THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

The Missionary Message of the New Testament

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By the Same Author

THE WHY OF OUR FAITH
THE CALL OF THE CHURCH

The Missionary Message of the New Testament

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

BY

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FOREWORD

THE Epistle to the Romans is essentially a missionary book. It was intended to be an exposition of the central ideas in the Gospel as Paul himself understood them, and the universal outlook of the Christian message is constantly emphasised. "There is no distinction of Jew and Greek," says Paul. "The same Lord is Lord of them all, with ample for all who invoke Him." The Gospel is worldwide, and it is worldwide because it deals with fundamental human needs.

This Gospel is gathered round two main ideas, Sin and Salvation, and to these ideas the main part of this book has been devoted. It seemed best to adopt this method of treatment in preference to going through the Epistle chapter by chapter. An attempt is made to show what Sin and Salvation involved for Paul, and it is argued that these are still fundamental to any Gospel that the Church of Christ must take to the world.

The New Testament quotations are taken from Dr. Moffatt's Translation.

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CHAPTER I

THE EPISTLE—ITS GREATNESS AND ITS ORIGIN

Of all Paul's epistles, that addressed to the Romans is undoubtedly the greatest. It is the most systematic in form, and the weightiest in substance. As we shall see in a moment, it was written for a definite situation. But, as Paul wrote it, he deliberately set his message against the background of eternity; he rose far above the merely timely and casual, and he made his Epistle an exposition of fundamental principles. He stated his Gospel in universal terms, and the result has been that the Epistle to the Romans has made a deep impression on each succeeding age.

No book in the world has been more carefully and diligently studied. Every chapter, nay, every verse, has been eagerly and patiently examined; on single phrases whole volumes have been written, and more than one system of thought has claimed to found itself on this book. No epistle has led to fiercer controversy, and yet, on the other hand, no epistle is more intimately connected with the great revivals in the Church. The more we read it, the more we are amazed by the intellectual force and spiritual power it displays. Coleridge calls it "the most profound work in existence," and his opinion, strong as it

is, would find many supporters. "At every word," says Godet, "we feel ourselves face to face with the unfathomable." Always the impression we get from this Epistle is that of inexhaustible resources. However much we explore its contents and make them our own, we feel that we are still only on the fringes of a great continent, and those who know the Epistle best are the first to acclaim the colossal genius of its writer.

The greatest and wisest thinkers in the history of the Church have given the whole strength of their minds to the study of this Epistle. They have gone behind its language to the tremendous problems it suggests, and in whole libraries of theology they have given us their conclusions. Almost every great question in philosophy and religion has been discussed in connection with it, and, as a result, most people think of this Epistle as in a special way a happy hunting ground of theologians, from which the ordinary man is of necessity barred. It abounds in "knotty points," and these, not only "ignorant and unsteady souls," but devout and earnest-minded men and women as well, may easily "twist to their own destruction" (2 Pet. iii. 16).

But even while we remember the difficulties—and it is idle to disguise the fact that they are both real and formidable—we can always say this for our consolation, that Paul wrote his message in the first place for average people rather than for

theologians, and we may be sure that he did his best to make himself intelligible. He doubtless saw a great deal further into the things of God than most of us do, and there are many aspects of his vision that we, with our more limited gifts, may not be able to appreciate as fully as he himself did. But at least we can take our stand by his side, and we can look in the same direction; we can see the general lie of the land even if we miss the details; and, as we try to follow his gaze, we can exclaim with an even greater degree of "raptured awe": "What a fathomless wealth lies in the wisdom and knowledge of God! How inscrutable His judgments! How mysterious His methods!" (xi. 33).

It was the winter of A.D. 57-58. Paul was then completing his third missionary journey. He had spent nearly three years at Ephesus, had visited Macedonia and Achaia, and now he had settled at Corinth, where he remained for three months (Acts xxi. 1-3). It was during that time that the Epistle was written.

"At the moment," he said, "I am off to Jerusalem on an errand to the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have decided to make a contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem" (xv. 27). He was glad they had come to this decision, for it was a recognition on their part of the debt they owed to the Jerusalem Christians. "If the Gentiles have shared their spiritual bless-

ings," he says, "they owe them a debt of aid in material blessings." Paul hoped much from this Gentile contribution, and he wanted it to be a means of bridging the gulf that at present existed between the Jewish and Gentile sections of the Church. If only the Jerusalem Christians would appreciate the spirit in which it was given, the misunderstandings and troubles of the past would be at an end, and Paul himself would feel free to embark on another stage in his missionary career.

For some time now his thoughts had been travelling westward, and he intended his visit to Jerusalem to mark the close of his labours in the east. "Once I finish this business," he says, "by putting the proceeds of the collection safely in their hands, I will start for Spain and take you on the way" (xv. 29). He had a feeling that his visit to Jerusalem would involve him in trouble. "I know this," he told the Ephesian elders, "that in town after town the Holy Spirit testifies to me that bonds and troubles are awaiting me" (Acts xx