jowett, Hofmann, Riggenbach); but the preponderance of authorities is in favour of the reading in our A.V. The phrase, "from the beginning," does not denote "from the beginning of the gospel," but "from eternity." The apostle refers the salvation of the Thessalonians to the eternal election of God. Chosen you to salvation—the final purpose of God's election. Through; or rather, *in*, denoting the elements in which the salvation consisted, or, which is the same thing, the state into which they were chosen. Sanctification of the Spirit—the Divine side—and belief of the truth—the human side of the element in which the salvation was realized.

Ver. 14.—Whereunto; to which. The

reference being to the whole clause, being "chosen to salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." He called you. Whom God elects from eternity, he calls in time. By our gospel; the gospel preached by us. To the obtaining (or, acquisition) of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Different meanings have been attached to these words; some render them "for the purpose of an acquisition of glory to Jesus Christ;" others, "for a glorious possession of Jesus Christ;" and others, "to be possessors or sharers in the glory of Jesus Christ." The last meaning is the correct one. Believers are constituted "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ."

Ver. 15.—Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions. Traditions generally denote statements orally delivered and reported; here the word denotes the apostle's instructions in Christianity, whether these are given by word of mouth or by letter. Which ye have been taught, whether by word; referring to the apostle's preaching when in Thessalonica. Or our Epistle; referring to the First Epistle to the Thessalonians.

Ver. 16.—Now our Lord Jesus Christ, and God, even our Father, who hath loved us. These last words, "who hath loved us," are to be restricted to God our Father, whose love was manifested in sending his Son to rescue sinners from destruction. And hath given us everlasting consolation; or, comfort; everlasting as contrasted with the temporary and deceitful comfort which the world gives. And good hope through grace; or, *in* grace. "In grace" belongs to the verb "hath given," and denotes the mode of the gift—of his own free grace, in contrast to personal merit.

Ver. 17.—Comfort your hearts, and stablish you; or, according to the best manuscripts, *stablish them*, namely, your hearts. These verbs are in the singular, but their nominative is our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father, thus implying the unity between these Divine Persons. In every good word and work.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The second advent.* 1. *The time of the advent.* The erroneous notions of the Thessalonians concerning the advent. Our Lord's references and the references in the Epistles to the advent. There is no reason for the assertion that the apostles believed in or taught the immediate coming of Christ. They announced the certainty of the advent, but the precise time was not within the sphere of their inspiration. 2. *The practical influence which the doctrine of the second advent should have upon us.* Negatively, it should not deprive us of our sober reason or fill us with alarm. Positively, its certainty should inspire us with hope and fill us with joy; its uncertainty should stir us up to watchfulness and preserve us in patience. We must not measure by our impatience the purposes of him with whom "one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

Ver. 3.—Importance of religious knowledge. We are surrounded by many influences tending either to lead us into error and delusion, or into scepticism and infidelity. We must add to our faith knowledge, and seek to be rooted and grounded in the faith. The truth ought to be the great subject of inquiry. Let us cultivate the love of the truth; let us pursue the truth wherever it leads, lest we should render ourselves liable to the condemnation of those who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness; and lest we should be led from error to error, and be lost in a perfect maze of falsehood.

Vers. 3—9.—The doctrine of antichrist. Antichrist is the caricature or counterpart of Christ. 1. He is the man of sin, the personification of iniquity; whereas Christ is the righteous One, the personification of righteousness. 2. He is the mystery of iniquity; whereas Christ is the mystery of godliness. 3. His advent is announced by the same word as the advent of Christ. 4. His coming occurred in its proper season; so also Christ came in the fulness of time. 5. His coming is after the working of Satan; whereas Christ's coming is in the power of the Holy Ghost. 6. He performs miracles of falsehood, a counterpart of the real miracles which Christ performed. 7. He sitteth in the temple of God, thus occupying the proper seat of Christ. 8. He shows or exhibits himself as God, whereas Christ is the true manifestation of the Godhead. In short, the kingdom of light which Christ has established has its counterpart in the kingdom of darkness.

Ver. 13.—Sanctification. 1. *Its nature.* It denotes separation and consecration. It consists in the mortification of sin and the production of holiness. 2. *Its properties.* Universal, adapted to our peculiar characters, discernible, progressive, in this life always imperfect, constant, and eternal. 3. *Its Author.* The Holy Spirit the immediate Author; it is his peculiar office to produce holiness in the soul. He not only purifies our affections, but takes up his abode in our hearts. 4. *Its instrument.* The belief of the truth. The instrument with which the Spirit works is the Word of God. We must not disjoin these two; the agency of the Spirit and the instrumentality of the Word are both equally essential and equally important.

Ver. 15.—Retention of Scripture. Whilst we reject the false and wrong, we must hold fast to the true and right. This is an age of testing. 1. We must examine the evidences of the Word of God. 2. We must endeavour to find out its meaning by careful study, and by prayer for the guidance and teaching of God's Spirit. 3. We must bring all doctrines and opinions to the test of Scripture, and draw our belief from the Word of God, and not from the opinions and traditions of men. 4. We must ever walk up to the light which we have. The Spirit is promised to guide us into all truth, and if we depend upon him and follow his guidance, we shall not be suffered to go astray.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1, 2.—A misapprehension respecting the time of the second advent. The apostle's main design in this Epistle is to correct a most disquieting error that had arisen upon this point.

I. THE PANIC IN THE THESSALONIAN CHURCH. 1. *It was concerning the date of the second coming of Christ.* "Touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto him." The facts of this august event had been prophetically described in the First Epistle. (1) It was the personal coming of Christ in "the day of the Lord" to judge the quick and the dead. (2) It was an event involving their "gathering together unto him" to meet the Lord in the air: a happy meeting, a marvellously glorious sight. 2. *The misapprehension caused a sort of panic.* "That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled"—like a ship tossed upon a stormy sea. It was this deep agitation of mind, this consternation and surprise, which led to the unsettled spirit that manifested itself in the Thessalonian Church. Errors in the region of dispensational truth often have this tendency. 3. *The panic was due to one or other of three sources.* "Neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us."

(1) It may have had its origin in some pretended revelation or spiritual utterance in the Thessalonian Church. Our Lord had predicted false alarms of this sort. "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe him not" (Matt. xxiv. 23). (2) Or it may have come "through word," that is, word of mouth, supposed to be spoken by the apostle during his visit to Thessalonica. (3) Or "through letter as from us," apparently forged letters such as had already become rife in the early Church.

II. THE GROUND OF THE PANIC. "As that the day of the Lord is now present." This is the correct translation; not "it is at hand." 1. *It could inspire no terror for the Thessalonians to know that the day was at hand*, for this had always been the apostle's teaching, as well as that of all Scripture (Matt. xxiv.; Rom. xiii. 12; Phil. iv. 5; Heb. x. 25, 37; Jas. v. 8; 1 Pet. iv. 7). They had been already familiar with the doctrine, which ought rather to have filled their hearts with transcendent gladness. 2. *Their disquietude and distress arose from the belief that the Lord had already come without their sharing in the glory of his kingdom*. Their relatives were still lying in their graves without any sign of resurrection, and they themselves saw no sign of that transformation of body in themselves that was to be the prelude to their meeting the Lord in the air. The apostle tells them distinctly that the day has not come, and that the signs of its approach had not yet been exhibited.—T. C.

Vers. 3—8.—*The rise of the apostasy and the revelation of the man of sin must precede the second advent*. This fact would assure them that a period of time of at least indefinite extent would intervene before the day of the Lord. "Let no man deceive you by any means."

I. THE COMING OF THE APOSTASY. "Because the day will not set in unless there come the apostasy first." 1. *The apostasy is so described because it was already familiar to their minds through his oral teaching*. "Remember ye not, that, when I was with you, I was telling you of these things?" 2. *It points to a signal defection from the Christian faith*. We imagine that the primitive Churches were signally free from error or fault of any sort. The apostle himself notes the signs of beginning apostasy even in his own day. (1) "The mystery of lawlessness doth already work." (2) There were for himself "perils from false brethren." (3) There were in the Church itself "enemies of the cross of Christ." (4) Later still "many deceivers had entered into the world." (5) The apostle foresaw that the evil "would increase unto more ungodliness." (6) This apostasy was to precede the revelation of the man of sin, not to be regarded as identical with it. Yet the two movements were not to be regarded as independent of each other, except in the order or time of their development. (7) The signs of the apostasy in Christendom are to be seen principally in the Papacy, but likewise in the kindred errors and corruptions of the Greek Church as well as in the delusions of Mohammedanism. The elements of the apostasy were, however, to be gathered up and concentrated at last in a single person as their final embodiment.

II. THE REVELATION OF THE MAN OF SIN. "And that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above every one called God, or an object of worship." His characteristics are here distinctly described. 1. *He does not represent a system of error, like Romanism, or the papal hierarchy, or a succession of popes, but a single person*. The man of sin has not yet appeared. Yet Romanism, or the papacy, comprehends much that is involved in the idea of this terrible person, who, however, goes beyond it in the appalling extent of his wickedness. The passage is not symbolic, but literal. It is a literal person who is described. 2. *He is "the son of perdition."* (1) Not because he brings ruin to others, but (2) because he is himself doomed to ruin—going literally to "his own place," like Judas, who may be regarded as a type of him. 3. *His boundless and blasphemous assumptions*. (1) His opposition to every God, true and false. (2) His self-elevation above every God, true and false. His action recalls the prophecy of Daniel: "The king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods" (Dan. xi. 36). This prophecy refers to a polytheistic king. The apostle refers to the man of sin as repudiating all worship, as if he represented a higher divinity than anything worshipped on earth. (a) The

description does not apply to the pope or the papacy: (α) Because the pope, though the head of a system of idolatry, does not oppose God or exalt himself above him, but rather owns himself "a servant of servants of the most high God," and blesses the people, not in his own name, but in the Name of the Triune God. (β) Because, instead of exalting himself above God or objects of worship, he multiplies the objects of worship by the canonization of new saints, and submits, like the humblest of his followers, to the worship of the very saints he has made. (γ) Because the pope, though guilty of arrogating almost Divine powers to himself, does not supersede God so as to make himself God. The man of sin "sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." Though votaries of the papacy have often given Divine titles to the popes, the Popes have never assumed to be God, but only vicars of Jesus Christ on earth. They have claimed to be viceroys of God. The temple of God cannot be the Vatican; nor the Christian Church, which is an ideal building; nor can Rome be regarded as the centre of the Christian Church. (δ) Because this prophetic sketch contains no allusion to strictly papal peculiarities, such as idolatry, either as to the Virgin Mary, saints, angels, or relics, the invention of purgatory, priestly absolution, bloody fanaticism, debased casuistry, lordship over the world of spirits. (b) The description applies to the man of sin—the lawless one—for whom the Papacy prepares the way by a long course of apostasy from the truth. (α) This terrible person is to oppose God and all worship of every sort, and may therefore be regarded as an impersonation of infidel wickedness. (β) He is to sit down in the vacated "temple of God" and claim all the attributes of divinity. He sits down in God's place—for the temple is God's dwelling—in some actual temple, and appropriates it to his own use. Wherever the scene of this marvellous usurpation may be, it signifies the obliteration of all Christian interests and the triumph of atheistic malignity. When the Lord comes, "shall he find faith in the earth?" We see how Positivism in our own day has forsaken the worship of a personal God and betaken itself to the worship of concrete humanity. The man of sin will use the papacy as Auguste Comte travestied it in constructing forms of Positivist devotion, by turning it into some darker shape and making it the tremendous instrument of the world's final ruin.

III. THE CHECK TO THE FULL DEVELOPMENT OF THE MAN OF SIN. "And now what restraineth ye know, in order that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of iniquity is already working only till he who now restraineth be taken out of the way." These words imply: 1. *That the apostasy was already in being*; for "the mystery of lawlessness is already working." The two, if not identical, are closely connected together. (1) It antagonizes Christ, who is "the mystery of godliness" (1 Tim. iii. 16). The mystery is a process, not a person, yet it works against the person of Christ. (2) Many of the elements of the "apostasy" were in existence in the days of the apostles, at least in the germ-state. The Epistle to the Colossians and the Second Epistle to Timothy point to an early development of Gnostic error which found its place in due time in the papal system (Col. ii.; 2 Tim. iii.). The self-deifying tendency was manifested in the conduct of several of the Cæsars. 2. *The words imply that the working of the apostasy was still undefined and as yet unguessed at.* It was still "a mystery," to be revealed in due time. Nothing is more remarkable than the gradual growth of error in the patristic age. False opinions held by pious Fathers in one age were held by errorists in the next age to the exclusion of the truth. 3. *The words imply that, as the apostasy would last through ages, the check would likewise exercise a continuous effect.* The common opinion is that the Roman empire was the restraining power upon the development of the man of sin. It was certainly such upon the course of the apostasy, which was to prepare the way for the man of sin. It held the Papacy in check till it was itself swept away by barbarian violence. Because it has passed away, it does not follow that the man of sin must have been revealed at once; for other checks have been supplied, and are being still continuously supplied, in the polity of nations and in the face of Divine truth, to restrain the last terrible manifestation of his power.

IV. THE DOOM OF THE MAN OF SIN. "Whom the Lord Jesus shall consume with the breath of his mouth, and shall destroy with the appearance of his coming." 1. *This does not refer to the Word and Spirit of Christ working in the minds of men for the destruction of antichristian error and antitheistic wickedness, but to the actual*

personal advent of Jesus Christ. 2. *The language implies the suddenness and the completeness of the overthrow of the man of sin, who thereby becomes "the son of perdition."* 3. *The picture presented may be identical with the Gog and Magog conspiracy which is to follow the millennium.* (Rev. xx. 7, 8.) The Lord puts the question, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith in the earth?" (Luke xviii. 8). Thus the apostle assures the Thessalonians that the day of the Lord cannot have come, because all the events here pictured must happen before that great and terrible day.—T. C.

Vers. 9—12.—*The methods of the man of sin and the retribution that overtakes his victims.* The apostle, after telling the doom of the man of sin by anticipation, goes back upon his description so as to bring out the contrast between the coming of Christ and the coming of his arch-enemy.

I. THE METHODS OF THE MAN OF SIN. "Whose coming is after the working of Satan in all powers and signs and prodigies of lying." 1. *The source of all this wonder-working activity—Satan.* There is more than human depravity at work in this tremendous revelation of evil power. As Satan is a liar and the father of lies, he will stamp falsehood upon the whole system, which he will elaborate with superhuman craft for the misguidance of men. 2. *The character of this activity.* It is external and internal. (1) It is external—"in powers and signs and prodigies of lying." (a) These are to be a mimicry of Christ's miracles, for the three words here used are twice applied to our Lord's miracles (Heb. ii. 4; Acts ii. 22). (b) They were not real miracles, as if they had been done by Divine power, but jugglers' tricks or such-like startling wonders as might delude "the perishing" into the belief that they were done by Divine power. The signs were to be as false as their author. (c) Their design was to attest the truth of the doctrine of the man of sin. (2) It is internal—"in all deceit of unrighteousness"—so as to pass sooner for truth. Guile marks his whole career, and unrighteousness is the aim and result. He "speaks lies in hypocrisy;" "by good words and fair speeches he deceives the hearts of the simple" (1 Tim. iv. 2; Rom. xvi. 18). The ministers of Satan can as easily transform themselves into ministers of righteousness as Satan himself become an "angel of light" (2 Cor. xi. 14, 15). 3. *The effects of this wonder-working activity.* They are confined "to those that are perishing." It is not possible "to deceive the elect" (Mark xiii. 22). Those who are blinded to the glory of the gospel are in the way of easy deception (2 Cor. iv. 3). It is those on the way to perdition who are so easily deceived.

II. THE RETRIBUTION THAT OVERTAKES THE VICTIMS OF THE MAN OF SIN. "Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." The causes of the success of the man of sin are first described on the side of man and then on the side of God. The whole case is one of just retribution. 1. *The sin of the perishing.* (1) The truth was that which brought salvation near, disclosing at once their need of a Saviour and the readiness of Christ to save them. (2) They did not receive it, though it was offered them, but rejected and despised it. (3) They rejected it because they had "not the love of the truth." Without this love, the truth will do us no good; it must be received into the heart as well as the head. Augustine prayed, "Lord, make me taste that by love which I taste by knowledge." 2. *The Divine retribution for the sin of the perishing.* "And for this cause God is sending them an inworking error, that they should believe the lie" of the man of sin. They rejected the truth of God; God will, as a judicial, punitive infliction, send them blindness so that the error of the man of sin will be received as truth. "A terrible combination when both God and Satan are agreed to deceive a man!" There is a double punishment here. (1) They will actually believe the lie of the man of sin. Sin often in the moral government of God is punished by deeper sin. Those who care nothing for the truth are easily seduced into the worst errors. Men will at last become so perverse as to call "evil good, and good evil." (2) They will be finally judged for the pleasure they have taken in unrighteousness. "That all may be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." It follows: (a) That error is not an innocent thing. It has practical issues of the most momentous character. (b) That it is a fearful perversion of the human soul to take pleasure in what God hates. (c) That God allows the sin and madness of men to develop themselves to their fullest extent. (d) That God in this

way will be finally justified in their judgment; he "will be justified in his speaking, and shall be clear in his judging" (Ps. li. 4).—T. C.

Ver. 13, 14.—Apostolic thanksgiving for the election and the calling of the Thessalonians. I. THE DIVINE ELECTION. "God hath from the beginning chosen you." 1. *There is an "election according to grace"* (Rom. xi. 5). It is not to be confounded with the calling, which is an effect of it. "Whom he predestinated, them he also called" (Rom. viii. 30). Our salvation is always traced to "his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." 2. *The date of the election.* "From the beginning." It is "from the foundation of the world" (Eph. i. 4), and therefore does not rest upon the personal claims of individuals. 3. *The means of the election.* "In sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." The election is to the means as well as the end; it cannot take effect without the means. There is an objective as well as a subjective side in the sphere of the election. (1) The sanctification of the Spirit. This is the objective side. (a) It implies a spiritual change of nature. The Spirit applies the salvation, and regeneration is his first work. (b) Sanctification is the evidence as well as the fruit of election. (2) "The belief of the truth." This is the subjective side. Man is not passive in his salvation. (a) As the Spirit is the agent, the truth is the instrument of salvation. (b) The truth must be believed in order to salvation. As men are chosen to be saints, they are chosen also to be believers. (3) The necessary connection between the sanctification and the belief. It might appear as if the belief of the truth ought to precede the sanctification of the Spirit. But there cannot be faith without the operation of the Spirit, while, on the other hand, the sanctification is "through the truth." The two are inseparably joined together. 4. *The end of the election.* "God hath chosen you to salvation." (1) It is not an election to Church privileges. (2) Nor to national privileges. (3) But to salvation itself. (a) This is salvation from sin and sorrow, death and hell. (b) It is "the end of our faith" (1 Pet. i. 9).

II. THE DIVINE CALLING. "Wherunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." The election issues in the call. 1. *The Author of the call.* God. "There is one Lawgiver who is able to save and to destroy." He has the right to call and the power to call. Nothing but Divine power can save the soul. 2. *The means of the call.* "Our gospel." The ministry of the Word was the great instrument in the Spirit's hand of their conversion. 3. *The end of the call.* (1) It was to obtain the glory of Christ. It was to be obtained, not purchased or wrought out by their personal righteousness. (2) Believers are to share in the very glory of their Redeemer.—T. C.

Ver. 15.—Exhortation to a steadfast maintenance of apostolic traditions. "Therefore stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our Epistle."

I. THE GROUND OF THIS EXHORTATION. It was their election and calling. There is a perfect consistency between the Divine election and the obligations of Christian duty.

II. THE NECESSITY OF CHRISTIAN STABILITY. It was specially needful at Thessalonica, in the midst of the agitations and shakings and restlessness that prevailed on the subject of the second advent. Believers were not "to be carried about by every wind of doctrine," lest "being led away with the error of the wicked, they should fall from their own steadfastness." They were to "hold fast the beginning of their confidence," and not "be moved away from the hope of the gospel." 1. *There is safety in stability.* 2. *There is comfort in it.* 3. *It gives glory to God.* 4. *It gives strength and encouragement to the weak and vacillating.*

III. THE MANIFESTATION OF THIS STABILITY. "Hold fast the traditions." 1. *They were of two kinds, oral and written.* "Whether by word, or our Epistle." (1) They included apostolic doctrines—"the form of doctrine delivered to them." (2) Apostolic ordinances, such as baptism and the Lord's Supper, which they had received from the apostles, as the apostles from the Lord. (3) Apostolic rules and usages for the government of the Church. 2. *The traditions in question afford no warrant for the Roman Catholic doctrine of traditions handed down through ages.* Because: (1) The word is here applied to both oral and written teaching. (2) The traditions were not handed

down from some one anterior to the apostle, and from the apostle handed down to the Thessalonians; nor were they committed to the Thessalonians to be handed down to future ages. They were handed over directly by the apostle to the Thessalonians. (3) The doctrine of tradition dishonours the Scriptures, because the traditions are said to be necessitated by the defectiveness and obscurity of Scripture.—T. C.

Vers. 16, 17.—Prayer after exhortation. The comprehensive prayer for blessing with which he concludes is strictly after the apostle's manner.

I. THE AUTHORS OF THE BLESSINGS PRAYED FOR. "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father." The order of mention is unusual, though the name of Jesus occurs first in the apostolic benediction (2 Cor. xiii. 14). 1. *God the Father is the ultimate Source of blessing*, as it is through Jesus Christ the blessing comes to us. 2. *There is an entire equality between them*, seeing the blessing is attributed to both. 3. *There is oneness of essence*, as is indicated by the singular verb used in the passage.

II. THE GROUND OF EXPECTATION THAT THE BLESSINGS ASKED WILL BE GIVEN. "Who loved us, and gave us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace." 1. *The Divine love is the true ground of all our hopes of blessing*, for it is everlasting, unchangeable, practical in its ends. 2. *The two elements in the Divine gift.* (1) "Everlasting consolation." (a) A source of un failing comfort in the midst of the trials of life, springing out of everlasting sources and sufficing to all eternity; for God is a "God of all comfort," and "if there be any consolation," it is in Christ. (b) This comfort is a gift—a mark of Divine favour, not of human merit. (2) "A good hope through grace." (a) This is "the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began" (Titus i. 2). (b) It is a good hope (a) because of its Author; (b) because of its foundation, "through grace;" (c) because of its purifying effects (1 John iii. 4).

III. THE BLESSINGS PRAYED FOR. 1. *Heart-comfort.* "Comfort your hearts." They needed to be comforted on account of their troubles respecting the second advent. None but God can give true and lasting comfort. "Thou hast put gladness into my heart." 2. *Establishment and perseverance.* "And stablish you in every good word and work." (1) This blessing is to be sought especially in restless and unsettled times. (2) Stability is to be sought in "every good word," so that believers may not be carried away by "winds of doctrine;" and in "every good work," so that they may not be shaken by doubt and thus become restless and disorderly in conduct. Instability is weakness, as stability is strength.—T. C.

Vers. 1, 2.—The day of Christ not immediate. **I. THE MISTAKE OF THE THESSALONIANS.** 1. *In itself.* The day of the Lord is present; it is already dawning; it is close upon us. This thought had taken possession of their souls; it filled their hearts; it left no room for ordinary commonplace duties. They were neglecting these in their strong excitement, in their eager anticipation of the approach of the great day. What was the use of attention to business, of daily labour, of the quiet performance of their accustomed tasks, when the Lord was to be expected at once, when they were to be caught up, away from earth and its employments, to meet the Lord in the air. "We which are alive and remain shall be caught up," St. Paul had said in his First Epistle. They misunderstood his words; they supposed that it must be during their own lifetime; that it might be, that it would be, immediate. 2. *Its origin.* Spirit, word, or letter. "Believe not every spirit" (St. John said); "try the spirits whether they are of God." There were utterances which claimed to be inspired and were not so. The discerning of spirits was one of the manifold gifts of the Holy Ghost. It was their duty not to despise prophesying, but yet to prove all things. There were also words quoted as if spoken by St. Paul; letters, too, purporting to come from him. Men misrepresented him; they attributed the sayings of others, their own, perhaps, to the holy apostle; even letters, it seems, were current, said to be the apostle's, but not really his. People are perplexed often nowadays by the many differences of opinion which exist among Christians. The fact of this diversity is to some an excuse for unbelief or for sloth in spiritual things; to others, a real temptation, a great trial of faith. But we see it has been so from the beginning. There were errors of belief in this infant Church of Thessalonica while the apostle, who had founded it, was still

near at hand—at Corinth. Even in these early days things which he had said were misunderstood; his authority was claimed for words which he had never spoken; and, strangest of all, there were written letters bearing his name which were falsely ascribed to him. We have our trials now. We are troubled, some of us, by the difficulties which arise from various readings or interpretations, by the doubts thrown by modern writers on this or that book of Holy Scripture, by the conflict of opinions in the Church. It is some comfort to think that we of this age are not alone in our temptations; our position is not one of such singular perplexity as some of us are apt to think. If we persevere in prayer, if we try to live by faith looking to the Lord Jesus Christ, the doubts which vex us will soon be cleared away.

II. ST. PAUL'S WAY OF DEALING WITH THAT MISTAKE. 1. *He beseeches them.* He is very gentle with his converts, very earnest too, and affectionate; full of deep anxiety for their spiritual welfare. And it was a matter of great importance. St. Paul had dwelt much upon the coming of the Lord. The Parousia was a subject of much excited talk, much stirring of heart among the Thessalonians. St. Paul had spoken in his First Epistle of "our gathering together unto him;" how "we that are alive and remain shall be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." It was a prospect very blessed, very awful too; it had been opened out in strong, startling words. They inferred from his way of expressing himself that it was very close at hand, to be looked for immediately; their excitement was intense. He beseeches them to listen. 2. *They must be calm.* Religion lies in a calm, quiet walk with God. It has its emotions, they are at times deep and strong; it has its enthusiasm, but it is ordered and grave. They must not allow themselves to be shaken from their settled judgment; they must not give way to this trembling, uneasy excitement. They must return to the quiet, steady discharge of the common duties of life; their best strength was in quietness and confidence. This was the best preparation for the coming of Christ. That coming was not immediate; much was to happen first.

LESSONS. 1. Learn to be sober, thoughtful, to distrust excitement, to live in patient continuance of well-doing. 2. There will be difficulties, perplexities; they are trials of faith; they must be endured in patience and overcome by faith. 3. Prepare for the coming of Christ. The best preparation is to perform each duty as it comes in faith and prayer as unto the Lord.—B. C. C.

Vers 3—12.—*The man of sin.* I. HE MUST COME BEFORE THE DAY OF THE LORD. 1. *His revelation.* He is antichrist—the evil counterpart of the most holy Saviour; he has his revelation, his apocalypse. There must be an apostasy before the coming of the Lord—a great, notable apostasy. The apostle had warned the Thessalonians of it; we need these warnings now. We must not be discouraged when we see scepticism, unbelief, rampant around us. These things must be; Holy Scripture has forewarned us. We must be prepared; we must be calm and steadfast, looking for the coming of the Lord. Such apostasies there have been; there have been precursors of the man of sin, such as Caligula shortly before the date of this Epistle, or Nero shortly after. There have been evil men among the popes of Rome who have exhibited in their lives some of the characteristic features of the antichrist. But *the* apostasy is yet to come; the man of sin is yet in the future; the mystery of iniquity is working even now; it is working below the surface, in secret; hereafter, we know not when, it will burst forth into open day in the revelation of the man of sin. We must not look forward to a continual, unopposed progress of the gospel; we must not expect that religion will go on in ever-extended triumphs, with no checks, no defeats, overspreading the earth more and more with its blessed influences. Such an expectation is not warranted either by Scripture or by the signs of the times. Scripture tells us of the coming apostasy, of the revelation of the man of sin. And in the world the forces of unbelief and evil are evidently gathering themselves for a mighty conflict. In our own country, it is true, there has been a great revival of religious zeal, great love for Christ, much earnest, self-denying work for his sake. But alongside of this there has been a great outburst of infidelity, a widespread scepticism, a hatred of revelation, manifesting itself in the life and works of men of learning and culture; while elsewhere the revolt against all forms of authority, Divine and human, has been more outspoken and far more widely spread. The armies of God and Satan, the powers of good and evil, light and darkness, faith and unbelief,

seem to be already marshalled in preparation for an awful struggle. It must come, Holy Scripture warns us; it will culminate in the revelation of the man of sin. He will be revealed—out of previous obscurity; the apparition will be unveiled out of darkness. 2. *His character.* He is a person, a man of mighty intellect and giant strength of will, who will take advantage of a general development of unbelief and lawlessness, and gain for a time a widespread sovereignty. Sin fills his being; it becomes, as it were, incarnate in him; it dominates his entire personality. He is "a son of perdition" like Judas (compare the common Hebraism, "a son of death"), destined himself to eternal death, involving in utter death all who follow him. He is an adversary, a human Satan, filled with all the awful energy, the concentrated malice of the evil one. He is the antichrist, the avowed and bitter enemy of the holy Saviour, bringing with his intense wickedness the horrible cry of "Ecrasez l'infame!" into awful prominence. He exalts himself against every one that is called God; he sits in the temple of God, reviving the madness of Antiochus Epiphanes, the impious attempt of Caligula. Such a man the world has not yet seen. There have been many outbursts of wickedness, many evil men in the long course of history have risen to sovereign power; but no one yet has combined in himself all the characteristics ascribed to the man of sin in this Epistle. It is a fearful spectacle which is yet to come. St. Paul warned the Thessalonians that such things there would be, uprisings of malice and persecution, anticipations of the man of sin. He warns the whole Church throughout all time that such things are to be looked for; that sooner or later, before the end cometh, the man of sin himself shall be revealed in all the awful energy of unmingled wickedness, relieved by no one trace of goodness.

II. THE OBSTACLE. 1. *The Thessalonians knew what it was.* St. Paul had told them of this during his short residence in Thessalonica. For some reason he had dwelt much on this awful subject; it must have been necessary for the Thessalonians in their special circumstances, though we know not why. They had knowledge which we have not; they knew precisely what we cannot find out for certain with all our searching. We may be satisfied that this knowledge, then good for them, is not now necessary for us, or it would have been more clearly revealed. "Ye have an unction from the Holy One," St. John says of believers, "and ye know all things"—all that we need to know for life and godliness. 2. *What was it?* The Roman empire, the power of Roman law, the emperor as embodying that power. This was the answer of most ancient writers; it seems to be the most common answer now. Then the power of Rome checked the outburst of anarchy and lawlessness. It is still the majesty of law, the authority of well-ordered governments, that fulfils the same office. The mystery of lawlessness is working now; it has not reached its height, it has not embodied itself in the fearful personality of the man of sin. But it is working; and it is a mystery, the terrible counterpart of the mystery of godliness. There is a mystery in evil, a strange, fearful mystery, dark secrets not yet revealed; a mystery which suggests awful, heart-rending questionings—questionings which can be quieted only in his presence who giveth rest to the troubled, anxious soul. This mystery of lawlessness was working even then in the world which the God of love created; it is working now; but it is held down by the restraining power; it cannot give birth to the man of sin till his time shall come, the time foreordained in the counsels of God. Then the restraining power will be taken out of the way; lawlessness will prevail, and its creature and embodiment, the lawless one, will come.

III. HIS ACTIVITY. 1. *It is but for a short time.* The Lord Jesus shall destroy him, and that in an instant, when he cometh. He needs only to speak the word of power; the breath of his mouth shall sweep the adversary into that perdition to which he was appointed. The manifestation of his coming, the very sight of the awful Judge, shall slay the wicked one. This must be our consolation when the dark problems of life distress our souls—"the Lord cometh." Then shall come the assured triumph of righteousness, the crowning victory over all the powers of evil. 2. *But it is tremendous.* As God is revealed in Christ, so is Satan revealed in the man of sin, the antichrist. The "miracles and wonders and signs" (Acts ii. 22) which God did by Christ are parodied by the power and signs and wonders which Satan will work through the agency of the man of sin. As Christ's coming is with power, with his mighty angels in flaming fire, so is the coming of the lawless one with all power according to the working of

Satan. As God worketh in his saints both to will and to do of his good pleasure, so Satan worketh in this his representative with all the awful energy of diabolical wickedness. The antichrist, says Bengel, stands in the same relation to Satan as Christ to God. The antichrist will work miracles, but they are by the energy of Satan, wonders of falsehood. They are not mere deceptions, they are real miracles; but they are the works of him who is the father of lies; and they are lies, inasmuch as they are intended to mislead men into worshipping him as God who is the personation of Satan, the liar from the beginning. Lies, too, they are, because they are the signs of a power which is only a miserable imposture, which must soon end in death and ruin. Our Lord has warned us (Matt. xxiv. 24) of false Christs and false prophets whose signs and wonders should be so startling as to deceive, if it were possible, the very elect. The false prophet, the second beast, of the Revelation doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire to come down from heaven, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he hath power to do. Then there may be, there will be, false miracles, lying wonders. Miracles alone do not always prove the agency of God, but miracles with holiness, works of faith issuing out of a life filled with the presence of God. The blessed life of Jesus Christ our Lord is a mightier miracle than the physical wonders which he wrought. A life of perfect purity and transcendent holiness in the weakness of human flesh, amid all the temptations of this wicked world, is to us a more convincing proof of the Divine mission of Christ than the signs from heaven would have been which the Jews so often asked for. The Church must expect the coming of lying wonders; she must stand unshaken amid all the developments of Satanic energy. The elect will not be deceived, for they will recognize the notes of antichrist, "all the deceivableness of unrighteousness;" they will remember the warnings of Holy Scripture: "Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God," "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning."

IV. ITS RESULT. 1. *He deceiveth them that dwell on the earth; not the elect*—the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God; but those who have not been sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise which is the earnest of our inheritance, the pledge of that seal of the living God which his angel shall one day set upon the foreheads of his chosen. But there are, alas! those that are perishing, who have not passed from death unto life through faith in the Son of God, but still abide in death. Such men the man of sin, the lawless one, deceives and engulfs in his own utter destruction. 2. *Their own wilfulness is the cause of their ruin.* "God is not willing that any should perish." The true light lighteth every man. It came to them, but they received it not. They received not Christ. He is the Truth, and he is Love. He came into the world that the world through him might be saved. But they received not him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. They had no love for the truth, no desire for it. They were quite indifferent to the truth, though their conscience told them that it was the truth; they were worse than indifferent, they rejected it. They might have been saved; the truth would have made them free. They might have been sanctified through the truth; for the truth of God, received into the heart, hath power to cleanse, to purify, to save the soul. But they loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 3. *It ends in judicial blindness.* God's Spirit will not always strive with man. In his awful justice he gives over to a reprobate mind those who persevere in disobedience. He sendeth them a strong delusion, a working of error. As virtue is its own reward, so sin is its own punishment. Eternal sin (see Mark iii. 29 in the best-supported reading) is the fearful end of the obstinate sinner. That hardening of the heart, in which habitual sin must at last result, is ascribed in Holy Scripture sometimes to God, sometimes to the sinner himself, sometimes to the deceitfulness of sin. They are different modes of expressing the same law of God's government. He has so ordered our moral nature, that sin, when it is full grown, bringeth forth death. He lets the rebel have his own will; he leaves him to be "lord of himself, that heritage of woe." The Spirit is withdrawn at last from those who vex, grieve, resist, his gracious influences. But there is something more awful still. Not only did the Spirit of the Lord depart from Saul, but "an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him." God himself sends at the last, in his most awful justice, the strong delusion, the inworking of error. It is the last state, worse than the first; after which comes that dreadful sentence, "It is impossible . . . to renew them again unto repentance." This thought gives a most terrible

significance to every act of wilful, unrepented sin; every such act brings a man nearer (how near he cannot tell) to that most awful state whence there is no repentance. Then comes judicial blindness; the light that was within them becomes darkness. They would not believe the truth of God, now they believe the lie of the man of sin. It is the judgment of God. We see indications of it from time to time in the credulity of unbelief. Men who reject the Bible are sometimes ready to believe anything except the Bible; they will greedily accept any legend, any scientific hypothesis, though evidently not more than a provisional hypothesis, which seems to contradict the Bible; they will deify humanity, they will worship the idol which is the creature of their own thoughts rather than the living God. This unbelief sprang out of sin; they "had pleasure in unrighteousness." There is such a thing as honest doubt; such were the doubts of Asaph, of Thomas. But unbelief in a very large measure comes from moral causes. Sin darkens the heart and the mind; sin always leads to practical, often to intellectual, unbelief. "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light;" he walketh in darkness; he seeth not the coming judgment.

LESSONS. 1. Be prepared for times of darkness—they must come; be strong in faith. 2. If unbelief becomes dominant, still believe; God has forewarned us. 3. Anarchy, confusion, leads to the predominance of sin. "Give peace in our time, O Lord." 4. Even miracles may deceive. Christ remaineth faithful; trust always in him. 5. Hate sin with utter hatred; it ends in hardness of heart.—B. C. C.

Vers. 13—17.—*St. Paul's hopes for the Thessalonians.* I. HE THANKS GOD FOR HIS PAST MERCIES SHOWN TO THEM. 1. *For their election.* He turns from prophecies of coming terrors to thoughts of hope and consolation. He repeats the words of ch. I. 3, "We are bound to give thanks." He felt the greatness of God's mercies to the Thessalonians. Mercies shown to them were shown to him; he so dearly loved them. It was his bounden duty to thank God for them; how much more was it their duty to be thankful for the grace granted to them! God had set his love upon them; God had chosen them from the beginning. This was the source of their blessedness; not any merits, any good deeds, of theirs. All our hopes rest on the electing grace of God. That thought is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons. It was so to the Thessalonian Christians, especially at this time, when awful anticipations of the coming end were casting a dark shadow over them. That election manifests itself in holiness of life. The seal of the Spirit is the earnest, the pledge, of the heavenly inheritance. God's elect must feel within themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh, and their earthly members, and drawing up their minds to high and heavenly things. The sanctification of the Spirit is the sphere in which the life of election moves and energizes. And with the growth of holiness in the heart faith is ever deepened and strengthened. The working of the Spirit greatly confirms the faith of eternal salvation to be enjoyed through Christ; it convinces the Christian soul with a mighty power, with the certainty of intuition, of the reality of the great truths of the gospel, so that the Christian walks in ever-increasing faith, in the power of that victory which overcometh the world. 2. *For the hope of glory.* God had predestinated the Thessalonians to be conformed to the image of his Son; by the preaching of St. Paul he had called them to that state of salvation. They were living in a present salvation; they were looking forwards to a future glory; their high hope was the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. His glory will be the glory of his saints, for he has given it them: (John xvii. 22). They are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. All that Christ has is theirs in hope; for Christ himself is theirs, and they are Christ's. The Christian who cherishes this high and blessed hope must live in continual thankfulness.

II. HE URGES THEM TO STEADFASTNESS. 1. *In the life of faith.* Stand fast, he says; fight the good fight of faith. You must do your part. God has chosen you; he has given you his Spirit; he has called you to salvation. Yet you must work out that salvation. We need not perplex ourselves with the deep mysteries which thought cannot fathom; in practice, the duty of perseverance follows from the electing grace of God. He has chosen you; persevere, for he gives you the power; be steadfast, for you owe a great debt of gratitude to him who has so greatly loved you. 2. *In doctrine.* Hold the traditions. St. Paul had taught the Thessalonians by word of mouth. We must remember that in all probability not one of our four Gospels was yet written. The

Thessalonians knew the history of our Lord's life and death, and the doctrines of the Christian faith, only through the oral teaching of St. Paul. The First Epistle was the only part of the New Testament Scriptures known to them; probably the only part as yet in existence. St. Paul had taught orally for several years before he began to write. Oral teaching was often misunderstood, often forgotten, as this Epistle shows. But the teaching of an apostle, whether by word or by writing, was a precious deposit, for that which he delivered to his converts he had himself received of the Lord. Be it ours to continue steadfast in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship.

III. HE SUMS UP HIS HOPES IN A BENEDICTION. 1. *He points them to God.* The clause begins in the Greek with the emphatic *αὐτός*, himself. We must stand fast, we must persevere; but it is he who establishes the hearts of his chosen; he only is our everlasting Strength, the Rock of ages. The apostle in this place, as in 2 Cor. xiii. 14, puts the Saviour's name first, because it is by Christ that we have access to the Father. We feel that this order would have been incongruous, impossible, unless Christ were indeed God; we feel that the singular verb could not be used, as it is twice, in ver. 17, unless he and the Father were one (comp. 1 Thess. iii. 11). God the Father is our Father, St. Paul says emphatically. He loved us; on his fatherly love rests our election, our hope of glory. He has given already to his saints eternal comfort, a comfort independent of the changes and chances of this earthly life—a comfort eternal, for it rests on him who is eternal; and with that comfort which is present, though not temporal, not confined within the limits of time, he has given also a good hope of future glory, the blessed hope of everlasting life with God in heaven. And this he has given in grace, in the encompassing atmosphere of his favour, without merit or works of ours. 2. *He prays that God's blessing may still rest upon them.* He who loved them, and gave them eternal comfort and good hope, will surely comfort and establish them. His first gifts are a pledge of their continuance. He will not leave his work unfinished. His love is like himself, eternal. He can shed that blessed comfort into the heart, the inmost seat of joy and sorrow. When there is hidden comfort there, outward troubles may cause sorrow, but cannot take away the fulness of joy. He can establish our heart; he can give us that established heart, fixed, trusting in the Lord (Ps. cxii. 7, 8), which the world, the flesh, the devil, cannot shake. Then we shall speak only words of truth and love, and do only works of righteousness and faith through that inner comfort and strength which comes from God alone.

LESSONS. 1. In the midst of dangers there is comfort for the saints; they are in the hands of God; God hath chosen them. 2. Look for the evidence of God's election in holiness of life; without holiness we cannot see him. 3. Be steadfast; make your calling and election sure; take heed lest ye fall. 4. Only God can give "eternal comfort." Seek that precious gift of him; it is given to those whom he establishes in every good word and work.—B. C. C.

Vers. 1—12.—*Antichrist.* I ERROB REGARDING THE COMING OF CHRIST. "Now we beseech you, brethren, touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him; 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; let no man beguile you in any wise." The apostle beseeches the Thessalonians as brethren, in the interest of correct views of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is his principal topic in both Epistles. The comforting side of the coming is the gathering together of all believers unto him, never to be followed by a separation, as set forth in 1 Thess. iv. 17, "Then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them" (the dead in Christ who have been raised) "be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." By the way in which he introduces this gathering together, it can be seen that it was very attractive to him. It was that in the coming which he especially wished to be conserved. In the beginning of 1 Thess. v. the apostle had distinctly taught the uncertainty of the time of the coming. But representations had been made to the Thessalonians that the day of the Lord was actually beginning. Three forms which these representations might take, or, more probably, did take, are specified. There were representations founded upon pretended prophecy. There were also representations founded upon an alleged oral communication of the apostle. There were further repre-

sentations founded upon an alleged Epistle of the apostle. The existence and circulation of a fabricated Epistle seem to be hinted at in the words at the close of this Epistle: "The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every Epistle: so I write." If the Thessalonians accepted of these representations, there was danger of their being precipitately shaken from their composure of mind and even thrown into a terrified state, as at sea men are discomposed and even horrified by the bursting of a storm upon them. The apostle, therefore, considered it necessary to write this Epistle, to put them on their guard against their being led away by these representations. Let no man beguile them in these ways, or, making it wider, in any other way.

II. THE ANTICHRISTIAN MANIFESTATION. 1. *The coming of Christ to be preceded by apostasy.* "For it will not be, except the falling away come first." "Apostasy" (after the Greek) is the more technical word—the apostasy of which the Thessalonians had been told. There is, particularly, meant falling away from the faith of Christ. It is a movement begun by those who have been within the Christian circle, and who, after having been advantaged by Christianity in outward enlightenment and quickening, have ungratefully turned away. Or the movement away from Christ may dishonourably be encouraged by those who still remain within the Christian circle, but have lost faith in the distinctive teachings of Christianity. The name of "apostate" has been given to the Emperor Julian for his signal renunciation of Christianity, but it is a name which belongs to every one who in the struggle of life parts with his early Christian convictions, his good traditions. Let us see that we are not, in the smallest degree, contributing to the movement away from Christ. 2. *The revelation of the man of sin.* "And the man of sin be revealed." It is now an exploded idea that the man of sin means popery. The principal interpreters—Olshausen, Ellicott, Alford, Eadie—hold to the idea of the man of sin being a person. He is supposed to be the last and worst product of the apostasy. He is a caricature of Christ, having a mystery, and revelation, and miracles, and claim of divinity, a coming and preparation, even as Christ has. He is as inclusive of all the bad forms of humanity, as Christ is of all its good forms. It cannot be said of this most unlovely conception that it has the similitude of truth. It cannot be dogmatically laid down as a matter of interpretation that the man of sin is a person, any more than the restrainer is a person. The designation "man of sin" points, in the first place, to sin as the essence of the apostasy. The moving away from Christ is an opposing of the Divine authority. The designation "man of sin" points, in the second place, to sin as working under human (not angelic) conditions, and, taken along with apostasy, points especially to the development of sin in human history. The designation "man of sin" points, in the third place, to this historical development, not as actual, but as idealized. As the language, "O man of God," is a call to consider the true ideal of manhood, so the man of sin may be viewed as the ideal of the development of sin among men. In so far as popery is after this ideal may it be said to be the man of sin. In so far as any of us take after the bad ideal of manhood may it be said to us, "O man of sin!" calling us to consider what we are following after. Let us see that we do not in the least merit the designation. By the revelation of the man of sin is to be understood the bringing out of the real nature of sin. It may put on specious forms, but it is essential villainess; it is uglier than the ugliest of creatures, it is more venomous than the serpent, it is more grovelling than the earth-worm, it is blacker than darkness. And in the working of Providence in human history, it is intended that this should be, with accumulating evidence and unmistakably, brought out. And we are here taught that there cannot be the revelation of Christ at his coming until all that is evil in sin has been brought out. 3. *The son of perdition.* "The son of perdition." The common Hebrew form is followed. Sprung from perdition, he has perdition as his destiny. The designation marks the result of the movement away from Christ. Every such movement must prove in the end abortive. How many of those movements that once had vitality in them have already ended in perdition! The designation was given by our Lord to Judas Iscariot: "And none of them is lost, but the son of perdition." And it is certainly not to be wondered at that he whose apostasy was aggravated by the proximity in which he stood to Christ should strikingly be shown in his suicidal end to be the son of perdition. In so far as any of us are moving away from Christ we are placing our paternity in perdition, and are working out perdition as our destiny. Let us, then, be warned by what will yet be seen to come out of sin. 4. *The opposer of Christ.* "He that

opposeth." It is not said, "He that opposeth Christ," but, from the way in which Christian thought is interwoven with the whole paragraph, we may understand that to be the meaning. We may, therefore, regard the movement as described by the designation "antichrist" with which John supplies us. As it is in its origin a movement away from Christ, so it comes to have the character of being directed against Christ. It is a movement in which advantages gained from Christ are unworthily used against him. As it is the object of God in the Church to put forward Christ for the acceptance of men, so it is the object of antichrist to draw away men from Christ. Popery is antichrist in so far as it does not give Christ and his words and his death their proper place in Christian belief and life. It may be said of us that we are antichrist in so far as we do not yield ourselves up to Christ, and do not to our utmost ability help forward the cause of Christ. "He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." 5. *The deifier of self.* "And exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God." There is strong confirmation here of the doctrine of Müller, that all sin is of the nature of selfishness. Antichrist is selfishness rising to the impious height of self-deification. He raises himself above and against him who is truly called God, without thereby falling into idolatry; for he also raises himself above and against those that have only the *name* of gods, and, it is added (going beyond the actually named), above and against all that *can* be turned into an object of worship. He does not, therefore, shut out the sacred sphere; rather does he fill it with himself. He is the centre of all wisdom, power, and glory for which worship is due. The startling language is that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God. There is supposed to be meant a session in the actual temple in Jerusalem by those who, laying undue stress upon the language here, regard the paragraph as having already received its fulfilment. But there is reference to the actual temple only by way of illustration. As God was represented as sitting between the cherubim, requiring the adoration of all Israelites (as he was the object of adoration to the highest intelligences), so antichrist entertains the thought of divinity and strictly requires adoration. While in Christ's consciousness of divinity there was the element of infinite self-sacrifice, in antichrist's presumptuous thought of divinity there is only the element of utter selfishness. We are not to think here merely of him who sits in the Church and arrogantly wields spiritual power. Rather are we to see the tendency of the whole movement away from Christ. This is how it aims at expressing itself. This is the dreadful interpretation of what it would be at. And it is true of us all, in so far as we are selfish, that we are aiming at making a temple for ourselves in which to sit down and to require adoration. As we in our present state of feeling can only recoil from such self-deification, let us beware of that selfishness which is at the heart of sin. 6. *The Thessalonians reminded of former teachings on the above points.* "Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?" In his teachings on the coming he was not corrected or supplemented by recent revelation. He had occupied the same position from the beginning; such is undoubtedly his own contention, and is against the contention of some who attribute to him that he believed that he would live to see the coming. He reminds the Thessalonians here, not without some measure of blame, that when he was with them (and he singles out himself in making this statement) he told them some things which he was now putting down in his letter.

III. THE RESTRAINING POWER. 1. *What restrains the antichristian manifestation.* "And now ye know that which restraineth, to the end that he may be revealed in his own season." This was another point on which he had given them information. It is left indefinite what the restraining power is. The prevailing opinion, as expressed by Ellicott, is "well-ordered human rule, the principles of legality as opposed to those of lawlessness—of which the Roman empire was the then embodiment and manifestation." It is true that civil rule keeps back many of the manifestations of evil. The civil ruler is a terror to evil-doers. If men were allowed to give vent to their evil passions without dread of punishment, this world would be a pandemonium. But, at the same time, it is true that the worst manifestations of evil, of proud defiance of God, of bitter rancour against Christ (which are chiefly to be thought of in connection with the antichristian movement), are those with which the civil magistrate has little to do. The condition upon which these manifestations depend is rather the increased setting forth

of Christ. There is a manifestation of good going forward, as well as a manifestation of evil. It must yet be shown in human history that there is an essential loveliness belonging to the Christian life. Many Scriptures promise a period of conquest for the Church. When the Church extends its conquests there will be a solidarity of influence on the side of Christ of which no adequate conception can now be formed. The result of that will be, among those who participate in the antichristian movement, deepened hatred against Christ. As when he conquered on the cross there was a calling forth against him of the worst elements especially of superhuman evil, so when he advances to conquest in human history there will be a similar calling forth of the worst elements especially of human evil. The time when evil is thus powerfully to be revealed has been fixed by God. It may be said that the apostle should, according to the interpretation, have regarded the Christian manifestation as coming to a head. But it was open to him to regard it under a special aspect as that which in its yet partial character held back the full manifestation of antichrist. 2. *The present working of the mystery of lawlessness.* "For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work." "Lawlessness," which corresponds to "sin," formerly used, is not to be taken as favouring the view that the restraining power is human rule. It points to the antichristian movement as characterized by a disposition to cast off all authority, especially the highest authority. The stress is to be laid on "mystery." Evil was then working, and in working was revealing itself, but its true nature as opposition to Christ was largely concealed, was only very partially revealed. A lurid light was thrown upon it by the ten great persecutions which, under the Roman emperors, were directed against Christianity. Light is thrown upon it by the attacks which in the present day are made upon Christianity. But it would seem that we have not seen all that is in it of opposition to Christ. The mystery of lawlessness still works. 3. *The removal of the restrainer.* "Only there is one that restraineth now, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his mouth, and bring to nought by the manifestation of his coming." Ellicott regards the use of the masculine gender as a realistic touch, by which what was previously expressed by the more abstract "restraining power" is now represented as concrete and personified. It is strange how this should not be regarded as applying also to the "lawless one" to whom the restrainer is here opposed. If the restrainer is human rule, then his removal must mean the upturning (apparently general) of human rule. And that is what is contemplated by some as the conclusion to human history. But the restrainer being "Christianity not come to the season of its full manifestation," his removal must mean the arrival of that season. When Christianity, working among the multitudes of men, brings its full influence to bear on the antichristian movement, in what it calls forth of opposition, that movement will come to the completeness of its exposure. And antichrist, thus morally defeated, eternally disproved, will have taken away from it its sphere of operation. It will be slain with the breath of Christ's mouth, and brought to nought by the manifestation of his coming.

IV. THE LYING CHARACTER OF THE ANTICHRISTIAN MOVEMENT. 1. *Lies of Satan.* "Even he, whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders." As Satan is a liar and the father of lies, so the antichristian movement which he inspires is characterized by lying. As Christ has power and signs and wonders of truth, so the antichristian movement has power and signs and wonders of lying. It is remarkable that the Church of Rome puts forward a claim of miracle-working, which helps it to preserve its influence over minds, but which it cannot establish. The power and signs and wonders by which men are apt to be deluded now are more of an intellectual nature. It is objected to Christianity that the miracles with which it is bound up are shown by science to be impossible. It is objected that it presents too severe a view of our human condition, in representing us as standing in need of salvation. It is objected that it presents too severe a view of the character of God, in representing him as punishing sin in Christ. It is objected that it presents too severe a view of human duty, in calling upon us to forsake all and follow Christ. When these objections are powerfully presented, and so as to have the appearance of saving the character of God from aspersions, there may be the effect, which false miracles have often had, of men being deluded. 2. *Lies of Satan leading to unrighteousness.* "With all deceit of unrighteousness." When men entertain false views,

especially of the character of God, there is an easy transition to unrighteousness. There are many ways in which they can persuade themselves, that they may exercise liberty in their manner of living. They do not need to pray to God; they do not need to read God's Book; they do not need to keep God's day; they do not need to be strictly honourable in their transactions; they do not need to make sacrifices for others. It is enough that they keep up an appearance of probity and purity, and, it may be, of religion, before men. They can leave all their failings to the general mercy of God.

3. *Unrighteousness leading to destruction.* "For them that are perishing." From unrighteousness there is a necessary, though, it may not be, an immediate, transition to destruction. When men do not observe the rules which are laid down for them by God, they are contending with God, and, contending with God, they cannot in the end succeed; for God is stronger than they. There were those who were perishing in their unrighteousness in Paul's day. And there are still those who seem to be perishing in their unrighteousness.

4. *The just dealing of God.* (1) *What those who are in the antichristian movement reject.* "Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." The apostle holds that it was their own fault if they were perishing. And, in doing so, he brings forward very precious truth. God has in view our salvation. He willeth that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. For this end he makes us the offer, not of the truth, but of the disposition which is necessary for finding it—the love of the truth. Of all dispositions it is that which is most needed to begin with. It is that which is needed against the deceitfulness of the heart. It is that which is needed against the delusive lies of Satan. If we accept of the love of the truth, if we have the disposition to know the truth about ourselves, and to follow the Divine leading—and God promises us this disposition—then we shall certainly be led on to salvation. But if we do not accept of the love of the truth, if we have the disposition to flatter ourselves, and to follow some *ignis fatuus* of our own imagination—and that is only too natural to us—we shall as certainly be led on to destruction.

(2) *What they induce.* "And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in righteousness." Receiving not the truth, it was not with them as though the offer had not been made to them. There was induced a state of judicial blindness. As it was induced in connection with the Divine offer which was refused, and in accordance with the Divine laws in their nature, it could be attributed to God. It could be said that God sent them a working of error, that they should believe a lie. Christianity is the most reasonable, most beautiful thing in existence. But when men are in a state of judicial blindness, they do not see its reasonableness and beauty; they believe men who lie about it, and treat it with indifference, or disdain, or hatred. This can only lead on to their being judged and condemned, the ground of their condemnation being their not believing the truth especially about Christ, but taking pleasure in unrighteousness. Let us see, then, that we accept the great offer from God of veracity, of love for the truth. Let us be willing to take a truthful view of things; not taking darkness for light, and evil for good. Let us be willing to follow the Divine leading. Let us especially be open toward Christ—toward the efficacy of his blood, toward the convincing power of his teachings, toward the enjoyment of his fellowship. And, if the antichristian manifestation goes forward around us, let us be all the more decided on the side of Christ.—B. F.

Vers. 13—17.—*Exhortation to steadfastness.* I. HOW GROUNDED. 1. *The election of the Thessalonians.* "But we are bound to give thanks to God alway for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, for that God chose you from the beginning unto salvation." This is another overflowing of gratitude for the Thessalonians, who are described not, as in 1 Thess. i. 4, as "brethren beloved of God," but as "brethren beloved of the Lord," i.e. sharing with Paul and his colleagues in the special love and care of him who presides over the brotherhood. There is the same inward binding that there was before (ch. i. 3) to give thanks to God, and to give thanks to God alway. What gave perpetual matter of thanksgiving, as in 1 Thess. i. 4, was the election of the Thessalonians. There is not brought in here, as there is there, their being chosen out of a condition of sin, but it is implied in their being chosen unto a condition of salvation. They had been chosen from

the beginning, *i.e.* from eternity. When God contemplated the creation of a race of men, and contemplated at the same time the incursion of evil into human nature and human history, he also contemplated human salvation. It was also within the Divine plan (going out into all particulars) that the Thessalonians among others should be saved. 2. *Means of the realization of their election.* (1) *Inward means.* (a) *From the Spirit.* "In sanctification of the Spirit." Precedence is naturally given to the work of the Spirit. For we must feel that, if God had not approached us first, we never should have approached him. The work of the Spirit, from beginning to end, is a work of sanctification. It is a saving work, inasmuch as it is the reclamation of our nature from unholy uses. On the positive side it is the fitting our nature for Divine uses. As the Spirit is the Agent of our sanctification, his all-sufficient help must be entirely depended upon. (b) *From themselves.* "And belief of the truth." In election we are responsible for our state of mind. The Spirit works on our mind through the truth. We may think of the truth that God has provided salvation for us. We may also think of the truth that God (according to ver. 10) has made us the offer of the love of the truth. We may further think of the Divine ideal to which our life is to be brought up. The Spirit has sovereign power in the presentation of truth to the mind; and what we have to do is to be receptive, to offer no obstacle to his presentation of the truth. And we are sanctified only in so far as we have received the truth into us. (2) *Outward means.* "Whereunto he called you through our gospel." The gospel is especially the offer of salvation on the ground of Christ's death. It was *their* gospel, as that in connection with which they served God. There was Divine sovereignty in the Thessalonians being favoured with the gos. el. It was by circumstances over which they had no control that Paul and Silas and Timothy were sent to Thessalonica. These servants of Christ stood forward and preached the gospel to them, and it was when they received it as a message from God that they were called to salvation. From that point their calling dated. *There is added the outward aspect of the salvation to which they were called.* "To the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." This is characteristic of the Epistle. The glory to which we are called is the glory which is possessed by Christ, and which he, as sovereign Dispenser, is to make our possession. We are to be glorified with nothing less than the glory of Christ. It will be seen that God, in electing, has in contemplation all the means of the election being realized. We may assure ourselves of belonging to the number of the elect, in so far as we have evidence of our election in our sanctification.

II. How put. "So then, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye were taught, whether by word, or Epistle of ours." Election contemplating the means of its realization in faith, it is not improper to found upon election an exhortation to steadfastness. They had taken up their Christian position. Attempts would be made in the way of persecution to move them away from their position. The ill-grounded expectation of the immediate coming was fraught with perils to them. It was already having a bad effect upon some in making them idle. It would be trying, to think that it was well grounded and not to have it realized. It would even be trying, to know that it was ill grounded and to have to give it up. There would be danger of religious excitement being followed by reaction. Let them beware, then, of apostatizing; let them stand fast. The way in which they were to stand fast was by holding fast the traditions. By the "traditions" we are to understand the truths handed to men. For instance, there was the revelation which was necessary for the stabilising of the Thessalonians, that there was to be an apostasy before the coming of Christ. In the traditions they had been instructed both *orally* and by *writing*. We are limited to the latter mode of instruction. What are known as ecclesiastical traditions have not independent authority, but have to be tested by the written Word. All our oral instruction has to be founded upon the written Word. By being in writing, the truths handed to us are preserved from corruption. We know that we have them in the form in which God wishes us to have them. It is difficult to escape the influence of traditional interpretation. Yet there is always the opportunity of a true interpretation, while we have the text as it was left by inspired men. The written Word is one of the great boons conferred on men. It is a great advantage to a child that he has not everything to learn for himself, but has the benefit of the experience of his parents.

So it is a great advantage to us, that we are not left to our own childish and foolish thoughts, but that we have the written instructions of our heavenly Father. It is by holding to these written instructions, as an unchanging element in the midst of all the tests to which we are subjected, in the midst of all the temptations to which we are exposed, that we shall be enabled valiantly to maintain our Christian position.

III. HOW FOLLOWED UP. *Invocation of the Divine blessing.* 1. *How God is invoked.*

(1) *In the Second Person.* "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself." From evangelical activity there is a rise first to the Mediator and lordly Dispenser of blessings in the Church. After the preachers have done their best for the Thessalonians, they have the painful consciousness left that they are impotent in themselves. At Corinth Paul planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So Paul and Silas and Timothy, feeling that they, in speaking and writing to the Thessalonians, were only held by him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, implore his help to make their activity successful. "Our Lord Jesus Christ himself accomplish what we are aiming at for them. Let his almighty efficacy be communicated through our feeble instrumentality." If we would do any good to any in whom we are interested, Christ must do it for us. His high priestly service must be recognized by us. Therefore let us ever rise above our mere wishing and striving for others to him who can make our wishing and striving effectual. (2) *In the First Person.* (a) *His fatherhood.* "And God our Father." From evangelical activity there is a rise, through the Mediator, to him who is the Final Reason and Contriver of redemption. We have some influence with God when we can call him our Father. We naturally expect to have more influence with a friend than with a stranger. We can appeal to him as a friend. We can, if need be, intercede on the score of friendship and long acquaintance. So we can appeal to God as our Father, to bless not only ourselves but others. And, should every other appeal fail, surely this shall not fail. When the cry comes up on behalf of his needy children, "Our Father, wilt thou not bless?" surely he will not turn away his ear. (b) *Wherein it was manifested.* "Which loved us." This is *timed* in the past, and calls up the great act of love—the gift of the Son. Our Father, who gave his Son for us. We can behold in this how God can love. Some would represent it as very unfatherly. But, apart from the Son's unforced consent, there is this consideration, that, where there is true fatherly feeling, it is not more easy to sacrifice a son than to sacrifice one's self. David felt this when he uttered his lamentation over Absalom: "Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" We must hold that, loving the Son infinitely, the Father could as well have sacrificed himself as his Son. The marvel and mystery is, that, loving his Son infinitely, he could be moved to sacrifice him for us his undeserving creatures. But surely by this act of devotion the love of God for us is placed for ever beyond all doubt. In presence of the cross, to doubt, or to act as though we doubted, that God loves us, is doing him the most glaring injustice. (c) *What it obtained for us.* "And gave us eternal comfort." There is no hiding it, that it is comfort that we all need. There is an evil heart, to keep us from being happy. It gives rise to slavish fear of God and forebodings of judgment. There is also an evil world, which alone is sufficient to keep us from being perfectly happy. It is an evil world, where there is exposure to poverty, to sickness, to bereavement, to death. It is an evil world, where, with sensitive spirits, we have to look forth on so much sin and wretchedness. Where, then, is the comfort? There is no real comfort for a guilty conscience in ignorance or distraction. It is unsubstantial comfort, to know that our suffering is common. There is some substantial comfort in the sympathy of our fellow-men, but it is variable. We may not find friends all that we would desire them to be to us. Those by whom we are most comforted may be taken away, and we have to be comforted for their loss. But there is comfort provided by eternal love, and comfort that is eternal in its nature. There is comfort in knowing that our great Substitute has made full satisfaction for our sin. There is comfort in knowing that we are clasped to the heart of the everlasting Father. That is comfort which is neither deceitful nor fleeting. It is sufficient for us amid all the cares of life. It is independent of all contingencies. "And good hope." Comfort refers to time present; hope refers to time future. Beyond all that we have of good and of comfort under evil, there is hope. And what is this hope? It is the hope of our real joys being perfected, of our being delivered from the plague

of an evil heart and the burden of an evil world, of our being placed where there will be no more need of comfort—in the presence of the eternal Love. It is also a good hope, in its being well founded—not founded on our own thoughts, but founded on the character and work and promise of God. It is a hope which is even now good in its cheering influence upon our hearts. (d) *Obtained without deserving of ours.* “Through grace.” The comfort is not self-created; we have had nothing to do with the procuring of it. But, seeing it has been graciously provided for us by eternal Love, we have good reason for taking it in the whole benefit into our hearts. The hope is one which we could not have dared to cherish of ourselves. It is far beyond anything that we could have thought of. But we cannot limit the grace of God. If it is his good pleasure to give us this hope, we have good reason for cherishing it.

2. *For what end God is invoked.* (1) *To bless the Thessalonians with comfort.* “Comfort your hearts.” There is another incidental proof here of the Divinity of our Lord in the use of a singular verb, while both our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father are the subject. The hearts of the Thessalonians were full of hopes and fears in view of the coming which was thought to be imminent; comfort is, therefore, invoked for their hearts. It cannot but be congenial to God to comfort the Church. “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.” Having provided the comfort in Christ, he must best know how, through Christ, to apply it to our need. (2) *To bless them also with stability.* “And establish them.” Comfort is invoked partly with a view to stability. When we are un comforted we are unstable as water. Our energies are relaxed, and we are unfitted for our work. Sorrow is weakness, but comfort is strength. *Double sphere in which stability is invoked for them.* (a) *Work.* “In every good work.” It was not unnecessary that they should be reminded that they were called to work, even to work with their hands. God grant them all the good elements which belong to work. Let the simplest work be done honestly. Let not their works “with self be soiled.” Let them be done unto the glory of God. In these, and in all the elements of good work, let them be confirmed. (b) *Word.* “And word.” Good speaking is even more difficult than good acting. “If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man.” God grant them all the good elements which belong to speaking. Let every word be characterized by truthfulness. Let it also have fitness; for “a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.” Let it also have wholesomeness, and not be like bad fruit. Let it breathe kindness. Let it breathe loyalty to Christ. In these, and in all the elements of good speaking, let them be confirmed.—R. F.

Vers. 1, 2.—A great delusion. One object, perhaps the principal object, of this Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, following as it does so closely upon the First Epistle, is to correct a disturbing error that was obtaining some considerable footing among the Macedonian Christians.

I. THE GREAT DELUSION. The First Epistle contains repeated references to an expectation of the second advent of Christ which was evidently very strong in the Thessalonian Church. The wish is father to the thought. From expecting “the day of the Lord” to arrive at any moment, some had been led, on most insufficient evidence, to ask whether it had not already come. The great delusion was that “the day of the Lord is now present.” It is not likely that any supposed Christ to have come, though in an invisible way, and in a different manner from which it was expected, or that they thought he might have come to another place, unseen and unknown to the Churches of northern Greece. What they were inclined to think seems to have been that the new era in which Christ was to appear had already dawned, though he himself had not yet come. Similar is the delusion of any who suppose that the day of grace is over and the time of judgment come, or that of those who think they have got into a new dispensation beyond the dispensation of the New Testament.

II. THE SOURCES OF THE DELUSION. 1. *Latter-day prophecy.* The expression “either by spirit” seems to refer to the supposed inspiration of Christian prophets. St. Paul had previously warned his friends to prove all things, while not quenching the Spirit by despising prophesyings (1 Thess. v. 19—21). We must beware of self-

deluded fanatics as well as of deliberate deceivers. 2. *False apostolical tradition.* "By word" probably means by reported word of St. Paul, which word, however, never really came from him. Thus early were false traditions afloat. See the mistaken tradition about St. John (John xxi. 23). If these erroneous traditions were current during the lifetime of the apostles, how can we accept so-called "apostolic tradition" as an authority? 3. *A forged Epistle.* The mistake could scarcely have arisen from our First Epistle to the Thessalonians, since that Epistle referred to the great day as future, while the error made it present. It is important to ascertain the authenticity of the books of Scripture.

III. THE DANGER OF THE DELUSION. St. Paul warns against it as something to be carefully avoided. Many evils attached to it. 1. *Erroneous views.* These are bad in themselves, as true views are desirable on their own account. The soul suffers for want of truth as the body for want of light. 2. *Dishonouring conceptions of the second advent.* If the day were already come, where was the glory, the judgment, the rectification of all things? False doctrines dishonour Christ even when they are meant to glorify him. 3. *Confusion of conduct.* Such a delusion as that which was creeping into the Thessalonian Church would disarrange all practical life. Delusions about the second advent distract attention from sober Christian work.

IV. THE WARNING AGAINST THE DELUSION. 1. *Form no hasty opinion.* "Be not quickly shaken," etc. Specious arguments should be examined at leisure before they are adopted. 2. *Do not permit novel teaching to give distress.* If the heart is well settled in Christian truth, though the mind should be open to receive new light, no distress or disturbance need be felt. 3. *Beware of deception.* "Let no man beguile you." Christians should be watchful and "wise as serpents," each having his own independent convictions.—W. F. A.

Ver. 3.—*The man of sin.* The man of sin and his awful character and career, here described by St. Paul, are subjects of such deep and dreadful mystery, that we may well take warning from the intricate confusion of the interpretations put forth by those people who profess to expound the fulfilment of prophecy, and content ourselves with accepting the prediction as it stands without attempting to identify it with particular historical events. Though some of its terms apply well to certain explanations, and others to different explanations, no explanation has yet been furnished which fairly and without any straining of words covers the whole of them. From Nero to the pope, from the days of the siege of Jerusalem to those of the yet future millennium, certain odious persons and systems have been selected for a realization of the prophecy. Leaving these dubious identifications, let us look at the main outlines of the picture.

I. THERE IS A MAN OF SIN. Whether he lived in the past or has yet to appear, a man to whom this awful name belongs is described in inspired Scripture. The Bible does not ignore the awful depths of human wickedness. It is dreadfully significant that this evil being is a man, not a devil. Humanity, which was created in the image of God and intended to be a temple of God, may be degraded into the image of Satan and become a haunt of iniquity. As good works through human sympathies, so does evil. A bad man is more dangerous than a fallen angel, because he is nearer to his fellow-men.

II. THE MAN OF SIN FOLLOWS AN APOSTASY. 1. *Spiritual apostasy leads a man to moral corruption.* The man who has forsaken Christ is tempted to fall into gross sin. Faith is the great preservative of morals. 2. *Apostasy lays the Church open to attacks from her enemies.* The "man of sin" could not arise before the Church had fallen, nor if he had appeared could he have had any power against a faithful Church.

III. THE MAN OF SIN PRECEDES THE SECOND ADVENT OF CHRIST. It was a mistake on the part of the Thessalonian Church to suppose that "the day of the Lord" had arrived, because the dreadful appearance of the man of sin which was to precede that day had not yet been seen. St. Paul warns us that apostasy and the frightful life of this wicked man—whoever he may be—must come before Christ returns. He does not encourage us to look for a gradual, unbroken progress of Christianity. The growth of the harvest fruit is arrested and delayed by frost and storm. Christ even wondered whether he should find any faith left on the earth at his return (Luke xviii. 8). The glorious consummation of all things to which the Christian looks forward is not to be

expected as the result of quiet improvement without relapse. Between the present and that "great Divine event" dark chasms of iniquity yawn. Every age has thought it could detect signs of this evil in its midst. So the unbelief and corruptions of our own day are taken by some to be "signs." Unhappily the language of the apostle warns us to expect more terribly demonstrative signs than any yet seen.

IV. THE APPEARANCE OF THE MAN OF SIN IS A SIGN OF THE APPROACHING ADVENT OF CHRIST. Here is some encouragement for the Church to endure the trials of the darkest times. These times are to usher in the great and glorious day of the Lord. Evil, when most triumphant, is nearest defeat. Dreadful as may be its transient success, it will soon be swept away. When the horror of sin is blackest, the judgment which is to sweep it away is nearest at hand. Christ will come again when he will be most needed.—W. F. A.

Vers. 7, 8.—*The mystery of lawlessness.* The exact, objective application of this prediction, like that of the preceding description, is not easy to discover. But principles are involved which are susceptible of general application.

I. THERE IS A MYSTERY OF LAWLESSNESS. By this expression the apostle probably means a mystery the character of which is lawless. 1. *We may expect to meet with new mysteries.* While time and inquiry resolve some mysteries, they bring upon us fresh ones. We are not to expect to be able to understand all the forces and influences with which we are surrounded. It is enough that we are in the hands of God who knows all, and trusting in Christ who can lead us safely through the darkness. 2. *New mysteries may be characterized by new lawlessness.* The answer to our inquiries may be very unsatisfactory in revealing only evil. There are strange novelties which are obscure in all points but their moral character, and that is plainly evil. If so, we may hope for no good from them, and need not further interest ourselves in them. 3. *All lawlessness is mysterious.* How did it originate? How is its existence possible? Why does not God sweep it away? These questions have perplexed men in all ages. We bow before them in helpless, pained wonder.

II. THERE IS A RESTRAINT ON THE MYSTERY OF LAWLESSNESS. 1. *Its full power is not yet revealed.* There are those who treat all sin with unbecoming levity, because they do not yet see its terrible fruits. They are playing with a torpid adder, that may awake at any moment and inflict a fatal wound. No one knows what hidden possibilities of harm lurk in the deep caverns of undeveloped sin. There are volcanoes in the hearts of some quiet men which may burst into destructive fires. 2. *Human means may be used to restrain the mystery of lawlessness.* Government, law, society, healthy habits of the majority, keep it down for a time. 3. *God holds the mystery of lawlessness in check.* He is supreme over its wildest raging. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh." God restrains the superabundant wrath of man (Ps. lxxvi. 10).

III. THE HIDDEN MYSTERY OF LAWLESSNESS WILL BE REVEALED. The volcano must break into eruption some day. Evil cannot slumber for ever. Hypocrisy will tire of its meek, innocent demeanour. The harvest of sin will have to be reaped. Let not any man put his confidence in the secretness or slowness of the processes of evil. The more they are hidden now, the worse will be the appalling outburst of them when the restraint under which they groan at present is released. The longer the wild horses are held in by the leash, the fiercer will be their mad gallop when they break loose.

IV. CHRIST WILL CONQUER THE MYSTERY OF LAWLESSNESS. Evil will not long be rampant. One fearful rebellion and then a tremendous defeat. 1. *Christ is to be the Conqueror of it.* He came to destroy the works of the devil. We could not effect this great work. He, our Saviour, does it for us. 2. *Christ is to come again for this object.* When the mystery is revealed, Christ's "manifestation" follows. 3. *Christ conquers with a breath.* His first work was difficult, involving his death. His last work will be divinely simple, and yet sublimely successful.—W. F. A.

Vers. 10—12.—*The love of the truth.* The reason for the doom of those who are to be destroyed at the second coming of Christ here given, is that they do not receive the love of the truth.

I. GOD EXPECTS US TO RECEIVE THE LOVE OF THE TRUTH. 1. *Truth is good in*

itself. Truth is to the soul what light is to the body. It is natural for men to love the day, unnatural for them to shun it. In a right and healthy state we should love truth simply as truth, whatever else it be. 2. *Christian truth is peculiarly attractive.* Scientific truth is beautiful, philosophic truth is valuable; but the truth of the gospel has far deeper attractions, because it contains revelation of the love and fatherhood of God, of the grace and goodness of Christ, of the redemption of the world, of the way of salvation, of the heavenly rest, etc. 3. *Truth should be welcomed with love.* We cannot accept it to any advantage until we love it; for (1) love opens our eyes to a sympathetic understanding of it, and (2) love saves us from a cold, barren acceptance of it, and helps us to receive it profitably.

II. IT IS AN EVIL HEART THAT PREVENTS MEN FROM RECEIVING THE LOVE OF THE TRUTH. St. Paul traces back the bad condition of those who reject the love of the truth to the fact that they "had pleasure in unrighteousness." The pleasures of sin cannot exist side by side with the love of the truth. Evil hates the light (John iii. 19). Moral corruption has no sympathy for the lofty thirst for truth of a pure soul. Hence it may be concluded that indifference to truth is a sign of moral evil. The corrupt life is a false life, and its departure from truth reveals the baseness of the character beneath. This is why the rejection of the truth is culpable. Intellectual doubt is of quite a different character. Indeed, it often arises from genuine love of truth, while self-satisfied orthodoxy is often quite indifferent to verifiable facts, preferring respectable error to painful truth.

III. THE PENALTY OF REJECTING THE LOVE OF THE TRUTH IS INCAPACITY TO KNOW TRUTH FROM ERROR. God punishes men in this condition by sending "them a working of error, that they should believe a lie." This is an awful fate. Truth is too precious a pearl to be cast before swine. They who do not love it shall not have it. Liars become incapable of knowing truth. The habit of indifference to truth so grows upon some people that the whole idea of truth becomes obscure and meaningless to them, and they ask with Pilate, half bewildered, half scornful, "What is truth?" Is not this a veritable destruction—the spiritual eye blinded and burnt out by the fires of falsehood and unrighteousness; the highest intellectual faculty, that of grasping truth, killed by corruption and falsehood? God save us all from this hideous doom!—W. F. A.

Vers. 13, 14.—*The Divine work of salvation.* We are to be thankful to God for the happy spiritual prospects of our fellow-Christians, because they all spring from his good purpose and work. The most striking characteristic of the description before us is its attributing the whole process from beginning to end to the will and action of God.

I. THE BEGINNING. 1. *An initial Divine choice.* This dates back to the dim ages of an awful antiquity. In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. In the beginning was the Word. In the beginning God chose his people for himself. Salvation is no after-thought coming in to redeem the failure of creation. It was all planned from the first. When God made man he foresaw sin and determined on redemption. Each one of us is thought of by God from the first. We come into the world to fulfil vocations which God designed for us when he first planned the universe. 2. *A present Divine call.* The choice would be of no use if it were not made known to us. But when the time for executing God's great design has arrived, he makes it sufficiently known for us to be able to follow it. He calls by the preaching of the gospel. The gospel, then, is an invitation. It is good news, but only for those who will accept the invitation. This new gospel came to bid men fulfil an ancient destiny. The latest work accomplishes the oldest thought of God.

II. THE PROCESS. 1. *Sanctification of the Spirit.* This is the Divine side of the process. Prior to it is the great atoning work of Christ. But that work is done for us that we may receive the Spirit of God as its fruit. Now we are looking at the work of God in us. God purifies and consecrates his people by an inspiration of his own Spirit. No safety is possible to the guilty, no glory to the unholly. The cleansing process must come before the great end can be reached. 2. *Belief of the truth.* This is our side of the process. It is useless for us to wait for our sanctification and for the baptism of the Holy Spirit which is to produce it. It will not come without our active reception of it. There is no magic about the process of the descent of the Holy Ghost.

It comes on certain conditions being fulfilled by us. (1) *Truth* is the vehicle that conveys it into our hearts. (2) *Faith* is the door in our hearts that opens to receive it.

III. THE END. 1. *Salvation*. Take this word in the largest, roundest sense, as deliverance from all evil. It is painfully true that in our greatest joy and thankfulness we have to recollect that at best we are plucked as brands from the burning. No blessing can be enjoyed till the awful ruin into which our souls were all of them sinking through our great and dreadful sin has been stayed. 2. *Glory*. Salvation is the beginning of God's work in us; glory is the completion of it. We can have no glory while we are in the mire of sin and wretchedness. But when we are delivered, God will not leave us like drowning men on a barren rock, saved from present destruction indeed, but with dreary future prospects. He will not have ended his work with us till he has exalted us into the region of his own glory.—W. F. A.

Vers. 16, 17.—A benediction. I. THE SOURCES OF THE BENEDICTION. A true benediction is more than an expression of good wishes. It is a prayer by one who has especial weight in intercession, although it is expressed to the person for whom it is offered. The benediction of so great and good a man as St. Paul is of great value, because the "effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." But the blessings desired by the apostle are not given by him any more than the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to their children were given by the patriarchs. The sources of the blessings of a benediction are not human nor earthly at all. Here they are declared. 1. *The personal influence of Jesus Christ*. This is strikingly expressed by the reference to "our Lord Jesus Christ himself." His brotherhood and his love lead him to bless us. His Divinity, his goodness, and his sacrifice give him authority in heaven. In his own right he blesses. And he does not delegate the blessing. He confers it himself. 2. *The fatherhood of God*. Because God is "our Father" we may expect blessings from him. Fears and doubts arise from partial views of God, and views which leave out of account his great fatherly nature. He does not bless as a Master paying wages, but as a Father dealing affectionately with his children.

II. THE ASSURANCES OF THE BENEDICTION. Grounds for believing that God will give the blessing are given for the encouragement of faith. 1. *Love in the past*. He has revealed his character by his providence, and he has proved in this way that he loves his children. But a parent's love is distinguished from all other kinds of love by its permanence. If God ever did love, he still loves. 2. *Eternal comfort*. This we have now in the peace of forgiveness and the rest of faith. The peace is such that the world can neither give nor take away. The rest is beneath the shadow of a great rock that outlasts even the seemingly everlasting hills. 3. *Hope for the future*. God has uttered promises and encouraged hopes. We cannot believe that he will mock the expectations which he has raised.

III. THE OBJECTS OF THE BENEDICTION. 1. *Heart-comfort*. We have eternal comfort; nevertheless we need more comfort. No soul is yet perfectly at rest. Sorrow distresses the most trustful. (1) Observe the *breadth* of the Divine comfort. We may have it in some departments of life and yet miss it in others. The Greek word *paraklesis* has a wider, fuller meaning than our word "comfort." It stands for all help, and help in every direction is what our souls need. (2) Note the *home* of the Divine comfort. It is to be in our hearts. Comfort anywhere else is vain. Comfortable houses, clothes, etc., leave the deepest trouble untouched. The heart may be on a rack when the body is on a downy couch. God's comfort reaches the heart. 2. *Stability in work and word*. We must not stop at comfort. We are consoled in distress that we may be free and strong and glad for service. (1) The service must come from the heart. "The heart" is to be established for service. (2) It must be *various and complete*—"every good work." (3) It must extend to speech—"and word." The Scriptures lay great stress on a right use of speech. (4) It must be steadfast. This is the end of the benediction. Eternal comfort must be balanced by steadfast faithfulness.—W. F. A.

EXCURSUS ON THE MAN OF SIN.¹

THIS is one of the most remarkable prophecies in the New Testament. It occurs in the writings of St. Paul, whose practical mind constituted him rather the preacher of the present than the prophet of the future. There is an obscurity in the language which, as already observed, could not have been so great to those to whom the apostle wrote, for he had previously instructed his readers in the nature of the occurrence (ch. ii. 5, 6); but our ignorance of these instructions renders the passage to us enigmatical and difficult to understand; and perhaps, also, this obscurity is increased by reason of our distance from the time when the apostle wrote. There are in this prediction several points requiring consideration: the apostasy or falling away which was secretly working even in the apostle's days; a withholding or restraining influence which prevented its open manifestation and full development; the advent of the man of sin, his characteristics and final doom. We shall, first, give a history of the various opinions concerning this subject in past ages, and then consider those views which are most prevalent in our days.

The following is a literal translation of the passage, in accordance with the exposition given in the foregoing pages: "But we beseech you, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our assembling together unto him, that you be not soon shaken from your *sober* mind, nor be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by epistle as from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord is imminent.² Let no man deceive you by any means, because that day shall not come, except there come the apostasy first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God, or is an object of worship; so that he sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Remember you not that when I was with you, I told you these things? And now you know what restraineth, that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already working, *yet* only until he that restraineth is removed;³ and then shall the lawless one be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his mouth, and annihilate by the appearance of his coming; *even him* whose coming is after the working of Satan, in all power and signs and wonders of falsehood, and in all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish, because they receive not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God sends to them the working of error, that they might believe the lie; that they might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

According to these words, this much is evident—that the apostle expected a falling away from the purity of Christianity. Nor is this the only passage where St. Paul alludes to such a declension from primitive faith and holiness; there are allusions to it in his other Epistles, but especially in the Pastoral Epistles, where he describes the apostasy of the latter days: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter

¹ This excursus is chiefly an expansion and revision of a dissertation on "The Man of Sin" in the author's work entitled 'Introduction to the Pauline Epistles.' For dissertations on the Man of Sin, the reader is referred to Alford's 'Greek Testament,' vol. iii., Prolegomena, pp. 55—68, 3rd edit.; Eadie's 'Commentary on the Thessalonians,' pp. 329—367; Elliott's 'Horse Apocalypticæ,' vol. iii. pp. 91, etc., 5th edit.; Hurd, 'On Prophecy,' vol. ii. pp. 1, etc., 4th edit.; Jowett on the 'Thessalonians,' vol. I. pp. 168—182, 1st edit., pp. 178—194, 2nd edit.; Lünemann's 'Briefe an die Thessalonicher,' pp. 214—229, and the translation of the same, pp. 222, etc.; an article on "Antichrist" by Meyrick, in the appendix to Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible;' Bishop Newton's 'Dissertation on St. Paul's Prophecy of the Man of Sin;' Riggenbach's dissertation in the Commentary on the Thessalonians in Lange's 'Commentary;' and Wordsworth's 'Greek Testament,' *in loco*.

² Or "is present." (See Exposition.)

³ Revised Version, "For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work: only *there is* one that restraineth now, until he be taken out of the way" (see footnote in the Revised Edition).

times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth" (1 Tim. iv. 1—3). So also, in his Second Epistle to Timothy, he alludes to the impending nature of this period of apostasy—the mystery of lawlessness was already working: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come," or rather, "are present" (2 Tim. iii. 1—5). And St. Peter affirms that there shall arise in the Church false teachers, who shall privily "bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and shall bring upon themselves swift destruction" (2 Pet. ii. 1); and that "in the last days there shall be scoffers, walking after their lusts" (2 Pet. iii. 2). And a similar declaration is made by St. Jude: "Remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; how that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts" (Jude 17, 18). And our Lord himself, in his eschatological discourse, warned his disciples that there should arise false Christs and false prophets (Matt. xxiv. 24)—a declaration which probably lies at the root of all similar apocalyptic assertions.¹ In these passages, however, it is to be observed that a plurality of false teachers is asserted; whereas, in our passage, they are concentrated in an individual—the Man of Sin.

Especially in the Epistles of St. John—there is express mention of Antichrist of a person (or persons) who is the opponent of Christ. It is only in these Epistles that the word occurs, and it does so four times: "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that [the] Antichrist shall come, even now there are many Antichrists." "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is Antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son." "Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of Antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world." "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an Antichrist" (1 John ii. 18, 22; iv. 3; 2 John 7). Now, the Man of Sin of St. Paul has been identified with the Antichrist of St. John. They agree in several points: in both he is described as an individual, whose coming will be foreshadowed by many forerunners;² in both his advent is future, but the evil principle, the apostasy or spirit of Antichrist, is already at work; and in both there is open opposition to God and Christ. It is, however, to be observed that in St. John the Antichristian error is more positively stated as consisting in the denial that Jesus Christ came in the flesh,—accordingly, as Gnosticism, which we know was already secretly corrupting the Church; and hence the reason why some have connected the Man of Sin with the errors of the Gnostics, whereas it does not appear from St. Paul's words that the characteristics of the Gnostics correspond with the characteristics of the Man of Sin; but, on the other hand, the denial of the Father and the Son is common to both.

It would far exceed the limits of this excursus to compare the Man of Sin with the declarations concerning the manifestations of evil in the Apocalypse of St. John. In that mysterious book there appears to be two centres or impersonations of evil: the one described as the beast coming out of the sea, to whom the dragon gave his power and seat and great authority (Rev. xiii. 1, 2); and the other, as another beast coming out of the earth, who had two horns like a lamb, and spake like a dragon (Rev. xiii. 11), and who has been identified with the false prophet (Rev. xvi. 13; xix. 20; xx. 10).³ Whether there is a resemblance between the Man of Sin and either or both of these beasts, we do not inquire; in both a manifestation or revelation of evil, and the concentration of it in an individual or individuals, is predicted.

¹ On the connection between Paul's prediction and our Lord's prophecy, see De Wette's 'Thessalonicher,' p. 188.

² "The mystery of iniquity working," in St. Paul's prophecy; the "many Antichrists" of St. John.

³ Arohdeacon Farrar entertains the strange idea that the first beast coming out of the sea is Nero; and the second beast coming out of the earth, or the false prophet, is Vespasian (see articles in the *Expositor*, May and September, 1881).

The prediction of St. Paul bears a still more striking resemblance to the vision of Daniel concerning the wicked and persecuting king (Dan. xi.) than to either the Antichrist of St. John or the beasts of the Apocalypse. That prophecy of Daniel received its primary accomplishment in Antiochus Epiphanes, the great persecutor of the Jews, but the concluding portion is applicable to a future opponent of God and his people, and finds its full accomplishment in him.¹ Now, the imagery employed by the prophet and the apostle is the same. Paul predicts a falling away; and Daniel tells us that the king shall "have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant" (Dan. xi. 30). Paul tells us that the Man of Sin shall sit in the temple of God, displaying himself as God; and Daniel, in the passage quoted by our Lord, speaks of the abomination of desolation being set up in the holy place (Dan. xi. 31). Paul foretells that the Man of Sin shall oppose and exalt himself against all that is called God or is an object of worship; and Daniel tells us that the king shall exalt and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished (Dan. xi. 36). This resemblance between the persecuting king of Daniel and the Man of Sin is repeatedly noticed by the early Fathers. Thus Origen observes, "What is stated by Paul in the words quoted by him when he says, 'so he sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God,' is in Daniel referred to in the following manner: 'And on the temple shall be the abomination of desolation, and at the end of time an end shall be put to the desolation'" (Origen, 'Contra. Cels.,' vi. 46).² There can hardly, then, be a reasonable doubt that Paul in his prediction had this prophecy of Daniel in view.³

The prediction of St. Paul concerning the Man of Sin made a deep impression upon the early Fathers, and the references to it in their writings are numerous. There is also a comparative unanimity in their sentiments. In general, they considered that the fulfilment of the prediction was future; that the Man of Sin was Antichrist, and an individual; and that the restraining influence was the Roman empire. Justin Martyr speaks of the Man of Sin as the man of apostasy, who speaks strange things against the Most High, and shall venture to do unlawful deeds on earth against Christians ('Dial. cum Tryph.,' c. 110). Irenæus observes "that he, being an apostate and a robber, is anxious to be adored by God; and that, although a mere slave, he wishes himself to be proclaimed as a king. For he, being endued with the power of the devil, shall come, not as a righteous king in subjection to God, but as the lawless one; concentrating in himself all Satanic apostasy, and, setting aside all idols, he shall persuade men that he himself is God" ('Adv. Hær.,' v. 25. 1). Tertullian alludes to the Roman empire as the restraining power: "What obstacle is there but the Roman state, the falling away of which shall introduce Antichrist, for then shall be revealed the lawless one?" ('De Resurr.,' c. 24). And again, "We Christians are under peculiar necessity of praying for the emperors and for the complete stability of the empire, because we know that dreadful power which hangs over the world and the conclusion of the age, which threatens the most horrible evils, is only retarded by the continued existence of the Roman empire. This is what we would not experience. And, while we pray that it may be deferred, we hereby show our good will to the perpetuity of the Roman state" ('Apol.,' c. 32). Hippolytus supposes that Antichrist will be a Jew, belonging to the tribe of Dan: "As Christ springs from the tribe of Judah, so Antichrist is to spring from the tribe of Dan" ('De Antichristo,' c. 14). Cyprian regards Antiochus Epiphanes as the type of Antichrist ('Exhort. ad Martyr.,' c. 11). And Jerome

¹ The Jews considered Antiochus Epiphanes as the type of Antichrist, to whom they gave the name of Armillus. Thus the Targum translates Isa. xi. 4, "By the breath of his mouth he shall slay Armillus, the wicked one." According to the Jewish notions, Armillus shall appear in the last days; he shall be born of a marble statue in one of the churches of Rome; the Romans shall acknowledge him as their Messiah, and accept him as their king; he shall make war with Israel, and in the battle that will ensue Messiah ben Joseph will be slain; but Messiah ben David shall appear, and utterly destroy Armillus and his followers.

² See also Irenæus, 'Adv. Hær.,' v. 25. 3.

³ For the resemblance between this prediction of Paul and the prophecy of Daniel, see Jowett on 'St. Paul's Epistles,' vol. i. p. 174, etc., 1st edit.; Hofmann's 'Schriftbeweis,' vol. ii. p. 614, etc.

⁴ The same opinion is entertained by Irenæus, 'Adv. Hær.,' v. 30. 2.

observes, "As the Saviour had Solomon and other saints as types of his coming, so we may rightly believe that Antichrist had, as a type of himself, that most wicked king Antiochus, who persecuted the saints and profaned the temple" (on Dan. xi. 35). There was a diversity of opinion among them regarding the meaning of the temple of God, in which the Man of Sin was to seat himself. Some of the Fathers (Chrysostom, Theodoret, Augustine, Jerome) interpreted the expression figuratively as denoting the Christian Church; whilst others (Irenæus, Cyril) took it literally, and referred it to the temple of Jerusalem, supposing that the Man of Sin would rebuild the temple.

It was an opinion in the early Church, continuing even to the date of the fourth century, that Nero was Antichrist. Of course, such an opinion cannot refer to the Man of Sin, as this would involve an anachronism; but can only be applied to Antichrist as described in the Apocalypse. Too much has been made of this Nero myth, as it is seldom alluded to by the early Fathers until the close of the third century. Nero was the first emperor who persecuted the Christians, and was therefore peculiarly obnoxious to them. After his death, there was a general impression throughout the Roman world that he was not really dead, but was living in concealment in Parthia, and would return to regain his empire. "About this time," observes Tacitus, "a report that Nero was still alive, and on his way to the East, excited a false alarm throughout Achaia and Asia" ('Hist.,' ii. 8). And Suetonius mentions that it was thought that Nero was still alive, and would shortly return to Rome, and take vengeance on all his enemies ('Nero,' 57). Mention is made in history of three impostors who personated Nero: one in Achaia and Proconsular Asia, in the reign of Otho; a second, also in Proconsular Asia, in the reign of Titus; and a third, protected by the Parthians, in the reign of Domitian. From this notion appears to have arisen the Christian idea that Nero would be again raised up as Antichrist.¹ The earliest notice of this opinion appears in the fourth of the Sybilline books (A.D. 80), which, however, is considered by critics to be not of Christian, but of Jewish origin. In the fifth Sybilline book, supposed to be of the time of Hadrian (A.D. 130), according to some by a Jewish Christian, and according to others by an Egyptian Jew, the Antichrist Beliar is identified with Nero.² Not until the close of the third century (A.D. 290) does Victorinus, Bishop of Pettau, in his exposition of the Apocalypse, identify the beast rising out of the sea with Nero: "Now that one of the heads was, as it were, slain to death, in this he speaks of Nero;" and Chrysostom regarded Nero as the type of Antichrist.³ The great reason, however, on which certain writers ground their opinion that the author of the Apocalypse considered Nero to be Antichrist, was the declaration contained in Rev. xvii. 10, 11, "And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. And the beast which was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition"—a passage referred to by Victorinus.⁴ By the five kings they understand the five emperors who had already reigned—Augustus, Tiberius, Caius, Claudius, and Nero; by the sixth, Galba (or, according to others, Vespasian; Galba, Otho, and Vitellius being omitted, as their reigns were short); by the seventh, Otho (or, according to others, Titus); and by the eighth, who was also one of the seven, Antichrist or Nero restored to life. This passage is still appealed to by recent writers who adopt the Nero hypothesis.⁵ Lactantius (A.D. 306),

¹ See Merivale's 'History of the Romans under the Empire,' cabinet edit., vol. vii. pp. 50, etc., 348, etc.

² See, on the Sybilline oracles and their probable age, Drummond's 'Jewish Messiah,' pp. 10—16. According to Friedlieb, both the fourth and the fifth books are of Jewish origin.

³ Lardner's Works, vol. ii. p. 94.

⁴ Victorinus supposes the five kings who had fallen to be Galba, Otho, Vitellius, Vespasian, and Titus; the sixth, Domitian; the seventh, Nero; and the eighth, Antichrist or Nero.

⁵ As Lücke, Ewald, Bleek, De Wette, Renan, Immer, Düsterdieck, and Archdeacon Farrar. Düsterdieck and Archdeacon Farrar (who, however, appears undecided) suppose that the eighth king is Domitian, who came as Nero in spirit, and who was also called Nero. Most of these writers suppose that Augustus was the first emperor, though no sufficient reason can be assigned for the exclusion of Julius Cæsar. Renan commences with Julius Cæsar, and, according to him, Nero was the sixth emperor, whom the author of the Apocalypse

on the other hand, repudiates this hypothesis as extravagant: "Some persons of extravagant imagination," he observes, "suppose that Nero, having been conveyed to a distant region, is still alive; and to him they apply the Sybilline verses concerning 'the fugitive who slew his own mother, being to come from the uttermost boundaries of the earth;' as if he who was the first, shall also be the last persecutor, and thus prove the forerunner of Antichrist. But we ought not to believe those who, affirming that the two prophets, Enoch and Elijah, have been translated into some remote place, that they might attend our Lord when he shall come to the judgment, also fancy that Nero is to appear hereafter as the forerunner of the devil, when he shall come to lay waste the earth and overthrow mankind."¹

The opponents of hierarchical power in the Middle Ages regarded the pope as Antichrist, and considered the passage in question as a prediction of the origin and growth of the papal authority. Thus as early as the close of the tenth century (A.D. 991), Arnulph, Bishop of Orleans, declared at the Council of Rheims that if the Roman pontiff was destitute of charity, and puffed up with knowledge, he was Antichrist. This view was entertained by Robert Grosstete the celebrated Bishop of Lincoln, by Savonarola, by the Albigenses, the Waldenses, Wickliffe and the Wickliffites, the Hussites, and all those sects who were in opposition to the Roman hierarchy. Even St. Bernard uses this bold language: "The ministers of Christ are become the servants of Antichrist, and the beast of the Apocalypse has seated himself in the chair of St. Peter."²

The Reformers in general adopted this opinion. Such was the view of Luther, Calvin, Zuinglius, Melancthon, Beza, and Bucer, and, among English Reformers, Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, Hooper, and Jewell. According to them, the apostasy is the falling away from evangelical doctrine to the traditions of men and the corruptions of popery; the Man of Sin, or Antichrist, is not, as the Fathers conceived, an individual, but the succession of popes—*series et successio hominum*; and the restraining power is the Roman empire, out of whose ruins the papacy arose. The Lutheran Church inserted this opinion as an article in their creed (Articl. Smalc., ii. 4). In the dedication of the translators of the Authorized Version to King James, it is assumed that the pope is the Man of Sin; and that monarch is complimented for writing in the defence of the truth, which gave "such a blow unto that Man of Sin as will not be healed." And the assertion that the pope is Antichrist and the Man of Sin forms one of the articles of the Westminster Confession: "There is no other head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ; nor can the Pope of Rome in any sense be head thereof, but is that Antichrist, that Man of Sin and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the Church against Christ and all that is called God" (ch. xxv. 6).

The Romanists, on the other hand, were naturally led by opposition to consider the passage as a prediction of the rise and growth of Protestantism. The apostasy was the falling away from the Romish Church by the doctrines of the Reformation. The Man of Sin denoted heretics in general, but especially Luther, the chief of the Reformers. The restraining influence was the German empire, considered as a continuation of the Roman empire. This, however, was not the general opinion of the Church of Rome; most of their theologians supposed that Antichrist, or the Man of Sin, was an individual whose coming is yet future.

The Greek Church was naturally led to regard the prophecy as a prediction of Mohammedanism; the apostasy was the falling away of many Greek and Oriental Churches to Mohammedanism; the man of sin was Mohammed; and the restraining influence the power of the Roman empire.³ Some of the Reformers (Melancthon, Bucer, Musculus) considered that there were two Antichrists—one belonging to the Eastern Church and the other to the Western; the Eastern Antichrist was Mohammed, and the

erroneously supposed to be alive. (See a most interesting note on this Nero fable by Aroh-deacon Lee, in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' New Testament, vol. iv. p. 759, etc. See also Bleek's 'Lectures on the Apocalypse,' p. 86, etc.; Düsterdieck's 'Offenbarung Johannis,' p. 521, etc.)

¹ Lactantius, 'De Mortibus Persecutorum,' c. 11.

² Quoted by Bishop Hurd, 'On Prophecy,' vol. ii. pp. 28, 29.

³ Innocent III. endeavoured to stir up a crusade by the declaration that Mohammed was the Man of Sin.

Western was the pope. It is a remarkable circumstance that all three—the Greeks, the Romans, and the Protestants—were at one as regards the restraining influence; this they regarded as the imperial power—the Roman empire, either in itself or continued in the Greek and German empires.

The modern views concerning the Man of Sin are chiefly four: the Rationalists, who consider that there is no prophecy; the Præterists, who consider the prophecy as already fulfilled; the Progressionists, who regard it as being fulfilled or in the course of fulfilment; and the Futurists, who regard the fulfilment as still future.

1. The first class of expositors are those who regard all the usual interpretations as proceeding from a false assumption as if there were a prophecy, whereas there is in reality no prediction at all. This opinion is adopted by Koppe, Pelt, De Wette, Lünemann, Jowett, and Davidson. Koppe appears to have been the earliest who took this view of the passage. He idealizes the prediction, and supposes that the apostle is only stating his impressions of what might be the future state of the Church from a consideration of the times in which he lived. The apostle was profoundly impressed with the prophecies of Daniel, and from them he dreaded an outburst of evil after his death, and he expressed his forebodings in language coloured from Daniel. Pelt supposes that the mystery of iniquity was the inward principle of evil which the apostle foresaw would afterwards break forth in a more open and violent form; that the restraining power was the will of God holding back the kingdom of Satan; and that the coming of Christ was the final victory of good over evil. So also De Wette observes, "He goes altogether wrong who finds here any more than the apostle's subjective anticipation, from his own historical position, of the future of the Christian Church. Instead of rising to the example of Christ, acknowledging the limitation which there is to a definite foreknowledge of the future, the apostle pays a tribute to human weakness, since he wanted to know too much beforehand."¹ Lünemann considers that Paul was so entirely engrossed by his ideas of the proximity of the advent that, carried away by his individuality, he "wished to settle more exactly concerning its circumstances and conditions the historical relations of the coming of Christ than is allotted to man in general to know, even although he should be the apostle, the most filled with the Spirit of God."² "Such passages [Col. ii. 8, 16; Eph. vi. 12]," observes Professor Jowett, "are a much safer guide to the interpretation of the one we are considering than the meaning of similar passages in the Old Testament. For they indicate to us the habitual thought of the apostle's mind; 'a falling away first,' suggested, probably, by the wavering which he saw among his own converts, the grievous wolves entering into the Church of Ephesus (Acts xx. 29), the turning away of all them of Asia (2 Tim. i. 15). When we consider that his own converts and Jewish opponents or half-converts were all the world to him; that through them, as it were in a glass, he appeared to see the workings of human nature generally, we understand how this double image of good and evil should have presented itself to him, and the kind of necessity that he felt that Christ and Antichrist should alternate with each other. It was not that he foresaw some great conflict, decisive of the destinies of mankind. What he anticipated for man nearly resembled the spiritual combat in the seventh chapter of the Romans."³ And Dr. Davidson remarks, "The passage does not contain a prophecy, but rather the writer's notion on a subject which did not concern the proper faith and duty of mankind. Those notions were shaped by the floating belief of his day, and have nothing beyond an historical interest. They belong to the past of Christianity—to its infantine state, when it was emerging out of Judaism, and assuming that independent position to which no man contributed so much as the apostle of the Gentiles."⁴

Such a view is at variance with the idea of inspiration—in other words, with the supposition that the apostle was guided in writing by a higher Spirit than his own. The supernatural is entirely overlooked; the apostle writes according to his own fancies;

¹ De Wette, however, expresses himself very differently, in the preface to his exposition of the Apocalypse; there he recognizes the symptoms of Antichrist in the God-denying egoism of our day, with its rejection of all restraints.

² Lünemann, 'Briefe an die Thessalonicher,' pp. 229, 230, translation of the same, p. 237.

³ Jowett's 'St. Paul's Epistles,' vol. i. p. 177, 1st edit.

⁴ Davidson's 'Introduction to the New Testament' vol. i. p. 14 (new edit.).

he is led astray by his erroneous opinions. How such a view is "entirely consistent with the apostle's inspiration" is difficult to understand, even although we employ the term "inspiration" in a very broad sense. The power of foretelling the future is denied to the sacred writers. "We take them," observes Dr. Davidson, "as guides to faith and practice generally without adopting all that they propounded, or believing that they could foretell events."¹ It is evident the apostle is here giving a prediction of what shall take place; and therefore, if there were no real prediction, he was on this point mistaken and in error, and consequently uninspired. If we admit inspiration, we must receive the truths declared as the revelation of God: the Scripture contains truths to be received, and not the mere opinions of fallen men to be canvassed.

2. The second class of interpreters are those who, recognizing a prediction, regard it as already fulfilled. To this class belong Grotius, Wetstein, Hammond, Le Clerc, Whitby, Schöttgen, Wieseler, Kern, Döllinger, and Baumgarten. These generally agree in considering that the prophecy received its accomplishment in Christ's coming in spirit to destroy Jerusalem, although they differ widely in details. Grotius supposes that the Man of Sin was Caligula, who demanded supreme and universal worship as god, and ordered his statue to be placed in the temple of Jerusalem; he who restrained was Vitellius, the Proconsul of Syria, who, at the risk of his life, refused to obey the order of Caligula; and the lawless one was Simon Magus. It seemed to Paul that the delineation of Antiochus Epiphanes in Daniel was to be realized in Caligula.² But the distinction between the Man of Sin and the lawless one is incorrect, and besides, the interpretation involves an anachronism, as the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians was written after the death of Caligula. Wetstein adopts the extravagant opinion that the Man of Sin was Titus, "the delight of the human race," whose army brought their idolatrous ensigns into the captured temple and offered sacrifices there; and that the restraining influence was Nero, that monster of iniquity, whose death was necessary for the rule of Titus. Hammond imagined that, by the Man of Sin, Simon Magus, together with his followers the Gnostics, was meant; the apostasy was the falling away of the Christians into Gnosticism; and the restraining influence was the apostles, who, by still preaching to the Jews, preserved the union still subsisting between Jews and Christians.³ Le Clerc supposes that the apostasy was the revolt of the Jews from the Romans; the Man of Sin was the rebellious Jews, and especially their leader Simon the son of Giora; and the restraining power was the chief of the Jewish nation, who were against the revolt. Whitby also considers the apostasy was the revolt of the Jews from the Roman empire or from the faith; the Man of Sin was the Jewish nation, with their high priest and Sanhedrim; and the restraining power was Claudius, during whose reign the Jews would not rebel, as they were under great obligations to him.⁴ Schöttgen also agrees with Whitby in considering that by the Man of Sin is meant the Pharisees, the rabbis, and the doctors of the Law; but he differs from him in considering that the restraining power was the prayers of the Christians, which warded off the destruction of Jerusalem until they had left the city and retired to Pella. Much more ingenious is the opinion of Wieseler. He also considers the prophecy as a prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem. "He that restraineth" must be some good influence which delayed the catastrophe, and this he considers to be the pious Jews then living, particularly the Christians; and if the singular number requires an individual, then the restrainer is James the Just, the Lord's brother. Not until James was murdered and the Christians had removed from Jerusalem was the city taken.⁵ Kern considers that the Man of Sin is Nero; he that restraineth is Vespasian and his son Titus; and the apostasy is the revolt of the Jews or the departure of the Christians.⁶ Döllinger, like Kern, supposes Antichrist to be Nero. Nero was already adopted by Claudius, and was regarded by many as the future Cæsar. "He that restraineth" was Claudius. The coming of Christ was his coming to

¹ Davidson's 'Introduction to the New Testament,' vol. i. p. 15 (new edit.).

² Grotius, 'Annotationes in II. Epistolam ad Thessal.'

³ Hammond on the New Testament, *in loco*.

⁴ Whitby's 'Commentary,' pp. 813—818. London: Thomas Tegg, 1842.

⁵ Wieseler's 'Chronologie des apostolischen Zeitalters,' pp. 268—277.

⁶ Kern, on this account, considers the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians to be spurious. The same view is maintained by Baur, Hilgenfeld, and others belonging to the Tübingen school.

execute judgment on Jerusalem; and although Nero did not personally undertake anything against the Jews, yet he did so by his lieutenant Vespasian. The apostasy was the departure of the Christians into the errors of the Gnostics. Döllinger, however, considers that there may be a more complete fulfilment in the last days.¹ Baumgarten thinks that the prophecy reflects the experience of the apostle: the Man of Sin was the Jews who everywhere opposed his preaching the gospel; the apostasy was the renunciation of Jesus as the Messiah; and the restraining influence was the imperial authority which hitherto had protected the apostle and kept the Jews in check. This opinion appears to be partially adopted by Bishop Lightfoot: "It seems, upon the whole, probable," he observes, "that the Antichrist is represented especially by Judaism. With a prophetic insight, the apostle foresaw, as he contemplated the moral and political condition of the race, the approach of a great and overwhelming catastrophe. . . . It was to Roman justice and Roman magistrates that the apostle had recourse at this time to shield him from the enmity of the Jews and to check their violence."² At the same time, he thinks that the prophecy has not yet received its most striking and complete fulfilment.

It would be a mere waste of time to examine these views *seriatim*. So far as they consider the prophecy as having received its full accomplishment, they do not satisfy its conditions, and have only a general and fancied resemblance. Especially it is fatal to the views of this class of interpreters that the coming of Christ alluded to is evidently not his coming in spirit to destroy Jerusalem, but, as the context shows, and as is the uniform meaning of the phrase in the Epistles of Paul, his coming in person to establish his spiritual kingdom.

3. The third class of exponents are those who regard the prophecy as being fulfilled, or as in the course of fulfilment; that is, as already partially fulfilled, but awaiting its complete accomplishment: we allude to those who find in the passage a prediction of popery. Besides the early Reformers, this opinion is advocated by Hooker, Hurd, Newton, Turretin, Benson, Bengel, Doddridge, Macknight, Michaelis, Elliott, and Bishop Wordsworth.

This opinion proceeds on the assumption that the restraining influence is the Roman empire. In the prediction, that influence is both masculine and neuter; by the masculine the emperor is meant, and by the neuter the empire. This opinion is that of the early Fathers, and was generally adopted with various modifications by Greeks, Romanists, and Protestants.³ It is in itself highly probable, and may have been handed down by tradition from the Church of Thessalonica, who had been instructed concerning its nature (ch. ii. 6). If the restrainer was the Roman emperor, we may understand the reason of the reserve of the apostle. If he had stated this in so many words, he would have been regarded as an enemy to the Roman government, because he would then teach the destruction of the empire, and would have involved Christians in persecution. Prudence required a discreet silence on this point. This reason for reserve was recognized by the early Fathers. "If St. Paul," observes Chrysostom, "had said that the Roman empire will soon be dissolved, the heathen world would have destroyed him as a rebel and all the faithful with him, as persons who took up arms against the state. But St. Paul means the Roman empire; and when that shall have been taken away, then the Man of Sin will come. For as the power of Babylon was dissolved by the Persian dynasty, and the Persian was supplanted by the Greek, and the Greek by the Roman, so the Roman will be dissolved by Antichrist, and Antichrist by Christ" (*in loco*). Now, in the view of those who regard the pope as the Man of Sin, this prediction was fully verified. No sooner was the restrainer removed than the Man of Sin was revealed. As long as the Roman emperor continued heathen and resident at Rome, no ecclesiastical power was permitted to exalt itself; but no sooner did the

¹ For Döllinger's views, see Lünemann, 'On the Thessalonians,' p. 232; and Riggenbach in Lange's 'Commentary.'

² Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible,' article "Second Epistle to the Thessalonians."

³ To this general opinion the view of Calvin is a notable exception. He supposes that the restraining influence was the limited diffusion of the gospel, and that the Man of Sin was not to be manifested until the gospel was preached to the whole world. "This, therefore, was the delay until the career of the gospel should be completed, because a gracious invitation to salvation was first in order" (Calvin, *in loco*).

emperor remove from Rome to Constantinople, than the papacy arose—the restraint on the Bishop of Rome was removed; and after the Roman empire in the West came to an end by the dethronement of Augustulus, the power of the pope mightily increased.

But the great point of inquiry is—Is there a sufficient resemblance between this prophecy and Romanism, so that we may conclude that they are related to each other as prediction and fulfilment? Are the characteristics of the Man of Sin found in popery? Those who belong to this class of interpreters assert that the resemblance is striking and obvious. An apostasy is predicted, and there is in Romanism a falling away from the pure gospel to the traditions of men; the doctrines of purgatory, transubstantiation, the sacrifice of the Mass, the adoration of the Virgin and the saints, are adduced as examples. The Man of Sin is represented as opposing and exalting himself against all that is called God or is an object of worship; and this is considered as receiving its fulfilment in the pope exalting himself above all human and Divine authority, claiming the title “king of kings, and lord of lords,” applying to himself the words of the psalmist, “All kings shall bow down before thee,” styling himself universal bishop,¹ and asserting his power to dispose of the kingdoms of the earth. The Man of Sin is said to seat himself in the temple of God, showing himself as God. The temple of God is here understood to be the Christian Church, and the pope places himself in it as its supreme head, the vicar of Jesus Christ. He shows himself as God by claiming Divine attributes, as holiness and infallibility; assuming Divine prerogatives, as the power of pardoning sins and the opening and shutting of the kingdom of heaven; and using such Divine titles as “Our Lord God the pope,” “Another God on earth.”² Every pope, on his election, is placed on the high altar of St. Peter’s, and receives the adoration of the cardinals. The coming of the Man of Sin is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and wonders of falsehood. And this is considered as receiving its fulfilment in the false miracles of popery; in the impositions of indulgences and purgatory; in the wonders done by sacred images moving, speaking, bleeding; in the prodigies effected by sacred relics; in the supernatural visitations of the Virgin; and in the pretended power of working miracles which the Church of Rome still claims; as Bellarmine reckons the glory of miracles as the eleventh mark of the Catholic Church. God is represented as punishing sin by sin, “sending to them the working of error that they might believe the lie.” The popish legends, which have gained such credit as to be admitted among their ceremonies, and especially the monstrous doctrine of transubstantiation, are regarded as the fulfilment of this part of the prophecy.³ And, besides, in the other passage where Paul predicts the falling away of the latter times, the marks which he gives find their counterpart in the corruption of popery: “Giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats” (1 Tim. iv. 1—3).

Paul represents the system as working even in his days: “For the mystery of lawlessness is already working” (ch. ii. 7). It works inwardly; it is a mystery, something concealed and unknown until it is revealed; the germs of the Antichristian system were already in the Church; the leaven of corruption was at work. Paul knew this because he was inspired by the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Ghost can see what man cannot see (Wordsworth). But, in truth, the germs of the Antichristian system are discernible in the false doctrines and superstitious practices alluded to in Paul’s Epistles; and it is asserted that there is a striking resemblance between them and the doctrines and practices of Romanism; as, for example, the worship of angels (Col. ii. 8), the

In the remarkable words of Gregory the Great, in opposition to the Patriarch of Constantinople, “Whoever calls himself universal bishop is the precursor of Antichrist.”

¹ These and such-like titles are cited in Jewell’s ‘Apology;’ Poole’s ‘Annotations;’ Newton, ‘On the Prophecies.’ See also Barrow’s ‘Treatise on the Pope’s Supremacy;’ Stillingfleet, ‘On Popery,’ ch. xviii.; and Luthardt’s ‘Saving Truths of Christianity,’ pp. 395, 396.

² “The annals of the world,” observes Dr. Macknight, “cannot produce persons and events to which the things written in this passage can be applied with so much fitness as to the bishops of Rome. Why, then, should we be in any doubt concerning the interpretation and application of this famous prophecy?”

abstinence from certain foods (1 Cor. viii. 8), bodily mortification (Col. ii. 23), the traditions and doctrines and commandments of men (Col. ii. 8, 22); so that, as Bishop Newton observes, "the foundations of popery were laid, indeed, in the apostles' days, but the superstructure was raised by degrees, and several ages passed before the building was completed, and the Man of Sin was revealed in full perfection."¹

Of course, according to this view of the subject, the complete fulfilment of the prophecy is still future. The destruction of the Man of Sin—that is, according to this view, Romanism—is also predicted: "Whom the Lord Jesus will slay with the breath of his mouth, and annihilate by the appearance of his coming" (ch. ii. 8). We have shown, in the Exposition, that by this cannot be meant the preaching of the pure gospel, or the diffusion of the Word of God at the Reformation; the language is denunciatory. As, however, this portion of the prophecy is unfulfilled, it is not required to offer any explanations. The interpretation of unfulfilled prophecy is probably beyond the powers of the human mind; the fulfilment is the only key to the interpretation.

To this view of the subject numerous objections have been raised: there are three which merit consideration. (1) It is affirmed that the Man of Sin is distinctly asserted to be an individual; he is called "the lawless one," "the son of perdition;" whereas, according to the above view, he is an ecclesiastical system, or a succession of individuals. But, as Bishop Lightfoot observes, "in all figurative passages it is arbitrary to assume that a person is denoted when we find a personification. Thus the Man of Sin here need not be an individual man; it may be a body of men, or a power, or a spiritual influence."² The restraining influence, which is put at one time in the neuter and at another time in the masculine, is almost universally acknowledged to be, not a person, but an influence or series of persons. So, in like manner, the Man of Sin may be a succession of individuals; at least, there is no absolute necessity arising from the terms of the prophecy to regard him as a person.³ (2) It is affirmed that, even admitting all the striking coincidences, yet the idea of popery does not and never did fulfil the prophecy in ver. 4. So far from the pope opposing and exalting himself against all that is called God or is an object of worship, his "abject adoration and submission to them has ever been one of his most notable peculiarities"⁴ (Alford). But to this it has been replied that the arrogance of the pope, his assertion that he is the vicar of Christ, his claim of infallibility, which has lately been conceded to him, are a distinct fulfilment of this prediction. (3) It is said that "if the papacy be Antichrist, then has the manifestation been made and endured now for nearly fifteen hundred years, and yet the day of the Lord has not come, which, by the terms of our prophecy, such manifestation is immediately to precede" (Alford). But to this it has been answered that it is not asserted that the coming of Christ follows directly on the coming of the Man of Sin, but merely that the Man of Sin will precede; the interval between the two comings is nowhere defined. Besides, it may be that there is a development of Antichrist, and that his final destruction by the coming of the Lord will not occur until his full development. Thus, for example, the spiritual power of popery may be unfolding itself; the mystery of lawlessness may be still working, as was lately seen in the introduction of two new dogmas into the Romish Church—the immaculate conception of the Virgin, and the personal infallibility of the pope. The career of the Man of Sin has not yet run.

Upon the whole, on an impartial review of the subject, we cannot avoid the impression that the points of resemblance between the prophecy and Romanism are numerous, varied, and striking. Our forefathers had no doubt as to the application of the prediction, and perhaps they were nearer the truth than we in modern times who hesitate. Such an opinion may be considered as uncharitable and unjust, and is certainly not in accordance with the more liberal spirit of our age, where popery is viewed as it presently exists, divested of its power to persecute, and as seen in the culture, refinement, and piety of many of its adherents. But when we reflect upon

¹ Bishop Newton's 'Dissertation on the Man of Sin.'

² Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible,' article "Epistles to the Thessalonians."

³ See Elliott's 'Horæ Apocalypticas,' vol. iii. p. 956, 5th edit.; Newton, 'On the Prophecies.'

⁴ Alford's 'Greek Testament,' vol. iii., Prolegomena, p. 66.

the abominable persecutions of the Inquisition, the monstrous wickedness of the popes prior to the Reformation,¹ the atrocities perpetrated in the name of religion,² the crimes committed by the priests,³ and the general corruption of the whole system; and when we think that it is only the restraining influence of Protestantism which prevents a repetition of such actions, we may see reason, if not to affirm positively, yet to suspect that such an opinion may be founded on truth, and, if so, be neither uncharitable nor unjust.

4. The fourth class of interpreters consider the fulfilment as future, and that we are not to look for any past occurrences as answering all its requirements. This opinion is the one which is chiefly favoured in our days. It has been adopted by Hofmann, Ewald, Olshausen, Riggenbach, Lange, Alford, Ellicott, Lillie, Eadie, Meyrick, and Bishop Alexander, although there is a considerable difference in their views.

It is maintained that it is unwarrantable to consider the pope as Antichrist, and the papacy as an Antichristian system. The essential doctrines of Christianity are maintained and defended by the Romanists. The cross of Christ is exalted, and his sufferings are declared to be an atonement for sin. The great doctrine of the Trinity is not only maintained, but prominently brought forward. The influences of the Spirit are recognized and depended on. And the pope, instead of opposing himself to God, owns himself to be the servant and worshipper of God.⁴ Hence it is considered that in the future there may be a fuller completion than has ever yet taken place in the past. Prophecy has many partial fulfilments, until it reaches its climax in a complete accomplishment. Thus the Messianic prophecies of our Lord were partially fulfilled in David, in Solomon, in the Jewish nation. So it may be with this prediction; its final application may be reserved for the last days of this world's probation. The antichristian elements, which are now found dispersed, may be collected and exhibited in an individual who will be the realization of the Man of Sin.

According to Hofmann, the whole passage refers to the visions of Daniel. Paul applies the prophecy therein contained to the latter days. The power that restraineth the outburst of evil is a good principle; just as Michael, the guardian angel of the Jews, withstood the Prince of Persia (Dan. x. 20). When the good principle which was preserving the world in agreement with God is removed, then Antichrist will appear in the form of some mighty lawless conqueror. Hofmann appears actually to expect the revivification of Antiochus Epiphanes.⁵ Ewald, again, applies to the prophecy the prediction of Malachi concerning the coming of Elijah. He supposes that by that which hinders the appearance of Antichrist the coming of Elijah is meant, and that Antichrist will not be revealed in all his atrocious wickedness until Elijah be taken out of the way and again translated to heaven.⁶

Omitting these interpretations, which must appear to our English minds fanciful and extravagant, based on mere conjecture, and wholly arbitrary in their nature, we come to the more rational statements of other divines. In general, according to them, the Man of Sin is an individual of gigantic mental power, enormous daring, and extreme wickedness, who shall appear on the earth in the latter days; and the restraining influence which prevents the appearance of such an individual is moral order or government. Thus, according to Olshausen, the Man of Sin is an individual. All the manifestations of evil, the revolt of the Jews from the Romans, Nero, Mohammed, the development of the papacy in the Middle Ages, the French Revolution of 1789, with the abolition of Christianity, and the setting up of a prostitute as the goddess of Reason in the cathedral church of Paris, and the present diffusion of infidelity and atheism, are the precursors of Antichrist; but they contain only some of his characteristics, not all.⁷ Similarly Dean Alford observes, "Though eighteen hundred years later, we stand, with regard to this prophecy, where the apostle stood; the day of the Lord not present, and not to arrive until the Man of Sin be manifested; the mystery of iniquity still

¹ As, for example, Sixtus IV., Innocent VIII., Alexander VII.

² The massacre of St. Bartholomew.

³ See Froude's 'The English in Ireland,' bk. iii. ch. i. sect. 2.

⁴ See Eadie, 'On the Thessalonians,' p. 353.

⁵ Hofmann's 'Thessalonicher,' p. 333.

⁶ Ewald's 'Sendschreiber der Apostel Paulus,' p. 27.

⁷ Olshausen, 'On the Thessalonians,' pp. 488. 489. Clark's translation.

working, and much advanced in its working; the restrainer still hindering. And let us ask ourselves—What does this represent to us? Is it not indicative of a state in which the lawlessness is working on, so to speak, underground, under the surface of things, gaining throughout these many ages more expansive force, more accumulated power, but still hidden and unconcentrated? And might we not look, in the progress of such a state of things, for repeated minor embodiments of this lawlessness; the many Antichrists (1 John ii. 18) springing up here and there in different countries, the apostasy going onward and growing, just as there were of Christ himself frequent types and minor embodiments before he came in the flesh? Thus in the papacy, where so many of the prophetic features are combined, we see, as it were, a standing embodiment and type of the final Antichrist—in the remarkable words of Gregory the Great, the *præcursor Antichristi*; and in Nero, and in every persecutor as he arose, and Mahomet, and Napoleon, and many other forms and agencies of evil, other and more transient types and examples of him.”¹ And Bishop Ellicott remarks, “The adversary is Antichrist, no mere set of principles or succession of opponents, but one single person, being as truly man as he whom he impiously opposes.” And he observes, “The restraining principle is the power of well-ordered human rule, the principles of legality as opposed to those of lawlessness, of which the Roman emperor was the then embodiment and manifestation.”² Similar views are adopted by Bishop Alexander,³ Dr. Eadie, Lillie,⁴ and Riegenbach. Meyrick, in his interesting and exhaustive article on “Antichrist,” in the appendix to Smith’s ‘Dictionary of the Bible,’ thus expresses his view of the sum of Scripture teaching with regard to Antichrist: “It would appear that there is to be evolved from the womb of the corrupt Church an individual Antichrist, who, being himself a scoffer and contemner of all religion, will yet act as the patron and defender of the corrupt Church, and compel men to submit to her sway by the force of the secular arm and by means of bloody persecutions. He will unite the old foes, superstition and unbelief, in a combined attack on liberty and religion. He will have the power of performing lying miracles and beguiling souls, being the embodiment of Satanic as distinct from brutal wickedness.” Or, as Lange puts it, “Antichrist may proceed from a coalition between completed absolutism and completed radicalism.”

Of course, according to this view, the fulfilment being yet future, we cannot apply to its truth or falsehood the characteristics given us in the prophecy itself. It appears to be the uniform doctrine of Scripture, as seen both in the prophecies of the Old Testament and of the New, that before the consummation of all things there will be a final and desperate struggle between the principles of good and evil. The revolt against all rule and authority, the spread of Nihilism, the increase of infidelity and agnosticism, the unblushing proclamation of atheism and the support given to it in the scientific and political world, the deification of materialism, are all the precursors of Antichrist. It may only require a dissolution of order and a corruption of morals, greater and more universal than that which occurred in the great French Revolution, to usher in the coming of the Man of Sin, who, amid the confusion, will seize upon the sceptre of dominion. We may figure him as an individual, a man of more commanding abilities and far greater wickedness than the first Napoleon; one who will subdue the world, and in the height of his impiety and ambition proclaim his atheism, and that man himself is God. We cannot penetrate into the future, but we may rest confident that, if such a state of things should happen, the final victory of the good over the evil cannot be doubted; the breath of the Lord is sufficient to overthrow the kingdom of Antichrist, and to baffle all his pretensions. “Whom the Lord shall slay with the breath of his mouth, and annihilate by the appearance of his coming.”

¹ Alford’s ‘Greek Testament,’ vol. iii., Prolegomena, p. 67.

² Ellicott, ‘St. Paul’s Epistle to the Thessalonians,’ p. 109.

³ Commentary on the Thessalonians in the ‘Speaker’s Commentary,’ vol. iii. p. 742.

⁴ Lillie’s ‘Lectures on the Thessalonians,’ p. 537, etc.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER III.

CONTENTS.—The apostle now comes to the conclusion of his Epistle. He beseeches the Thessalonians for an interest in their prayers, that the gospel may be rapidly diffused and glorified by numerous conversions, and that he and his fellow-workers may be enabled to preach it unhindered by the opposition of their enemies. He expresses his confidence that the Lord will preserve them from evil and render them obedient to his instructions, it being his earnest prayer for them that they might be directed into the love of God and the patience of Jesus Christ. The apostle then proceeds to admonish them on account of the disorderly conduct which many of them exhibited. He had heard that there were some among them who walked disorderly, and who, either from dread or from excitement on account of their belief in the immediate coming of the Lord, had desisted from their worldly employments. He commands such to return to their duties, giving himself as an example, inasmuch as, when at Thessalonica, he had laboured with his own hands for support. If, however, such disorderly persons were not to be persuaded, then he enjoins the members of the Church to withdraw from them and exclude them from their society, in order that they might be ashamed and brought to repentance and amendment of life. He invokes peace upon them from the Lord of peace; he authenticates his Epistle to guard against imposition; and concludes with his apostolic benediction.

Ver. 1.—Finally; furthermore; for the rest; introducing the concluding part of the Epistle (see 1 Thesa. iv. 1). Brethren, pray for us (see a similar request in 1 Thesa. v. 25). Observe the unselfishness of the apostle's request. He does not ask the Thessalonians to pray specially for himself, but for the unimpeded diffusion and success of the gospel, and for himself only in so far as that he might be freed from all hindrances to preaching the gospel—that God would be pleased to crown his labours with success. That; introducing the subject-matter of prayer; what he requested the Thessalonians to pray for. The word of the Lord—namely, the gospel—may have free course; literally, *may run*; that all obstacles to its

progress may be removed; that its diffusion may be free and unimpeded; that, like the sun, it may rejoice as a strong man to run his race (Pa. xix. 5; comp. Pa. cxlvii. 15, "He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth: his word runneth very swiftly"). And be glorified; namely, in the conversion of souls (comp. Acts xiii. 48). The allusion may be to the applause given to the victors in the foot-races which constituted so considerable a part of the Grecian games. This personification of the Word of the Lord is a favourite figure with the apostle. "In St. Paul's language there is but a thin film between the Holy Ghost, the Divine personal Spirit, and the spirit in the believer's inmost being. And so in St. Paul's conception there is but a thin film between the Word preached and the living Word of God who is God" (Bishop Alexander). Even as it is with you; a recognition of the eagerness with which the Thessalonians had received the gospel.

Ver. 2.—And that; a further addition to the prayer. We; either I Paul, or else Paul and Silas and Timothy. May be delivered; not may "come off victorious whether by life or death" (Calvin), but may be rescued from our enemies. Jowett observes that we have here the shrinking of the flesh from the dangers which awaited the apostle. But there is no trace of cowardice in these words; the apostle desires deliverance, not for his own sake, but for the sake of the free diffusion of the gospel. From unreasonable; a word whose original meaning is "out of place;" then used in an ethical sense, "wicked," "absurd," "unreasonable;" perhaps here applied to persons who will not listen to arguments. And wicked men. By these unreasonable and wicked men are not to be understood the Jews of Thessalonica, from whom Paul formerly suffered, for their influence would hardly extend to Corinth; nor Christians who were only so in name (Calvin), and specially the Judaizing Christians, for there is no allusion as yet to their attacks upon the apostle; but the fanatical and unbelieving Jews at Corinth (see Acts xviii. 12). For all men have not faith; or, *the faith*; *the faith is not the possession of all*. Faith here is the Christian faith: all men have not received it—obviously alluding to the unbelieving Jews. The words cannot mean, all men have not the true faith—referring to pretended Christians—false brethren, but secret enemies (Calvin). Nor is it to be rendered "all men have not the capacity of faith." Others understand by faith that upright and candid disposition which would

engage men to receive the testimony of the apostle; and others fidelity, as if the apostle meant, "There are few men whom we can trust."

Ver. 3.—But; in contrast with the men just mentioned. The Lord is faithful; as if the apostle had said, "Man may be faithless, but the Lord is faithful" (see Rom. iii. 4). "In contrast to the infidelity of man, he praises the fidelity of God" (Bengel). By the Lord, Christ is meant. In the former Epistle, faithfulness is attributed to God (1 Thess. v. 24), here to Christ. This faithfulness of Christ consisted in watching over his Church, and in effecting its diffusion in spite of all the opposition of these unreasonable and wicked men. Who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil; or, *the evil*. The word "evil" may be either masculine or neuter: if masculine, then it denotes "the evil one;" if neuter, then "evil" in general. There is nothing in the word itself to determine its meaning; this must be learned from the context. Most commentators (Calvin, Bengel, Olshausen, Hofmann, Macknight, Ellicott, Eadie, and Bishop Alexander) suppose that the evil one is meant; and it is so rendered in the R.V.: "Guard you from the evil one." But it is better to take the word abstractly—"evil" in general, whether evil persons or evil things; as a contrast to "every good word and work" (ch. ii. 17). So Alford, Lünemann, De Wette, Jowett, Lillie. There is the same difference of opinion with regard to the words in the Lord's Prayer: "Deliver us from evil;" or "from the evil one" (R.V.). Here, also, notwithstanding the high authorities on the opposite side, we consider that our Lord's words are not limited to the evil one, but are to be taken generally—"evil" in the widest sense, as being much more forcible.

Ver. 4.—And we have confidence in the Lord. The apostle confidently expects the obedience of the Thessalonians, but his confidence is not fixed on them—on their own efforts, endeavours, and resolutions—but on the Lord, namely, Christ; on his grace and strength communicated to and perfected in weakness. The obedience of the Thessalonians flowed from the grace of Christ; it was in consequence of the communication of the influences of his Spirit that they were enabled to make progress and to persevere in the Christian life. "Here," observes Professor Jowett, "as elsewhere, the apostle speaks of believing, hoping, doing all things in Christ. We lead an ordinary life as well as a religious one; but, with the apostle, his ordinary life is his religious one, and hence he uses religious expressions in reference to all that he says and does." The apostle lives in

the sphere of Christ. Touching you; with reference to you—the direction of his confidence. That ye both do and will do the things which we command you. There is here the same union of Divine assistance and human effort, of God's working and man's working, which pervades the whole scheme of the gospel salvation (see Phil. ii. 12, 13).

Ver. 5.—And the Lord; namely, Christ, for so the word "Lord" is to be rendered in St. Paul's Epistles. Bishop Wordsworth supposes that the Holy Ghost is here invoked, as both God and Christ are afterwards mentioned in the petition; but the term "Lord" is not applied by the apostle to the Holy Ghost; 2 Cor. iii. 17 is the only apparent exception. Direct your hearts; as the heart is the fountain of Christian life—the centre of the will. Into the love of God. Here not God's love to us, especially "the manifestation of the love of God in Christ and his work of redemption" (Olshausen); nor the love of God to man, which is to be the pattern of our love to God; but, objectively, our love to God. This love of God is the fulfilment of the Law; and hence the apostle prays that the Thessalonians may be directed into it as the source and essence of all acceptable obedience. And into the patient waiting for Christ. The words, "patient waiting," are but one word in the original, generally translated "patience" or "endurance." The clause has been differently interpreted. Some (Calvin, Hofmann, Jowett) render it, as in the A.V., "patient waiting for Christ." And this is conformable to the context, as the object of Paul was to repress all impatient longing for the advent. But such a meaning is not linguistically justifiable. Others render it, "patience for Christ," that is, steadfast endurance for his sake (De Wette); but there is no preposition in the original. The words simply mean "Christ's patience," or "the patience of Christ" (R.V.), the patience which he exhibited under his unparalleled sufferings. The Thessalonians were exposed to persecutions, and therefore the apostle prays that they might be directed into the patience of Christ, as this would enable them to bear all their sufferings with composure. Love and patience comprehend the active and passive virtues of Christianity.

Now follows a warning against the disorderly life and conduct which the expectation of the immediate advent of Christ had produced. On account of the supposed nearness of the day of the Lord, great disorders had arisen in the Thessalonian Church. Work had been given up by many, who walked about in fanatical

idleness. The apostle had censured this conduct in his former Epistle (1 Thess. iv. 11, 12), but the evil had rather increased than diminished; and, accordingly, he severely rebukes this spirit, and sets himself to correct the disorders occasioned by it.

Ver. 6.—Now we command you, brethren. An injunction, not specially directed to the elders or office-bearers, but to the members of the Church in general (see 1 Thess. v. 14). In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Strengthening the command, as being given in the Name and authority of the great Head of the Church; not we, but Christ himself commands you. That ye withdraw yourselves. A nautical expression, denoting to “shorten the sails;” hence metaphorically to keep out of the way, to withdraw; that ye avoid intercourse and fellowship with; no allusion as yet to excommunication. From every brother—fellow-Christian—that walketh disorderly; literally, *out of the ranks* (see 1 Thess. v. 14). And not after the tradition; or, *the instructions*; not the example of the apostle, which is afterwards mentioned, but the instructions which he orally delivered when at Thessalonica, and subsequently confirmed by the Epistle which he had written to them (see ch. ii. 15). Which he received of us. Here the readings of manuscripts differ. Some read “which you received of us,” and others “which they,” namely, those represented by the brother that walketh disorderly, “received of us” (so B.V.).

Ver. 7.—For yourselves know; without it being necessary for me to say anything about the matter; ye yourselves are witnesses. How ye ought to follow (or, *imitate*) us; better, perhaps, to be restricted to Paul than used as inclusive of Silas and Timothy. For we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; referring to the apostle’s residence in Thessalonica.

Ver. 8.—Neither did we eat any man’s bread; a Hebraism for “neither did we get our sustenance,” as bread was the staff of life. For nought; gratis, free of expense. But wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable unto any of you. The apostle makes the same declaration in his First Epistle, expressed in almost similar terms: “For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail; for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God” (1 Thess. ii. 9).

Ver. 9.—Not because we have not power; that is, to demand support. Paul, as an apostle, had the right of maintenance from the Churches among whom he laboured. This right of support he insists upon in the First

Epistle to the Corinthians (1 Cor. ix. 1—18). But for the sake of his converts, to give them an example of diligent working, and to remove every impediment to the progress of the gospel, he often waived his rights. Thus he did at Thessalonica (1 Thess. ii. 6, 9), at Corinth (Acts xviii. 3; 2 Cor. xi. 9), and at Ephesus (Acts xx. 34); in all these places he laboured for his maintenance as a tent-maker. But—we acted so—to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow—imitate—us.

Ver. 10.—For even when we were with you; during our residence in Thessalonica. This we commanded, that if any man would not work, neither should he eat. This or similar expressions have been shown to be a proverb in frequent use among the Jews. Thus: “Whoever doth not work doth not eat” (‘Bereshith Rabba’); “Let not him who would not labour before the sabbath eat on the sabbath” (‘In Lib. Zenon.’). It is a law of nature, and the apostle here sanctions it as a law of Christianity. There is here a reference to the sentence pronounced on man in Paradise in consequence of disobedience: “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread” (Gen. iii. 19). Labour, indeed, may in one point of view be considered as part of the curse, but it is also a blessing adapted to man’s fallen nature. Labour is the law of God; idleness is the parent of many crimes and is productive of misery. He who has no business allotted to him ought to choose some useful occupation for himself.

Ver. 11.—For; the reason for the allusion to this proverb. We hear. The apostle had either heard from Timothy who had rejoined him from Thessalonica, or from the report of the bearers of the First Epistle. That there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. There is here a paranomasia or play upon words, the words “working” and “busybodies” being cognate. It is difficult to preserve the resemblance in a translation. “Busy only with what is not their own business” (Jowett); “Working at no business, but being busybodies” (Ellicott); “Not busy, but busybodies” (Wordsworth). The word “busybodies” denotes busy in useless and superfluous things, about which one need not trouble himself—occupied about trifles. The apostle refers to the fanatical excitement in the Church on account of which the Thessalonians, instead of occupying themselves with the fulfilment of the duties of their earthly calling, busied themselves about matters which were unprofitable and vain.

Ver. 12.—Now them that are such we command and exhort by (or, as the best manuscripts read, *in*) our Lord Jesus

Christ; in him, as the source of authority; "In his Name." That with quietness. In contrast to being busybodies, with calmness of spirit, freedom from excitement. They work, and eat their own bread; not the bread of others, but their own, for which they have laboured and which they have earned. They would thus be independent of the liberality and generosity of others. (For similar exhortations, see 1 Thessa. iv. 11; Eph. iv. 28.)

Ver. 13.—But ye, brethren; contrasted with those who walk disorderly, ye who have not neglected your worldly employments. Be not weary in well-doing; or, as it is in the margin, *faint not in well-doing*; "lose not heart in well-doing" (Ellicott). The phrase has been differently interpreted. Thus Chrysostom explains it that indolent persons, however justly they may be condemned, must not be suffered to perish from want—a meaning opposed to the context. Calvin renders it that, although there are many that are underserving and abuse our liberality, we must not on this account leave off helping those who need our aid: let not the sloth of those disorderly persons hinder or damp your charity—a most needful admonition, but it does not exhaust all that is meant by the precept. Others restrict it to diligence in our earthly duties: though others be idle, working not at all, let not their example lead you astray; be not ye weary in doing what is right and proper (Lünemann). But the phrase is to be understood in its general sense, denoting holy and upright conduct (see Gal. vi. 9, where the same exhortation is given).

Ver. 14.—And if any man obey not our word by this Epistle, note that man. Some attach the words, "by this Epistle," to "note that man," and render the clause, "Note that man by an epistle to me." Thus Calvin: "He desires that they may be reported to him, that he may reprove them by his authority." So also in the margin of our A.V.: "Signify that man by an epistle." But the presence of the article denoting a definite Epistle, "this Epistle," and the order of the words in the Greek, are against this interpretation. Others render the clause, "Note that man by this Epistle;" point out to him the injunctions and the warnings which are contained in it against such a line of conduct; but such a meaning is too artificial. It is better, therefore, to attach the words, "by this Epistle," to "our word," as in the A.V.: "If any man obey not our word by this Epistle." "Note that man;" that is, set a mark upon him, note him for the sake of avoidance, excommunicate him from your society. And have no company with him. Exclude him from your fellowship meetings, your love-feasts. That he may be ashamed;

the design or object of thus noting him. As if the apostle had said, "Bring the force of Christian opinion to bear upon him. Show your moral indignation by excluding him from the Christian community." The noting or excommunicating was more of the nature of a correction than of a punishment, and its design was the reclaiming of the offender.

Ver. 15.—Yet; or as it is in the original, *and*; a purely connective particle. Count him not as an enemy; an entire outcast. But admonish him as a brother; a Christian brother. No hostile feeling was to be united with this avoidance of intercourse with the erring, but rather loving admonition, inasmuch as he was still a Christian brother.

Ver. 16.—Now the Lord of peace himself. In 1 Thessa. v. 23 it is "the God of peace" who is invoked: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly." Here it is Christ who is named as "the Lord of peace." He is the Lord of peace, as the Author, the Procurer, the Mediator of peace. Peace is here to be taken in its widest sense—peace with God, complete salvation. Give you peace always by all means. Some manuscripts read "in every place," but the reading in our version is best attested—"always by all means;" "at all times and in every way;" whether it be outward or inward, for time or for eternity. The apostle could desire no higher blessing for his converts. The Lord be with you all.

Ver. 17.—The salutation of Paul with mine own hand. The apostle usually dictated his Epistles to an amanuensis, but wrote the concluding words with his own hand. Thus Tertius was his amanuensis when he wrote the Epistle to the Romans (Rom. xvi. 22). Probably the Epistle to the Galatians is an exception (Gal. vi. 11), and also the Epistle to Philemon (Philem. 19). The same authentication expressed in the same words is found in the First Epistle to the Corinthians (1 Cor. xvi. 21), and in the Epistle to the Colossians (Col. iv. 18). Which; referring, not to the salutation, but to the whole clause; which circumstance. Is the token; the mark of authentication. Of every Epistle. Such authentication was especially necessary in the case of the Thessalonians, as it would seem that a forged epistle had been circulated among them (ch. ii. 2). Some restrict the words to the Epistles which the apostle would afterwards write to the Thessalonians (Lünemann); but they are rather to be understood of a caution which the apostle practised, or was to practise, in all his Epistles. Some refer the token to the words, "The salutation of Paul with mine own hand," and although these words are only found in two other Epistles, yet it is asserted that the

other Epistles were otherwise sufficiently authenticated. But it appears better to understand by the salutation the benediction which follows; and a similar salutation or

benediction is found at the close of all Paul's Epistles (see 1 Thes. v. 23).

Ver. 18.—The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*Intercessory prayer.* 1. *Its duty.* We must not be selfish or confined in our prayers, but bear each other's burdens before a throne of grace. Christian love finds its outlet in intercession. A desire for the salvation of others must manifest itself in prayer for their conversion. God is the Hearer of prayer, and will answer our prayers for others as well as for ourselves. The command of God to make intercession for all men should constrain us, and the example of holy men should encourage us. 2. *Its objects.* Sinners, that they may be saved; believers, that they may be confirmed in the faith and kept from evil; ministers, that their ministry may be blessed; the gospel, that it may have free course and be glorified.

Ver. 3.—*Perseverance of the saints.* 1. *Its nature.* By the perseverance of the saints is meant that all true believers, those who are united to Christ by faith and sanctified by his Spirit, can never fall from the faith; that they shall always abide in a state of grace or favour with God; and that they shall continue in holiness unto the end. 2. *Its ground.* The perseverance of the saints is founded on the faithfulness of Christ. "The Lord is faithful." He who has begun the good work will carry it on; he who intercedes for us in heaven will obtain his requests; he who has bestowed upon us his Spirit will not withdraw his grace. 3. *Its uses.* The perseverance of the saints is full of comfort to confirmed believers; it is that which imparts security to all their other blessings, transforms their hopes into assurance, and fills them with joy unspeakable. On the other hand, it affords no encouragement to licentiousness, for it is a perseverance in holiness; it is not that believers will be saved whatever their conduct may be, but that they will persevere in holiness unto the end.

Ver. 5.—*The patience of Christ.* 1. *Its perfection.* As seen in his conduct toward God and man during his sufferings, and in contrast to the conduct of the most patient men, as for example Job, Moses, and Paul. 2. *Its example.* We have need of patience in this world of toil and suffering. A contemplation of the patience with which Christ endured his unparalleled sufferings is the best antidote against impatience under any sufferings which we may be called upon to endure.

Ver. 6.—*Avoidance of evil company.* The apostle commands us to withdraw ourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and to have no fellowship with those who obey not his instructions. We must avoid making wicked men our companions, otherwise we shall soon be led astray and contaminated by their evil principles. The happiness or misery of the young for time and for eternity is, humanly speaking, dependent upon those whom they now choose as their intimate companions.

Ver. 10.—*The sanctity of labour.* True religion hallows earthly labour. Christianity is not designed to draw a man out of the world, to cause him to neglect his earthly duties, or to make him idle; but to consecrate and sanctify his worldly employments, to cause him to perform them in a religious spirit, and to look up to God as his chief Master. Paul himself wrought at the occupation of a tent-maker; and a far greater than Paul, the Lord Jesus Christ himself, was for the greater part of his life engaged in the occupation of a carpenter. "Earthly things," observes Dr. Arnold, "are precious when we use them as the materials with which we may build for ourselves a heavenly habitation; and the humblest and most ordinary trade or employment may be carried on with such a temper and such a spirit that it may advance us daily on our way to heaven; and the angels themselves may behold us engaged in it with respect and love."

Ver. 11.—*Evil of being busybodies.* Busybodies are idle, yet busy; idle as regards

their own work, but busy with the business of others; ever meddling with what belongs not to them; always counselling others and interfering with their concerns, whilst neglecting their own;—a character at once mean and degrading, the cause of much annoyance to themselves and of mischief to others.

Ver. 13.—*Weariness in well-doing.* 1. *The specification of some different forms of well-doing.* The advancement of men's temporal interests, the promotion of religion, the diffusion of the gospel, working with and for Christ. We must remember that we ourselves must first be good before we can do good; there must first be well-being before there can be well-doing. Good works can only proceed from good men. 2. *The causes of weariness in well-doing.* A love of ease and a wish not to put ourselves to trouble; a want of self-denial; the monotony of the work; a want of co-operation and sympathy; a want of apparent success; a want of realization of Christ's claims on our lives and services. 3. *Considerations why we should not be weary in well-doing.* Our duty as Christians; the bright example of Christ; the reward which awaits us—the rest which remains for the people of God.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The prayers of the Thessalonians asked by the apostle.* He had prayed for them; he now asks them to pray for him.

I. **MINISTERS NEED THE PRAYERS OF THEIR PEOPLE.** "Finally, brethren, pray for us." 1. *Because their work is a great work.* 2. *Because it is weighted down with opposition and hindrance.* 3. *Because ministers feel their need, not only of human sympathy, but of Divine grace, wisdom, and strength.* 4. *Because such prayers knit the hearts of pastor and people more closely together.*

II. **THE DOUBLE PURPORT OF THE PRAYER FOR THE APOSTLE.** It was for no mere personal or selfish object, but had exclusive reference to the furtherance of the gospel. To pray for ministers is to pray for the gospel. 1. *It was a prayer for the rapid spread of the gospel.* "That the Word of the Lord may run and be glorified, even as it is also with you." (1) There were grave hindrances in its way presented by Jewish prejudice, Gentile fanaticism, and the jealousy of the Roman power. He is anxious that the gospel should not go halting and picking its steps, but "like a strong man rejoicing to run a race," overleaping all barriers of space and prejudice and hatred. Ministers have their "feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." It is God only who can remove all impediments and make the mountains a plain before Zerubbabel. (2) The apostle was anxious that the gospel should be glorified—as "the power of God unto salvation"—by the conversion of large numbers of people, by their cheerful obedience to the truth, and by their orderly walk in the gospel. He quotes the example of the Thessalonians themselves—"even as it is with you"—as worthy of imitation in spite of some exceptional defects. The courteous reference would lead his converts to pray for him with deeper interest and fervour. 2. *It was a prayer for deliverance from obstructive enemies.* "And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men." The impediments to the free progress of the gospel were evil men. They were his Jewish enemies at Corinth who rose against the apostle and brought him to the judgment-seat of Gallio (Acts xviii. 12). (1) It was a prayer that his career might not be cut short by their malignity. The apostle's life was, perhaps, the most valuable in all the world in that generation, but it seemed to be at the mercy of men without scruple or mercy. He was, indeed, "in deaths oft." His enemies either lay in wait for him to destroy him, or roused the fanaticism of mobs against him. (2) It was an enmity directed by men without any check from reason or principle. His most persevering enemies through life were the Jews. No reason or argument could satisfy them or mollify their hatred. Their conduct was easily explained by the fact that "all men have not faith." As if nothing better could be expected from godless and blaspheming Jews.—T. C.

Vers. 3, 4.—*The apostle's cheerful assurance and confidence on behalf of the Thessa-*

lonians. He dismisses all thoughts about himself, and returns to the thought of comforting his converts.

I. THE DOUBLE BLESSING IN STORE FOR THEM. "Who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil." 1. *An essential factor in their Christian comfort was establishment* (1) in the doctrines of the gospel, which were threatened by godless or fickle speculators; (2) in the grace of faith, which may be weakened by persecution or by misconceptions of truth; (3) in the profession of faith, which true believers will be able to hold fast to the end. 2. *An equally essential factor was their preservation from evil*, either (1) in the form of sin, that it should not have dominion over them or reign unto death; (2) or in the form of Satanic temptation; (3) or in the form of opposition from unreasonable and wicked men.

II. THE ARGUMENT TO ASSURE THEM OF THIS DOUBLE BLESSING. "The Lord is faithful." He will be true to his promises, and not suffer one of them to fail. The Lord Jesus is at once the Author and the Finisher of our faith. "We are complete in him;" we are "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself" (2 Tim. ii. 13). "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv. 13).

III. THE CONFIDENCE OF THE APOSTLE BASED ON THIS ASSURANCE. "But we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that you are both doing and will do the things which we command you." 1. *The ultimate ground of his confidence touching them was in the grace and strength of the Lord*, not in themselves, or their wisdom, or strength. 2. *The matter of his confidence*—their present and future obedience to his commands. There must be a patient continuance in well-doing; a ready, universal, perpetual obedience to the commands he had already given them by the authority of Christ, and to those which he was now about to give to them.—T. C.

Ver. 5.—*The apostle's further prayer for his converts*. They needed grace to enable them to discharge all these duties.

I. THE LORD JESUS IS THE TRUE DIRECTOR OF THE HEART. "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and the patience of Christ." 1. *The heart needs direction*. It is the fountain of life and feeling and action. But it is often wayward in its impulses. 2. *The heart that is self-led is misled*. We cannot direct our own hearts, neither can apostles do it for us; the Lord only can do it. He directs us by his Spirit, not only into all truth, but into all right feeling and all acceptable obedience. He only can change us into his own likeness.

II. THE RIGHT DIRECTION OF THE CHRISTIAN HEART. "Into the love of God, and the patience of Christ." 1. *The love of God is the spring of all evangelical obedience, and the motive-force of all spiritual power*. The Thessalonians had love already, but the apostle prays for fuller measures of it, that they may be prepared for yet more exact and thorough and unquestioning obedience. 2. *The patience of Christ*, which so characterized him, is to be copied in the lives of his followers exposed to similar persecutions. His sufferings are their sufferings; and they need his patience to enable them to endure them, as well as to sustain that "patient continuance in well-doing" in the midst of evil which will keep them free from restlessness and disorderly walking.—T. C.

Ver. 6.—*The apostle's method of dealing with the idle busybodies of the Thessalonian Church*. This is one of the leading objects of this Epistle.

I. THE NATURE OF THE OFFENCE REBUKED BY THE APOSTLE. "Withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition they received from us." 1. *It was a habit of idleness caused by the unsettling tendency of the belief that the day of the Lord's coming was near at hand to wind up all human affairs*. They were, therefore, "working not at all," allowing themselves to be ignobly dependent either upon richer brethren or upon ecclesiastical funds. 2. *Linked with this idle habit was the disposition to be "busybodies"*—concerning themselves with matters that did not belong to them. "Bishops in other men's dioceses," as the figure of the apostle elsewhere describes the same class (1 Pet. iv. 15); like the younger widows who "were wandering about from house to house, and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies" (1 Tim. v. 13). This unworthy habit of life was a serious annoyance

and interruption to neighbours, as well as an unwarranted tax upon the generosity of their rich patrons. 3. *It was an aggravation of the offence that the offenders were not only "brethren," but were living in deliberate disregard of the apostle's oral instructions during his first visit to Thessalonica.* "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither let him eat." Thus they showed a reckless defiance of apostolic counsel. This was surely to "break rank," as the word "disorder" suggests.

II. THE APOSTLE'S COMMAND TO THE CHURCH RESPECTING THESE OFFENDERS. 1. *The time was past for mere requests or exhortations.* He had addressed them in this milder tone in the First Epistle: "We beseech you that ye study to be quiet, and do your own business" (1 Thess. iv. 11). But his request had been disregarded. 2. *The command he now addresses to them was backed by Divine authority.* "We command you in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1) Because he is the Source of all authority in the Church; (2) because the conduct of the Thessalonian busybodies was a dishonour to the Lord who bought them; (3) because it was a command to which obedience could be secured so long as the Christians "directed their hearts into the love of God, and the patience of Christ." 3. *It was a command to the body of the Church to "withdraw themselves" from the disorderly brethren.* (1) It was no command to excommunicate them. It was no case of expulsion or exclusion from Church fellowship, but (2) what may be called social excommunication. The brethren were to avoid all unnecessary intercourse with them, perhaps the richer members to encourage them no longer in their indolent and restless fanaticism by their ill-placed generosity, and thus bring them to a sense of shame and repentance for their laziness and tale-bearing.—T. C.

Vers. 7—10.—*The example of the apostle himself as a support to his command.* I. THE APOSTLE'S EXAMPLE. "For we were not disorderly among you, nor did we eat bread for nought from any one, but in toil and weariness, working night and day." Though there were rich people in the Church, he accepted no gift from them, but laboured at his craft assiduously to earn a living for himself. 1. *His refusal of support from his converts did not invalidate his right to it.* "Not because we have not authority"—an authority which he fully expounds in 1 Cor. ix.—for "the labourer is worthy of his hire," and has he not "a right to forbear working"? 2. *It was based upon a supreme regard to Thessalonian interests.* (1) "That we might not be a burden to any one of you," (2) and "that we might give ourselves for a pattern unto you to imitate us." The apostle had evidently in view the extravagances of conduct that were beginning at an early period to spring from misunderstandings respecting the time of the Lord's coming. He was not ashamed of his handicraft. No Christian man ought ever to be ashamed of honest labour.

II. THE APOSTLE'S INJUNCTION TO THE DISORDERLY. "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any one will not work, neither let him eat." 1. *This does not apply to those who cannot work, but to those who will not.* The command does not touch cases of charity. 2. *It is a command based on the original law of Eden.* "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" (Gen. iii. 19). Work is a Divine order, not repealed by Christianity but lifted up to higher blessing and dignity. The idle man ought, therefore, to be allowed to suffer the effects of his idleness. 3. *It is a command which, when obeyed, will introduce tranquillity into life, and at the same time conduce to an honest self-respect.* "That working with quietness they eat their own bread." (1) They would thus be eating their own bread, not the bread earned by others' toil, nor that reserved by the same toil for the use of the really destitute and poor. (2) They would thus carry more quietness into their own lives as well as those of their neighbours, for there would be no time for intermeddling with other people's concerns. We should live "quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty" (1 Tim. ii. 2).—T. C.

Ver. 13.—*Exhortation to well-doing.* "Brethren, be not weary in well-doing."

I. THIS IMPLIES THAT THEY HAD BEEN HITHERTO ENGAGED IN WELL-DOING. "Walk-
ing honestly to them that were without" (1 Thess. iv. 12).

II. IT IS AN INJUNCTION NEEDED BY THE VERY CONDITION OF THE THESSALONIAN

CHURCH. Their charity might have been abused by the idle, but they were not to be discouraged by these examples of fanatical restlessness from the practice of beneficence.

III. IT IS AN INJUNCTION POWERFULLY RECOMMENDED ALL THROUGH THE GOSPEL. 1. *It was putting into practice the patience of Christ*, for which the apostle prayed in their interest. 2. *God is glorified by well-doing.* (John xv. 8.) 3. *God remembers it.* (Heb. vi. 9, 10.) 4. *A blessing attends it.* (Jas. i. 25.) 5. *It follows us into our final rest.* (Rev. xiv. 13.)—T. C.

Vers. 14, 15.—*The true spirit of faithful dealing with an erring brother.* The apostle returns to this subject again.

I. HIS REITERATED COMMAND. "If any man obey not our word by this Epistle, note that man, and have no company with him." Let him be a marked man, like a leper in your midst, standing wholly isolated in a heathen city. This would be a social extrusion deeply felt by a "brother" who would be cut off from the cordial greetings of the Church.

II. THE DESIGN OF THIS SOCIAL EXCOMMUNICATION. "That he may be ashamed." It is not "for destruction," but for edification; it is to bring the offender to a due sense of his sin, and to a resolution for its abandonment.

III. THE SPIRIT IN WHICH THE COMMAND IS TO BE CARRIED OUT. "Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." 1. *It is an injunction not to regard him as your enemy, or as an enemy of Christ*, as if he had denied the faith, or sunk into profligacy, or relapsed into heathenism. There must be neither hostility nor carelessness on your side, but rather "the love that suffereth long, and is kind." 2. *It is an injunction to affectionate admonition.* "But admonish him as a brother." How this would be consistent with the withdrawal of all intercourse it is unnecessary to speculate. There was to be a faithful dealing with him that he might be won back, and "Satan have no advantage" over him.—T. C.

Vers. 16.—*A prayer for peace.* "Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always in every way."

I. THE AUTHOR OF THIS BLESSING. "The Lord of peace himself"—Jesus Christ. 1. *He is our abiding Peace.* (Eph. ii. 14.) 2. *He gives it as his legacy to the Church.* (John xiv. 27.) 3. *He guides into the way of peace.* (Luke i. 79.) 4. *He is the Prince of peace.* (Isa. ix. 6.) 5. *Peace is preached by him.* (Eph. ii. 17; Acts x. 36.)

II. THE PEACE IN QUESTION INCLUDES: 1. *Reconciliation with God.* 2. *Peace with one another.* 3. *Peace in all the relations of life.* 4. *Peace in the midst of speculative disturbances.* 5. *Peace in the midst of persecutions.* 6. *Peace in the prospect of death.*

III. IT WAS A PRAYER FOR A CONTINUOUS PEACE. "Always." It was to be as uninterrupted as a river (Isa. xlvi. 18), with no breaks made in it by the world, the flesh, or the devil. None but the Lord of peace could sustain such a peace in power.

IV. IT IS PEACE TO BE ACQUIRED IN EVERY WAY—BY PRAYING, BY PREACHING, BY CONVERSATION.

V. THE PENDANT TO THIS HAPPY PRAYER. "The Lord be with you all." A comprehensive benediction upon the disorderly as well as the orderly brethren of Thessalonica. "Be with you all"—"by his presence to comfort and refresh; by his power to keep and preserve; by his grace to assist; and by his Spirit to counsel, advise, and direct."—T. C.

Vers. 17, 18.—*The closing salutation with its autographic significance.* "The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every Epistle: so I write." He takes the pen out of the hand of his amanuensis and writes the closing words himself.

I. IT WAS IMPORTANT TO AUTHENTICATE THE EPISTLE. There were letters falsely attributed to him (1 Thess. ii. 2). It is essential for Christians to know the distinction between the human and the Divine. The Thessalonians would be able to identify his large, bold handwriting (Gal. vi. 11).

II. THE SALUTATION WAS NOT A MERE SYMBOL OF FRIENDSHIP, BUT A PRAYER FOR HIS BELOVED CONVERTS. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." 1. *His Epistles began with prayer; they end with prayer*—"fencing round that which he

said with mighty walls on either side." 2. *All the good he desires for his converts is included in the grace of the God-Man.* The prayer implies the Divinity of Christ. His name alone appears in his parting supplication. 3. *It is a parting request for all the brethren without exception,* including even those who received his rebukes.—T. O.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Prayer for missions.* I. **THE IMPORTANCE OF IT.** Prayer is a mighty power; we must use it. We must not stand by indifferent and uninterested, and leave the progress of the gospel to missionaries abroad, to God's ministers at home. We must all take our part in the work. Success in that work depends in large measure on the prayers of the faithful. All who pray earnestly for the work of missions are really helpers, as really, though not in the same degree, as the most hardworking missionaries. Faithful prayer is as necessary as faithful preaching. The united prayers of the Church, the mighty volume of supplication that ascends in behalf of missions, is the strength of those who labour in loneliness and self-denial among heathen and savages. Each one of us, however humble, may contribute his share to the great result. All who do so are co-workers in the blessed work of saving souls. It is a high privilege; the Lord has committed the progress of Christianity to the prayers of his people. We may well ask ourselves if we have been as energetic as we ought in that great spiritual work.

II. **THE DUTY OF PRAYER.** 1. *For the spread of the gospel.* St. Paul urges it constantly upon his converts. He had been praying for the Thessalonians; now he asks for their prayers in return. It is a commandment. He bids us pray that the Word of the Lord may run, that it may meet with no check in its onward course, but spread ever further and wider, from city to city, from country to country, till "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." This is the only limit. The Church must not be stationary; it must be always in movement. The water of life is living water, ever welling up fresh and clear; it is a running stream. Stagnation means corruption. The gospel must keep moving onward, winning fresh hearts, exerting an ever-growing influence over those who have long felt its power. To stand still is to go back, to win no new victories is to lose its ancient triumphs. It is our bounden duty to help on this progress by our earnest prayers. We are met by an inert mass of apathy; we must strive to kindle it into life by our fervent supplications. "Ask, and ye shall have." The apathy of which, it may be, we complain so bitterly, may be due in large measure to our own spiritual sloth, to the sluggishness of our prayers. Where the Word of the Lord runs, it will be glorified; it is living and powerful; it will manifest its energy in the blessed lives, the holy deaths, of converted men; it will show forth the glory of the Lord in that glory of holiness which, springing from his indwelling presence, will transform the souls in whom that presence abides. 2. *For the missionaries themselves.* They are exposed to many dangers; it was so with St. Paul. He was now at Corinth, a city where there was a great work to do, for the Lord had much people there. But he met with much opposition, at first from fanatical Jews, afterwards from "false brethren" and "false apostles." He bids the Thessalonians pray that he might be delivered from these men, not for his own sake—he counted not his life dear unto himself—but that he might finish his course with joy, and be blessed in saving many souls. So we should pray now for faithful missionaries, that they may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men.

LESSONS. 1. Pray constantly for the success of the gospel in all the world. Christ bids you; his apostles bid you. 2. Do not think yourself too weak and sinful to do so; such humility is false humility; it defrauds God's ministers of the assistance which you are bound to give them. 3. Believe in the power of prayer; it is an important element in a living faith.—B. C. C.

Vers. 3—5.—*St. Paul's confidence.* I. **HE TRUSTS IN THE LORD.** 1. *The Lord is faithful.* All men have not the faith; the faith is not the possession of all. These unreasonable and wicked men seem to be beyond its saving influences. But the Lord is faithful. He is the Truth; his promises are sure. Amid the tumult of opposition, the rude fanaticism of the Jews, the sneers of the philosophic Greeks, St. Paul still trusted in the Lord. "The Lord is faithful." It is a great word; we may well pray that it may be engraven in our hearts, as the centre of our hopes, the strength of our souls. 2. *He will strengthen the Thessalonians.* It is what St. Paul prayed for in the last

chapter. He knows that his prayer is heard. God will stablish the Thessalonians. He has built his Church upon a rock; the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. The rain may descend, the flood may come, the stream of adversity may beat vehemently against the Church of God; it cannot fall, for it is founded upon the rock. God is faithful. He will keep them from the evil—from the evil which surrounds them in the world, from the power of the evil one. The words sound like a reminiscence of the Lord's prayer. Compare also 2 Tim. iv. 18, "The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom." St. Paul, it seems, was accustomed to use the same holy words which we say in our daily prayers. How many generations of Christians that prayer has helped in their heavenward journey! They are safe now with Christ. We are marching onwards to that rest which they have reached. We have the same helps which they had. Let us seek that holy confidence which St. Paul had. The Lord is faithful; he will stablish you; he will keep you from the evil.

II. HE HAS CONFIDENCE IN THE THESSALONIANS. Or rather in the Lord touching them. It is in the Lord always that he trusts; but that confidence in the Lord reaches to the Thessalonians; he believes that they are doing now, and will continue to do the things which he commands them, because he is sure that the Lord will stablish them, and keep them from the evil. It is an exhortation delicately expressed in the language of confidence. He trusts them; the consciousness of being trusted is a strong motive for obedience; there is a sense of shame in disobeying a master, a teacher, who reposes implicit confidence in his pupils. Mark the delicate tact of the apostle.

III. HE DOUBTS THEM NOT, YET HE PRAYS FOR THEM. 1. *For growth in love.* In 1 Thess. iii. 11 he had prayed that God would direct his way to the Thessalonians; here he prays that God would direct their hearts into the way of love. The way of love is the way that leads to God, who is love. We need to be directed thither. Our attention is often distracted by the various paths which lead this way and that in the journey of life. God can direct us by his Spirit into the one path which leads to God. That path is love, self-denying, self-forgetting love—the love which comes from God and ends in God. For love is of God, it is his gift; it comes from him who is the only Fountain of pure and holy love. And it ends in him; for God only is the true Object of our highest love; only in him can the deep yearnings of our souls find their proper satisfaction. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart." It is his commandment, the first of all the commandments. He does not mock us with commands which we cannot obey; he giveth his Spirit; and the gift of the Spirit is the gift of power. He can direct; he will, if we seek it in persevering prayer, direct our hearts into the love of God. 2. *For growth in patience.* The Church of Thessalonica needed patience; it was much afflicted from the first. The Lord Jesus Christ was the great Example of patience. He endured the cross, despising the shame. If we would run with patience the race that is set before us, we must consider him, always looking unto Jesus. In our sufferings we must meditate on the sufferings of our Lord and Saviour, and pray for grace to follow his example. We need his patience, such patience as he had. We must pray for it. The Lord will direct us to it.

LESSONS. 1. The Lord is faithful; trust in him. He is true; he will establish the hearts of his chosen. 2. We must be stern with ourselves, but gentle with others; gentle words of confidence win those whom harshness would only repel. 3. Pray for love; pray for patience.—B. C. C.

Vers. 6—15.—*The importance of the common duties of daily life shown.* I. By ST. PAUL'S EARNEST APPEALS. 1. *He commands*, and that in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. There were some among the Thessalonian Christians who walked disorderly, whose lives were not ordered according to the teaching which they had received from St. Paul. The Church generally was sound, as the Epistle shows, but there was a section that needed counsel and firm treatment. Probably the prevalent restlessness about the approach of the day of the Lord so filled their minds that it seemed hard to attend to less exciting matters. In view of an event so awful, the little details of daily occupation seemed trivial and insignificant. The whole course of life, with all its complex interests, might any moment be abruptly checked by the sudden coming of the Lord. It was hard to descend from the contemplation of a topic so absorbing to the

little duties of work and everyday life. But the apostle commands, and that with the greatest earnestness. It is just in those little duties that our responsibility chiefly lies. It is in the small matters of daily life that the battle between good and evil is fought out for each individual soul. "The daily round, the common task," is the field in which we are trained for heaven; or, if not for heaven, it must be for hell. Ordinary lives are commonplace; they do not present opportunities for showy action; there are few emergencies, little excitement in them. The lives of most of us are, by God's appointment, ordinary and commonplace; it is the discipline for eternity which he has provided for us. The quiet, faithful performance of those common duties is the best preparation for the coming of the Lord. He cannot find us better employed than in the work, whatever it may be, which his providence has given us to do. And, in truth, those commonplace lives afford ample opportunities for self-denial, if only we will use them; a road for drawing daily nearer to God, if only we will take the path pointed out by his providence, not some self-chosen way of our own. A commonplace life may be in the eyes of the holy angels full of beauty and heroism. To do each little duty, as it comes, faithfully and thoroughly; to keep the thought of God's presence constantly before us, and to try in all things, great and small alike, to please him; to persevere all the day, and every day, in the quiet life of duty;—this involves a sustained effort, a lofty faith, a holy love, which are in the sight of God of great price. The life of duty, however humble and quiet that duty may be, is the life of holiness. Religious fervour, religious excitement, if it ends in excitement and does not issue in obedience, is but a counterfeit in the sight of God; it will not abide the day of his coming. In the First Epistle St. Paul had bidden the Thessalonians to study to be quiet, to do their own business, to work with their own hands. He speaks more strongly now. Probably the excitement had increased; it had led to the disorder which he condemns. He *commands* them now, and that in virtue of his apostolic authority, in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose ambassador he was. Sometimes God's ministers must speak with authority. They must be instant in season, out of season; they must reprove, rebuke, exhort; but such rebukes will avail little, unless they are administered with much long-suffering, with humility and godly fear, and enforced by that authority of character which only holiness of life can give. To possess such authority, a man must have that reality the absence of which is so soon detected; he must have that ready sympathy which is such a source of power and success in ministerial work. 2. *They must withdraw themselves from every brother that walketh disorderly.* St. Paul is not issuing a sentence of excommunication, as in 1 Cor. v. and 1 Tim. i. 20. The conduct of these Thessalonians was not so utterly wicked as that of the incestuous person at Corinth; their errors were not so dangerous as those of Hymeneus and Alexander. But they were neglecting the duties of their station; they were living in disobedience. It was not right for Christians to recognize such men as brethren; their lives were a scandal; they were bringing discredit upon the Christian name. True Christians must be jealous for their Master's honour; they must sometimes show openly their disapprobation of inconsistency. It is a difficult and painful duty. It is necessary, in performing it, to keep a very careful watch over our own motives; to speak and act in deep humility and real charity; to cast first the beam out of our own eye; to remember the Saviour's rule, "Judge not." But though a difficult duty, it is sometimes a duty. A true Christian must not live on terms of intimacy with men who disgrace their Christian profession. He will not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand in the way of sinners. All his delight will be in the saints who are on the earth. Especially he must avoid the companionship of those who make a great show of religion and live ungodly lives. No sin is more dangerous than hypocrisy; none is more strongly condemned by our Lord.

II. BY HIS EXAMPLE. 1. *He did not behave himself disorderly.* He illustrated in his life the power of true religion. He was a man of warm affections, of enthusiastic character, full of high hopes; but he never allowed any excitement of feeling to interfere with the quiet performance of daily duties. His life and preaching supplemented one another. His preaching disclosed the motives which prompted his actions and regulated his life; his life was his preaching translated into action—it showed the reality, the living force, of the truths which he preached. 2. *He worked with his own hands.* He always asserted the right of the apostles and their companions to maintenance from the

Churches. The Lord hath ordained, he said, that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel. But he did not claim this right for himself. It was not pride that prompted his conduct; he accepted the gifts of the Philippians. But he knew the value of an example of self-denying and absolutely disinterested labour. The Gentile world had never seen such a life. It was a power in itself; it constrained the admiration and won the hearts of men; it forced them to admit the reality of a religion which sustained him in such unparalleled self-sacrifices. So he would not eat any man's bread for nought. For nought, he says in his humility; though he knew well that his converts in Thessalonica owed to him, like Philemon, even their own selves. He wrought with his own hands, and that night and day. It was hard, uninteresting, ill-paid labour. It required the close application of many hours to earn even the simple livelihood which contented him. But he worked on in patience, knowing the power of example.

III. HE INSISTS ON THE DUTY OF HONEST LABOUR. 1. *He had done so during his stay at Thessalonica.* He had given his opinion in the words of a short, stern proverb, "If any will not work, neither let him eat." Labour is the ordinance of God; a punishment at first (Gen. iii. 19), but it is turned into a blessing (Ps. cxxviii. 2) to those who accept it as the will of God, and use it as a discipline of obedience and self-denial. Work, in some form or other, is a necessity for us; without work, life soon becomes dreary, full of restlessness and dissatisfaction. To have nothing to do is far from enviable; it is full of ennui and weariness. Time is a priceless talent, given us that we might work out our own salvation; to waste it day after day, to "kill time," as the saying is, is a miserable misuse of the good gifts of God. We must all work, if we would be happy here, if we would be ready to meet the Lord when he cometh. Mental labour is the lot of some, manual labour of others. God has ordered our lot and appointed our work. Work of some sort we must have. None have a right to eat their bread without labour, neither the rich nor the poor. (1) If God has given us worldly means, still we have no right to eat the bread of idleness. We must find work to do, the work which the Master has set us. If we need not work for ourselves, we must work for others. There is work enough for all in the vineyard of the Lord; only in work can we find peace and satisfaction. Without work, we are eating the bread which we have not earned; without work, we must in the end be restless and unhappy; without work, how can we bear to read those awful words, "Thou wicked and slothful servant"? (2) And the apostle forbids indiscriminate almsgiving. When the Lord said, "Give to him that asketh thee," he did not mean to the idle and the worthless. Give freely, but give to the old, the sick, the helpless. It is a difficult thing to give rightly; it needs study, thought, prayer. We must not encourage idleness, but neither must we allow our heart to be hardened by the imposture which we meet so often. Be generous, full of sympathy to the afflicted, but let the idle be corrected by the stern discipline of hunger. To give to such is doubly wrong; it encourages the slothful in their sinful idleness, and it robs the really poor. 2. *He repeats his exhortation now.* There were busybodies at Thessalonica, who neglected their own business, and busied themselves with matters which did not concern them, or with curious questions which were beyond their reach. It is always so with the idle; the restless thoughts must find occupation, and commonly find it in mischief. St. Paul exhorts them again. He does not sternly leave them to themselves; he longs for their spiritual welfare. He exhorts them, and that in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, to work with quietness; not to let excited feelings interfere with the quiet, well-ordered life of Christian duty; but to eat their own bread, the bread earned by honest labour; not to live on the alms of others, when they might preserve a manly, Christian independence.

IV. HE ASKS THE BRETHREN TO SUPPORT HIS EXHORTATIONS. 1. *They must not be weary in well-doing.* There is much to make Christians weary; their own helplessness and sinfulness; the disappointments, misunderstandings, ingratitude, which they meet with in their work. But they must persevere in the quiet walk of duty; they must do good, seeking no reward save that which comes from our Father who seeth in secret. Weariness is hard to bear; it will press heavily upon us at times. We must run with patience the race that is set before us, looking always unto Jesus. 2. *They must carry out his censures.* His Epistle was an authoritative document; it came from the Lord's

apostle, armed with the Lord's authority. It must be obeyed; it was the duty of the Church to enforce obedience. The brethren must show their concurrence with St. Paul by not keeping company with any professing Christians who may still persist in disorderly conduct. But they must be careful not to sin against the law of love. The offender is a brother still; they must admonish him for his soul's sake; they must show by their conduct their sorrow, their disapproval of his disobedience, that the disapprobation of Christians known and respected may bring him to a sense of shame. and, by God's grace, to amendment of life.

LESSONS. 1. Duty seems sometimes dull and prosaic, but it is our appointed path; do each little duty as in the sight of God. 2. There is a true dignity in honest labour; never despise it in others; work yourself in the station to which God has called you. 3. Be careful in your choice of companions; avoid the disorderly; seek the society of the pious and obedient.—B. C. C.

Vers. 16—18.—*Conclusion.* I. THE CLOSING PRAYER FOR PEACE. 1. *Only the Lord can give it.* Again we have the solemn *ad-ros*, himself. He is the Lord of peace; it is his: "My peace I give unto you." He only can grant that chiefest blessing. The Thessalonians might have their difficulties, their dangers; they might be weary. But it is the weary and the heavy laden whom the Lord calls to himself. "Come unto me," he says, "and I will give you rest." Only we must take up his yoke, the yoke of obedience; only we must bear his burden, the burden of the cross; and we shall find peace, rest for our souls. For his yoke is easy. It seems not so at first; we are tempted often to be disorderly, to forsake the quiet path of duty; it is hard to resist temptation. But if we come to Christ and learn of him, the blessed Master, he will teach us the grace and blessedness of obedience, and we shall gradually learn something of his own lesson—to do our Father's will as it is done in heaven, gladly and with cheerful submission. His burden is light. It seems not so at first; the cross is sharp. But he bore the cross once for us; he bears it *with us* now. When he strengthens us we can do all things; the heavy burden becomes light when we rest on his strength. He is the Lord of peace. Peace is his to give; he will give it to the chosen. 2. *He can give it always.* At all times and in all ways we need the peace of God. We want it in the Church, in the commonwealth, in the family; we want it all the day and every day. We shall have it if he is with us, for with his presence comes the gift of peace. "The Lord be with you." It is a precious benediction. We listen, we accept it in humble thankfulness. We must strive ourselves to keep ourselves in the love of God, to realize the deep truth of his presence, to draw daily nearer and nearer to him.

II. ST. PAUL'S OWN SALUTATION. 1. *His autograph.* He writes the concluding words with his own hand. His Epistles were sacred writings; they were the work of an inspired apostle; they had the stamp of Divine authority. St. Paul marks their importance by his closing words. He did not, perhaps he could not, write the whole; he writes his signature at the last. In his own handwriting, perhaps, as some have thought, large and clumsy (comp. Gal. vi. 11 in the Greek), but known and loved by his converts, he sends his last word of love; he salutes, he greets them with the embrace of Christian charity. 2. *His last benediction.* As always, he ends with the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. He had prayed in his first Epistle that it might rest upon them. Now he adds the significant word "all." He had been obliged to blame some of them, to blame them severely; but he will not end his Epistle with words of censure. He prays that grace may be with them *all*. He loves them all; he longs for the restoration of those who were living disorderly, for the continual progress and sanctification of the whole Church. And so he prays for grace. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ can convert the erring; that same grace can comfort and confirm the faithful. St. Paul closes all his Epistles with a prayer for grace. The grace of God should be always in our thoughts, in our hearts, in our prayers for ourselves and others.

LESSONS. 1. Only God can give true and lasting peace; seek it of him; he giveth to all men liberally. 2. We need it always, everywhere; then pray always, everywhere. 3. By grace ye are saved; refer everything to the grace of God; trust only in that grace, not in works of righteousness which we have done.—B. O. C.

Vers. 1—5.—*Intimation of the close of the Epistle.* "Finally, brethren."

I. REQUEST FOR PRAYER ON BEHALF OF THE PREACHERS. 1. *For the diffusion and glorification of the Word of the Lord through their instrumentality.* *Diffusion.* "Pray for us, that the Word of the Lord may run." The Word of the Lord is the Word as given by the Lord to be diffused. It is especially the offer of salvation to perishing men on the ground of Christ's work. The Thessalonians are asked to pray that the Word of the Lord, by their preaching, may run, *i.e.* have free and rapid course. In the same way we are to pray that the Word of the Lord may be everywhere preached. This is a motto for a Bible Society: "Pray that the Word of the Lord may run." By both means may it accomplish its course. Let no country be shut to the preaching of the gospel, to the circulation of the Scriptures. Let the earth be filled with knowledge. *Glorification.* "And be glorified." For this, too, prayer needs to be made. May the Divine Spirit accompany the Word in its course through the world. And, wherever it comes, let it be glorified. Let it be shown to be the Word of the Lord, by its powerful saving effects upon the hearts of all who hear it or read it. *Commendatory statement with reference to the Thessalonians.* "As also it is with you." In its course through the world in those days, the Word came to Thessalonica. And they presented no obstacle in their hearts to its reception. They received it, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the Word of God. And it was signally glorified in its being the means of their being turned from idols to the living and true God. Let the Word of the Lord also be glorified in our conversion, in the transformation of our characters. Let us be willing trophies of the power of the Word to change us to the Divine form. 2. *For the presence of a condition without which they could not be instrumental in diffusing and glorifying the Word of the Lord.* "And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and evil men." In most places the preachers had to encounter unreasonable and evil men. If these had their way, the Word of the Lord would be impeded, by there not being freedom for preaching it. The Thessalonians, then, are asked to pray, on behalf of the preachers, for their deliverance from these unreasonable and evil men. They are not forbidden to pray for their personal salvation, but they are enjoined to pray against them as impeters of the Word. Let Divine restraint be laid upon their unreasonableness and malice, but let Divine speed be granted to the Word. *Reason for expecting the existence of unreasonable and evil men.* "For all have not faith." The meaning is not that all have not aptitude for faith. It is one of the devil's lies that religion is only a matter for some people. The meaning is, that all are not, in the way of faith, receptive of the Word. We need not, therefore, wonder if, in the case of some, their want of sympathy with the Word shows itself in forms of unreasonableness and malice. They are only working out their position more vigorously than some others, even as Paul did in his pre-Christian state.

II. THEY HAD CONFIDENCE THAT THE LORD WOULD ASSIST THE THESSALONIANS. "But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and guard you from the evil one." They at once turn away from their own case to the case of the Thessalonians. There were unreasonable and evil men at Thessalonica too. But the Lord was to be trusted in as Protector of his Church in every place, and stronger than the unreasonable and evil men. And their Lord Protector, the preachers were persuaded, would make them immovable against the assaults of their enemies, and would deliver them from the evil one, the inspirer of their unreasonableness and malice.

III. THEIR CONFIDENCE IN THE LORD EXTENDED TO THE CO-OPERATION OF THE THESSALONIANS WITH THE LORD ASSISTING THEM. "And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command." In the language, "And we have confidence in the Lord," there is a carrying forward of the thought. Their confidence in the Lord extended to the Thessalonians doing their part. They had no doubt that in the present they were doing what they were commanded. They had no doubt also in their resolution for the future. This expression of confidence has the force of hopeful exhortation.

IV. PRAYER THAT THE LORD WOULD ASSIST THE THESSALONIANS. "And the Lord direct your hearts." Though the Lord promises to assist us, and to assist us in connection with our good resolution, yet we need to pray for his assistance. The prayer is for the directing—not mere directing, but the powerful directing—of our hearts. Of ourselves our hearts are misdirected. But, in virtue of his triumph on Calvary, the Lord has power over our hearts to direct them aright. *There is a twofold direction*

mentioned. 1. *The central disposition.* "Into the love of God." Our hearts are rightly directed, when they are directed in love toward him who is the Centre of our being. As being should tend toward its source, so should we tend toward God. As it is natural for a child to love his parents, so surely it is natural for us to love him by whom we have been made, and for whom we have been made. It was the object of the Lord, in his personal ministry on earth, to hold up before men the immeasurable goodness of God. So it is his object in our hearts, by his Spirit, to hold up Divine excellence, so that we may be powerfully attracted toward God. And in this love, as it is real and active, is there motive power for the keeping of the commandments of God handed to us by inspired men. The Lord, then, give us this love for ourselves and our friends. May God be so presented to us that all misdirection of our hearts shall be powerfully overcome. 2. *The special disposition in their situation.* "And into the patience of Christ." By the patience of Christ we are to understand the patience exhibited by Christ which is held up before us as our ideal. "For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself." In the midst, then, of unreasonable and evil men—not more unreasonable and evil than those which assailed Christ—let them in the same spirit endure.—R. F.

Vers. 6—15.—*Duty of withdrawing from a disorderly brother.* I. DUTY STATED. "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 they received of us." The commandment, being in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, was as authoritative as though it had been given directly by him who has the absolute right to command in the Church. It was a commandment relating to a brother walking disorderly, and not after the received tradition. It is implied that a definite order had been appointed by the Lord for the conduct of members of the Church. This order, handed to the preachers, had been handed by them to the Thessalonians. But how was a brother to be dealt with who did not observe this order? Our Lord had laid down the rule with regard to one who offended directly against a brother. "And if thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his fault between thee and him alone: if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he hear thee not, take with thee one or two more, that at the mouth of two witnesses or three every word may be established. And if he refuse to hear them, tell it unto the Church: and if he refuse to hear the Church also, let him be unto thee as the Gentile and the publican." What we have here differs from that in being the case of one who by his conduct offended against the general order and reputation of the Church to which he belonged. In 1 Cor. v. there is the ordaining of discipline in a case of very great scandal in the Corinthian Church. "For I verily, being absent in body, but present in spirit, have already, as though I were present, judged him that hath so wrought this thing, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, . . . to deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." The disorderliness in the Thessalonian Church was not of the gravest nature. Nor was it disorderliness with the greatest amount of deliberation; but was rather the consequence of a false impression with regard to the coming. Nor was it the most confirmed disorderliness, being after clear enunciation of duty as shown in 1 Thess. iv. 11, 12, and, we may suppose, after warning as directed in 1 Thess. v. 14; but disorderliness to which discipline had not yet been applied. There is allowed, then, to the disorderly person the position of brother, and apparently the right to sit down at the Lord's table. But the right-minded members of the Thessalonian community are directed to withdraw from him. Let him, in the way of discipline, be shunned in private intercourse. Let him be made clearly to understand that no countenance is given to him in his disorderly course.

II. DUTY ENFORCED BY THE EXAMPLE OF THE PREACHERS. "For yourselves know how ye ought to imitate us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; 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." An appeal is made to what was within their own knowledge and observation. They were aware, without their requiring to be told, that there had been nothing disorderly in the behaviour of the preachers among them. They had practised what they had taught. They had been an example in all

particulars of the order of which they had been the medium of delivery. Special reference is made to their being an example of independence acquired by manual labour. It could not be said of them that they had eaten bread for nought at any man's hand. They had eaten bread in labour and travail, working night and day, to be raised above the point of being burdensome to any of them. Very similar language is used in the First Epistle. "For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: working night and day, that we might not burden any of you." The thought there is that, by their having adopted this course, they were placed above all suspicion of selfishness. They were only givers to the Thessalonians, as mothers to their infant children. We are here told what led to their supporting themselves by the labour of their own hands. It was the consideration of example. In the excitement into which the Thessalonian Church had been thrown by the announcement of the coming, there had been early observed a tendency to neglect the duties of their worldly calling, which could only result in their making themselves a burden. To counteract this tendency, they had thrown the influence of their example into the scale of industry. As they were not burdensome to the Thessalonians, let none of them be burdensome to any. *Reservation of right.* "Not because we have not the right, but to make ourselves an example unto you, that ye should imitate us." As preachers they had the right to be maintained by those to whom they ministered. In preaching they were as much labouring—giving out their strength, even the strength of their bodies—as when they were tent-making, or engaged in other manual labour. And, according to the principle which is brought in elsewhere, the labourer is worthy of his hire. In certain circumstances they felt free to accept of maintenance from those among whom they laboured, and thus to give their whole strength to spiritual work. Even at Thessalonica they felt free to accept of a gift from the Philippian Church. They did not feel free to accept of maintenance from the Thessalonian Church, simply because it was necessary, by their example, to encourage among them a spirit of independence in connection with diligence in performing the duties of their worldly calling.

III. DUTY ENFORCED BY THE PLAIN MANNER IN WHICH THE PREACHERS HAD TAUGHT. "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, if any will not work, neither let him eat." In the First Epistle it had been said, "And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your hands, even as we charged you." The Thessalonians are now referred back, beyond that point, to the time when the preachers were with them. In prescribing starvation as the remedy for the slinking of labour, Christianity has a certain aspect of severity. And yet, in this respect, Christianity is only sanctified common sense. There may be doubt in particular cases whether a man has the ability to work or the opportunity to work. But there can be no doubt of this, that if he has the ability to work and the opportunity and *will not* work, then he should be allowed to starve. That is to say, let the struggle go on in him between hunger and indolence. There is no call for our interposing in the name of Christian charity, which needs to be salted with salt, if it would not lose its flavour. We may expect that the struggle will end in hunger gaining the mastery over his indolence. And there will be an experience gained which may make him a profitable member of society for the time to come. It is well that the Christian rule is so plainly laid down. For there is a false spiritualism that looks askance at labour. It has even been attempted to throw a Christian halo around idleness in the order of the mendicant monks. But there is a sensible practical tone about Christianity which must commend it even to those who are not in sympathy with its central teaching. We do not need to engage in our worldly business with a grudge, as though all the time gained to the body were lost to the soul. We may feel free, with Paul and Silas and Timothy, in labour and travail, to work night and day, that we may not be burdensome to any. There is indeed danger, and very great danger, of our going over to the other side, and neglecting our spiritual duties, becoming worldly in our business. But that is to go beyond the intention of Christ. He means that, by attention to our spiritual duties, we should be fitted for our worldly duties. He means that we should be mindful of him, and loyal to his laws in our worldly duties. He means that, through the right performance of our worldly duties, our highest spirituality should be promoted. And blessed is he who can work out this problem aright in his life.

IV. OCCASION FOR LAYING DOWN THE DUTY. "For we hear of some that walk among

you disorderly, that work not at all, but are busybodies." There were some, the few among them, who did not observe the order given by the Lord. Specially, they did not observe the Lord's appointment of labour. They are described as working not at all. They were not idlers pure and simple, to begin with. They did not work, because they thought the coming was already commenced. They were really in a high state of tension. And, as their energies were not allowed scope at all within their proper work, they had to find scope in work beyond. This is brought out in the Greek as it cannot so well be brought out in the English translation. It is literally, and in a paradoxical way, "working nothing, but working beyond." They did not busy themselves with work that belonged to them; they even energetically busied themselves in a meddlesome way with work that did not belong to them.

V. THE DISORDERLY BRETHEREN ADDRESSED. "Now them that are such we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread." The Lord's authority and suasion is brought to bear on them as a class. It was not sufficient excuse for them that they took the Lord's coming to be imminent. Even though their impression had been well founded, they were not therefore justified in freeing themselves from the Divine ordinance. If we knew when definitely we were to die, it would still be our duty, our strength being continued to us, to work up to the very last moment. That would be in the way of preparing for our change. So they should rather have thought of being called away from their ordinary work by Christ at his coming. They would thereby have saved themselves from much sinful and disquieting speculation and intrusion into what did not concern them. When we work, and work with all the might of our nature, within our own proper sphere, we can have the accompaniment of quiet. We can have restlessness banished from our mind; and we can avoid the annoyance that comes from meddling with the affairs of others. When we work, too, with a diligent hand, we are put in a position of honourable independence. We do not need to be a burden upon others. We can eat our own bread, eat what we have earned by the sweat of our brow. To orderliness, then, in the form of attention to the duties of their worldly calling, with all the weight of the Lord's authority, with all the charm of the Lord's suasion, the preachers sought to bring back the few among the Thessalonians who had been disorderly.

VI. THE CHURCH ADDRESSED AS RIGHT-MINDED. "But ye, brethren, be not weary in well-doing." From the way in which the Church is addressed, it can be seen that the right-minded from their numbers were properly representative. From the context, "well-doing" is to be understood in its less restricted sense. Those were doing well, in honouring the Lord's appointment of labour. The position in which they were placed was trying. It was hard for them to work on amid all the excitement that prevailed, especially if they themselves had the impression that the coming was impending. What need was there for work, when a new order of things was being introduced? Was it not more commendable to lay down their tools and devoutly wait for the heavens being opened over them? By this unsettling influence some of their number had been carried away. And the position of matters was aggravated by the support of these unprofitable members being thrown upon the Church. All the more honour, then, to them, the right-minded, that, amid temptation, they held to the old order, that they thought it the right thing to labour on diligently, till they actually heard their Lord's voice on earth commanding them to cease from labour. Let them not weary in following an upright course. When an upright man sees his unscrupulous neighbours taking many an advantage which in his conscience he is not free to take, he is tempted to ask what advantage there is in uprightness. But, though the disadvantages were a hundred times greater than they really are, it would still be our duty to follow the Divine leadings. Let us not weary in the path that leads to God and life. There is nothing that is in the end wearying and wearing out but a mind that is conscious of wrong-doing.

VII. FURTHER SPECIFICATION OF THE COURSE TO BE FOLLOWED WITH THE DISORDERLY BROTHER. "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." The right-minded being numerous could act in the name of the Church. The disorderly brother could be called before them, or before a court representative of the Lord's authority in the Church. In some way his attention was to be specially directed to the part of the

letter which pertained to him. And obedience was to be demanded of him to what was laid down in the letter. The ground was taken from under the position he occupied by the announcement that the coming was to be preceded by an apostasy and the revelation of the man of sin. That put the coming into the distance, and gave an aspect of stability to the old order of things, including the six days' labour of the fourth commandment. But it was not easy to get rid of all the false excitement at once. And the habit of idleness had to be overcome, so far as it had been formed. Against these hindrances the authority of the teachers was to be brought to bear. If after trial he persisted in neglecting to work, then the course to be followed was to note that man, and have no company with him. He was to be dealt with even as others who are mentioned in 1 Cor. v.: "But now I write unto you not to keep company if any man that is named a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one, no, not to eat." The idler among them was to be a marked man, even as the greater offender; the whole sentiment of the Church was to be brought to bear against his idleness. They were not to have free intercourse or companionship with him. They were not to admit him into their privacy. They were not to invite him to their houses, to contribute to his support, or in any way to show him countenance in his disorderly course. They were to do this with a disciplinary end in view, viz. to shame him out of his idleness. It was a shame for a man, being able-bodied, to be idle and to throw himself as a burden upon others. It was especially a shame in a Christian, who was surely not to be behind his heathen neighbour in the ordinary duties of life. By producing in him a feeling of shame his amendment would be secured. *Caution to be observed.* "And yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." They were not to take the extreme step of cutting him off altogether from Church fellowship. He was not hopelessly removed from good. There was nothing decisive against the reality of his Christianity. They were therefore, while withdrawing from him, to acknowledge him as a brother, giving him to feel that, on returning to orderliness, they would welcome him back to freedom of Christian intercourse. *There is a rule laid down here for our guidance in Christian intercourse.* We are only to have free intercourse with those who are at one with us in the great essentials of the Christian faith and life. We are not to be on easy terms with those of whose sentiments, or of whose mode of life, we cannot approve. That would be to tolerate their sentiments, to tolerate their conduct, and thus to compromise our position and open up the way for our own deterioration. It would also be to encourage them in their position and prevent their amendment. Our duty is to withdraw from them, so far as it is necessary to conserve our own position, and so far as it is necessary to convince them that we do not countenance them in their position. But we are not to go to the extreme of bearing ourselves toward them as though they did not belong to the Christian circle. We are not to treat them as enemies. But we are to perform toward them the brotherly duty of trying to remove sin from them, so as to open up the way for the restoration of all suitable Christian intercourse. It is to be feared that many Christians are not sufficiently careful as to those with whom they freely associate. They look to position, to convenience, to companionableness, to sympathy in smaller matters, and not so much as they should do to the great ends of intercourse. There are even those belonging to the Christian circle against whose ideas and conduct it is necessary for us to protest. When they are habitually worldly, or unsettling, or uncharitable, or unbrotherly in conversation, or given to intemperance, even as we love the order which Christ approves, and as we would not be partakers with them in their sins, we must withdraw from them, while not, in moral cowardice, shirking the duty of speaking out what we think and admonishing them for their good.—R. F.

Vers. 16—18.—*Concluding words.* I. SALUTATION. 1. *Invocation of peace.* (1) *From whom peace is invoked.* "Now the Lord of peace himself." We are to rise above what we can do for others to the Lord of peace himself. He has purchased peace for us by his death. "He is our Peace;" "The chastisement of our peace was upon him." He is, therefore, the sovereign Dispenser of the blessing of peace in the Church. Peace was the legacy he left to his believing people in the world. "Peace I leave with you; *my* peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.

Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." When, after his resurrection, he appeared to his disciples, he bailed them with the salutation of peace. "As they thus spake," we are told, "Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you;" and yet again, on the same occasion, he said, "Peace be unto you." We wish, then, for all in whom we are interested, that our ascended Lord would bestow peace upon them, even as he bestowed peace upon the disciples before he ascended. (2) *The peace invoked.* "Give you peace." "Peace be with you," is a sentiment which we should have in our hearts, and often on our lips, especially in parting with our friends, as Paul here in his letter parts with the Thessalonians. They leave us for a time, but not without our sincere wishes for their peace. Now, what is the peace that we wish especially for those that we are interested in? *To be clear with God.* There is no greater evil than to be in a state of unreconciledness to God. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." They have sometimes a peace, a want of such dispeace as might be expected, but only by blinking the facts of their case. They do not thus get quit of their sins, any more than men can get out of debt by pertinaciously refusing to look into their accounts. Their state remains unaltered. Their sins will find them out, it may be in this life. Certainly, when earthly things cannot longer preoccupy them, and in the presence of eternal realities they are thrown back upon themselves, then will conscience fill them with dispeace. For persons who are insensible to their actual condition as sinners we can only wish dispeace. "Let sinners in Zion be afraid, let fearfulness surprise the hypocrites." What we wish for our friends is a *peace that corresponds to facts.* We wish them to be in a state of reconciliation, and to be conscious of that. We wish them to be so that they can inquire most narrowly into their state, and honestly come to the conclusion that they have an interest in Christ, while repeated self-examination can only result in the discovery of something more in their character that needs to be removed. *To have a feeling of repose in God.* We are such beings that our peace is only to be found in dependence, in leaning. We are apt to seek a resting-place in the creature; but, alas, all that is beneath the highest fails us, and we are driven from one resting-place to another, like the dove that could find no rest on the unstable waters. "Return unto thy rest, O my soul." True peace is only to be found in him from whom our being has come and to whom it tends, in leaning our weakness on his strength, our ignorance on his wisdom, our sinfulness on his grace. This is a rest out of which we cannot be driven, which makes us independent of the creature, which cures our restlessness of spirit. And as this is what we so much wish for ourselves, so we wish it for our friends. *To have a feeling of satisfaction in being employed as God wants them to be employed.* It is essential to our peace that our faculties should be truly and healthily employed. "Great peace have they who love thy Law." And what we wish for our friends is that, in some worthy way, they should work out the plan of their life given them by God. *To have peace from without.* It is said that, when a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him. And that is often strikingly fulfilled. But it is not what every one can enjoy. Even Christ had his enemies, who gave no cause of offence to any. And we cannot calculate on escaping, who fail so much in our social duties. But still we wish this outward peace for our friends so far as it may please God. Let them be delivered from unreasonable and evil men. "Let no root of bitterness springing up trouble them." May causes of annoyance, elements of discord, be removed from families and from Churches! (3) *Time for which peace is invoked.* "At all times." That would not be a good wish which was limited to a certain time, and was not made to extend over a longer period. If we wish peace at all, we will not wish it merely for a day, or for a month, or for a year, but for all time. Let them not by carelessness lose their evidences. Let not the coming years bring discord into their hearts or into their circle. The Lord give them peace in the season of affliction. The Lord especially give them peace in their dying hour. The Lord give them peace when they enter upon a new and solemn scene. May peace abide with them for ever. (4) *Ways in which peace is invoked.* "In all ways." The Lord of peace knows best how to see to the peace of our friends; with him, therefore, the ways may be left. The Lord use us, if we are his way of promoting their peace. The Lord work even against them in his providence, if that is necessary to their being ejected from their false confidences. The Lord especially increase their faith, that their

peace may flow as a river, broadening and deepening, until it loses itself in the ocean of eternity. 2. *Invocation of the Lord's presence.* "The Lord be with you all." This is a brief but comprehensive form of salutation. The Lord be with our friends, wherever their lot is cast. The Lord go with them where they go, and dwell with them where they dwell. The Lord be with them in their going out and in their coming in. The Lord be with them in their basket and in their store. The Lord especially be with them in the great work of their life.

II. REMARK REGARDING THE HANDWRITING OF THE SALUTATION. "The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every Epistle: so I write." Paul, here dissociating himself from Silas and Timothy as joint-writers, singles out himself by name. It is he who has given turn and form to the thought throughout. It is he who pre-eminently had the care of the Gentile Churches. At the close of 1 Corinthians, and also at the close of Colossians, there is the same language as here. "The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand." In those places there is no salutation preceding; we require, therefore, mentally to supply a salutation. Here, where there is a salutation preceding, we are supplied with what the salutation is. We are to think of the weak-eyed Paul as seated in his room in the city of Corinth, and dictating the letter to the amanuensis beside him. While he had anything on his mind to say to these Thessalonians in the way of commendation, or direction, or advice, the amanuensis continued to write. But, having fully unburdened his mind, he took the roll of parchment into his own hand, and, in his own handwriting, put down these words: "Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in all ways. The Lord be with you all." Still continuing to write, he adds the explanatory note: "The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand." In his explanation he includes his reason for giving his own handwriting: "Which is the token in every Epistle: so I write" (i.e. in these characters). A forged epistle in his name had been circulated in Thessalonica; to prevent such imposition in future, he gives them, in the few words in his own handwriting, a token or seal by which to assure themselves of the genuineness of his letters. Let them accept of no letter which did not carry with it the evidence of its genuineness.

III. BENEDICTION. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." This is the short form which is found in the First Epistle, with the thoughtful addition of "all." There were some persons in the Thessalonian Church who had come under his censure. As in the sixteenth verse he has included them in his salutation ("with you all"), so now he includes them in his benediction. He leaves the Thessalonians for the time, with no grudge in his heart against any, but with the catholic desire that they should all be dealt with, not according to their own demerit, but according to the merit of their Saviour, of which he is sovereign Imputer.—R. F.

Ver. 1.—*Prayer for missions.* Money is not the sinew of the spiritual wars of the Church. The necessary appeals for money so urgently pressed by the friends of missions should not blind our eyes to the higher needs of those great enterprises. All the wealth of the Stock Exchange could not convert one soul. As it was in Israel's great battle with Amalek, when Joshua could only prevail in the field so long as Moses prayed on the mountain, the missionary is successful in proportion as the Church is prayerful. In order that this assertion may not fall powerless as an empty, dogmatic platitude, inquire how it may be substantiated by a consideration of the chief elements of true success in the mission field.

I. THE SPIRITUAL CHARACTER OF THE LABOUR OF THE MISSIONARIES. Money cannot make missionaries. It may send men abroad, feed, clothe, and house them, but it cannot put an apostolic spirit in them, nor cheer and strengthen that spirit when it flags; and yet without such a spirit no missionary work can be looked for. Careys do not come with good balance-sheets, nor are Moffats evolved out of glowing financial reports. The great want of the missionary societies is men, not money. 1. *Prayer is necessary that the right men may be forthcoming.* God only can find the men, and the most gifted men will fail except they go in pursuit of a Divine vocation. St. Paul was appointed "not from men, nor through man" (Gal. i. 1); he was sent on his specific mission through indications of the Holy Spirit in response to the prayers of the Church at Antioch (Acts xiii. 2). 2. *Prayer is necessary that missionaries may be*

sustained. There is much to damp the ardour and depress the spirit of the missionary amid all the degraded scenes of his work. St. Paul had been praying for his friends at Thessalonica; in return he sought their prayers for his work. He so identified himself with his mission as to regard prayer for the mission as prayer for himself.

II. THE EXTERNAL PROGRESS OF THE TRUTH. St. Paul asks for prayer "that the Word of the Lord may run." Nothing is more striking than the fact that the rate of progress of Christian missions is not at all proportionate to the perfection of the mechanism with which they are organized. The years of biggest subscriptions are not always the years of most numerous conversions. 1. *Prayer is necessary that God may remove obstructions to the progress of Christianity.* Governments may hinder missions. Countries are sometimes closed against missionaries. Then we must pray that God would open a way. What doors has he opened in our day! The Word is now free to run through the vast populations of China. "The great dark continent" is opening up to the light. This is not done by money. "It is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." 2. *Prayer is necessary that God may dispose the minds of men to receive the truth.* In a neighbouring Macedonian Church lived the first European resident converted by St. Paul, and of her it is said, "whose heart the Lord opened, to give heed unto the things which were spoken by Paul" (Acts xvi. 14). Therefore we must pray that God's Spirit may go with the Word, to prepare the soil to receive it and to quicken it when it is sown.

III. THE INTERNAL FRUITFULNESS OF THE GOSPEL. The apostle is not satisfied with desiring that the Word of the Lord may "run;" he wishes also that it may be "glorified." This further wish strikes a high note. It reminds us that missionary success cannot be measured by the numbers of the converts. The great question is—what is the character of them? Statistical reports are delusive. The missionary who can make no sensational return of long lists of converts may be doing the most real, solid, lasting work in laying the foundation of true Christian character in a few. There are nominal Christians in heathen lands who are a dishonour to the name they bear, as there are also at home. Prayer is necessary that a right character may be cultivated in mission Churches. Christ was glorified when the man who had been a fierce demoniac sat clothed and in his right mind at the feet of his Deliverer. The Christian who has been a savage is the finest witness of the power of the gospel. But it is very difficult to irradicate the vices of heathenism, as missionaries know to their sorrow. Let us pray for this most hard but most needful work.—W. F. A.

Ver. 3.—*Security.* It is interesting to notice how much anxiety St. Paul spends on the normal and permanent character of his Christian converts. He is not satisfied with having won their first confession of faith, nor is he content that now and again they should flash out with some brilliant display of spiritual energy. His chief concern is with their life throughout, his chief desire for the strength and persistence of its higher character. It is important for all of us to bear in mind that salvation is not an isolated act, that it is a chronic condition. We are always in danger of falling unless we are kept in a continuous Divine security.

I. THE TWO ELEMENTS OF SECURITY. 1. *Internal stability.* We are in danger of falling through our own weakness. Badly built houses do not wait for an earthquake to throw them down; they crumble to pieces. (1) The first requisite for security is a *good foundation.* Christians should see to it that they are building on Christ, and not on their own doings and habits. (2) The next requisite is *compact, solid building.* The building of wood, hay, and stubble is fragile, though it may be erected on a foundation of rock. We want firm principles, sound habits, decided convictions. 2. *External protection.* (1) We are in danger from the *evil one.* In estimating our measure of security we have to take into account the character of our environment. The ship may be well built and yet it may not be able to withstand the pressure of ice-floes. The strongest house may give way before an avalanche. The Christian is beset by temptations. It is not enough that he is firm in his personal will to do right; he needs protection from external inducements to go astray. (2) To be secure against this danger we need to be *guarded.* We can never be strong enough to withstand the whole force of an attack of Satan. Some providential warding off of the fiercest blows seems to be necessary.

II. THE GREAT GROUND OF SECURITY. St. Paul does not wish, or hope, or pray for the security of his friends. He knows and is confident that they have a good ground of security. Our fears are due to our unbelief. Faith has her feet on an immovable rock. 1. The ground of our security is *Christ*. (1) He *strengthens* us with internal stability. The indwelling Christ is the source and secret of Christian vigour. Weak, wavering Christians have too little of Christ in their lives. (2) He guards us against external assaults. Christ has faced and met and defeated the tempter. He interposes the presence of his Holy Spirit between the evil spirit and our hearts. 2. The reason for trusting in Christ for security is his *faithfulness*. It should be sufficient for us to have confidence in his goodness. He is so gracious, so kind, so generous to help, that we may be sure that he will aid his people in their greatest dangers. But we have more than this assurance. He has promised help (Matt. xxviii. 20); he is appointed by God as our Saviour, and therefore, in fulfilment of his great mission, fidelity leads him to see to the security of his people.—W. F. A.

Ver. 5.—*The patience of Christ*. The Christian life has two aspects, a heavenward and an earthward aspect. In its heavenly relations it should be filled with love to God; in its earthly relations—especially when under such trials as befell the early Christians—it needs to be fortified to endure with patience. The latter grace claims particular attention.

I. GREAT PATIENCE IS REQUISITE FOR THE ENDURANCE OF EARTHLY LIFE. Very great differences in successive ages and in various individual lots make the amounts of patience necessary for each man to be very unequal. It would be foolish for one in our own day, to whom the lines have fallen in pleasant places, to pose with the solemn, martyr-like demeanour which was natural to Christians in the days of persecution. They needed patience to face cruel calamities which we happily are spared. Nevertheless, "man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward;" the quietest public times see the bitterest private sorrows in some households; great, awful spiritual troubles come upon men whose external circumstances are placid and sunny; and even where no one heavy blow falls, innumerable small vexing cares, like the Egyptian plague of flies, fret and wear the soul. Therefore patience is still greatly needed. It is one thing to suffer trouble and quite another thing to bear it, not to be crushed by it, not to rebel against the Power that sends it, even in secret thought, but to stand up under it, with dumb, uncomplaining endurance, like those sad, calm Caryatides that have stood for centuries bearing on their patient heads ponderous temple structures.

II. THE PATIENCE OF CHRIST IS THE MODEL AND THE INSPIRATION FOR THE PATIENCE OF CHRISTIANS. This wonderful patience of Christ may be best appreciated when we come to meditate on its relation to his circumstances and experience. 1. *His previous glory*. They who have once known better days feel the smart of adversity most keenly. From heaven's throne to the cross—what a descent! 2. *His extreme sufferings*. Was ever there sorrow like his? Gross insult was added to cruel torture; and insult tries patience worse than pain. 3. *His sensitive nature*. There are men who seem to feel a needle-prick more acutely than others feel a sword-thrust. Our Lord was one who felt most acutely, with the painfully delicate perception of the most refined nature. 4. *His powers of resistance*. He might have summoned legends of angels to his assistance. 5. *The marvellous spirit with which he endured all*. "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter." He not only prayed for his murderers, but he calmly weighed their guilt and defended them on account of their ignorance. This wonderful patience of our Lord is a model for us; it is also an inspiration. As we turn from the petty complaints of men to the sight of that awful, Divine patience, surely our murmurings must be shamed and silenced.

III. IT IS REQUISITE THAT GOD SHOULD DIRECT OUR HEARTS INTO THE PATIENCE OF CHRIST. 1. The patience must *penetrate to our hearts*. Patience of language and of constrained demeanour is superficial and will not satisfy God, nor can it remain long without the deeper patience of the heart. 2. Our hearts cannot receive this patience till they are *directed aright by God*. It depends on our disposition, which we must have moulded by the hand of God into a firm faith and a calm endurance. 3. This patience *follows love to God*. Our hearts are to be first directed into love. When we love as Christ loved we can endure as he endured.—W. F. A.

Ver. 10.—Pauperizing charity. There appear to have been idle, talkative persons in the Thessalonian Church who neglected their trades while they made themselves very prominent in the Christian assemblies, expecting to be supported out of the common funds. St. Paul justly rebukes their disgraceful conduct. He points to his own example. Even he, an apostle, devoted to the work of the Churches, did not draw from the funds of the Churches, but supported himself by his own labour. The wholesome direction which he gives has a certain grim humour about it. Here is his remedy for the tiresome, loquacious idlers: starve them into industry. That process will bring them to their senses. It would have been well if the same wise, manly counsel had always prevailed in the Church. A weak and foolish administration of Christian charity has too often fostered the poverty it aimed at curing. Some of the reasons which make it positively wrong for the charitable to support the idle should be well weighed by those persons who are more kind-hearted than reflective.

I. IT INJURES THE RECIPIENT. Thus paupers are bred and multiplied. 1. *The sin of idleness is encouraged*; for idleness is a sin. Those who encourage it will have to bear part of the guilt of it. 2. *The indolent are tempted to many vices.* The idle members of the Church gave to the Thessalonians the greatest trouble. Work is a moral antiseptic. 3. *Independence is destroyed.* The able-bodied pauper is quite unmanned by the loss of his independence. There was some sense in those stern old Elizabethan laws against sturdy beggars and vagrants.

II. IT INJURES THE GIVER. 1. Where public funds are thus misappropriated, *an injustice is done to those who contribute to them.* We do not pay poor rates in order to encourage idleness, nor do we give communion offerings for that unworthy object. District visitors who have the administration of moneys subscribed by other people should remember this, and not permit soft-heartedness to oust justice. 2. Where only private benevolence is concerned, *the heart is hardened in the end by the sight of the abuse of charity.*

III. IT INJURES THE TRULY NEEDY. We take the children's bread and give it to dogs, and the children starve. The idlers are the most clamorous for assistance, while the deserving are the most backward to make their wants known. Suffering in silence, they are often neglected, because greedy, worthless persons step in first and ravage the small heritage of the poor.

IV. IT INJURES THE COMMUNITY. 1. *It discourages industry generally.* Not only are the idle encouraged in their discreditable way of living, but a tax is put upon industry, and men do not feel so strongly inclined to work honestly for their daily bread. 2. *It propagates the worst class of society.* The idle part of the population of great cities are the canker of civilization. There vice and crime breed most freely. It is the law of England that no man need starve. But it is right and necessary that when the state gives bread it should compel labour—*i.e.*, of course, if there is health for work. Idleness is the curse of the East; Syrian felahin will sit to reap their corn. Wise Christians will ever protest against this fatal vice, and all who administer Church funds should feel a heavy responsibility resting upon them to guard against increasing it by well-meant but foolish doles of charity.—W. F. A.

Ver. 14.—Church discipline. There are several references to Church discipline in the writings of St. Paul, showing that he was desirous to see order and a healthy character of Church life maintained among his readers. In an earlier verse of the present chapter (ver. 6) he advises the Thessalonians to withdraw themselves "from every brother that walketh disorderly;" now he bids them not keep company with those who refuse to obey his apostolic message.

I. IDLENESS IS AN OFFENCE HEAVY ENOUGH TO MERIT CHURCH DISCIPLINE. The preceding verses show that St. Paul has in mind those idle busybodies who walked disorderly (ver. 11, etc.). We visit dishonesty, intemperance, etc., with censure. The apostle goes further, and selects idleness for special notice by the Church. So great does he feel the evil of it to be.

II. NEGLECT OF APOSTOLIC INJUNCTIONS IS THE IMMEDIATE OCCASION FOR THE EXERCISE OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE. The idle are first to be admonished (ver. 12). When admonition fails, further measures must be taken. The apostles had no ambition to be lords over Christ's heritage; though their commanding influence naturally gave great

weight to their directions, similar to that which comes unsought to the European missionary among converts from heathen savagery. Nevertheless, it was not this adventitious authority that St. Paul relied upon. He wrote under inspiration. His message was prompted by the Divine Spirit. When we refuse to hearken to the admonitions of the New Testament we are resisting the Holy Spirit of God.

III. CHURCH DISCIPLINE IS TO BE EXERCISED BY MEANS OF QUIET SEPARATION. There is no word here of physical force. It was impossible for a Christian community living in a pagan city to call in the aid of the civil power to execute its decrees; but there is every reason to believe that, had the possibility of anything of the kind been contemplated in the mind of St. Paul, he would have repudiated it—holding as he did that his weapons were not carnal. Further, there is no reference to spiritual excommunication, no cursing with bell and book. Simple separation is all that is advised. This is a peaceful, gentle, but effective mode of censure. It would, of course, directly stop the evil practice of idlers living on the Church funds. And it would administer a rebuke that would be all the more eloquent that it was silent. It is always our duty to see that our Church fellowship is kept pure. We should have the courage to separate from those who disgrace the Christian name. We should be careful for our own sakes that the society we select to move in is healthy and elevated in moral tone. For the sake of others we should discourage unworthy conduct by refusing to associate with those who are guilty of it. Some who are not brave enough to do this are guilty of great meanness in talking against offenders behind their backs, while treating them in the most friendly way when in their presence.

IV. THE OBJECT OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE IS TO RECOVER THE OFFENDER. The most stern penalties are to be inflicted with a merciful end. Here the mild punishment of quiet separation is to aim at restoring the wrong-doer. First he is to be shamed, as he will be if there be any right spirit in him. Men should feel ashamed of idleness. Then and throughout he is to be regarded, not as an enemy, but only as an erring brother. Thus tender and sympathetic should Christians be with one another in regard to their failings, remembering that it is only through the forgiving grace of Christ that any of us enjoy the privileges of Christianity. There is no room for a Pharisee in the Church, and we must beware lest the exercise of Church discipline develop his ugly spirit.—W. F. A.

Ver. 16.—*Peace from the God of peace.* After giving directions about the small trouble that disturbed the Thessalonian Christians—small indeed when compared with the bitter factiousness and the graver sin that subsequently disturbed the Church at Corinth—St. Paul prays that peace may reign among them and that the Lord may be with all of them, with the erring in their restoration as well as with the faithful brethren. The peace which he desiderates so earnestly is clearly more than mutual concord; it is that deep peace of God in the heart which is at the root of peace among men, and is itself the greatest of blessings.

I. PERFECT CHRISTIAN PEACE IS UNIVERSAL. What most strikes us in regard to the peace here referred to is the universality of its scope and area. 1. *Perfect Christian peace is continuous and unbroken.* It is to be enjoyed "at all times." In closing the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, St. Paul wished his readers to "rejoice alway" (1 Thess. v. 17). Now he prays that they may have continuous peace. If we cannot have the joy of the angels we may have the peace of God, which is better. As there are some who have happiness without peace, so there are others who have peace without happiness. There is a transient superficial calm which the world calls peace; but volcanoes slumber beneath, and in a moment it may be shattered as with an earthquake. There is no peace in the wicked. There is an eternal peace for the people of God. 2. *Perfect Christian peace comes through various means.* St. Paul adds the curious phrase, "in all ways." It is not only that peace may be enjoyed continuously in spite of changing and adverse circumstances, but those very circumstances, even the most unfriendly of them, are to minister to the peace. This may appear paradoxical, but in experience we find that the troubles and distractions which would upset all peace if we only had the surface peace of earth drive us nearer to God, and so help us to realize more perfectly the eternal peace of heaven.

II. PERFECT CHRISTIAN PEACE FLOWS FROM CHRIST. It is not to be got by any

efforts of our own wills. We cannot pacify ourselves any more than the sea can calm the raging of its own wild waves. He who said, "Peace, be still!" to the storm on the lake is the only One who can quell the tempests that surge in human hearts. Christ infuses his own peace because he is the Lord of peace. 1. *He is at peace in his own soul.* Peace is contagious. The peaceful gives peace. We may often see how much one quiet, self-possessed man can do to allay the panic of a whole crowd. "My peace I give unto you," said Jesus (John xiv. 27). 2. *He reigns in peace.* Christ does not provoke enmity and warfare except against evil. Among his own people he reigns pacifically. 3. *He directly bestows peace.* St. Paul's wish is a prayer. We pray that Christ may breathe his peace into us by a direct inspiration. This richest, deepest, purest blessing is for those who dwell near to their Lord and drink of his Spirit.

—W. F. A.

HOMILETICAL INDEX

TO

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF

ST. PAUL TO THE THESSALONIANS



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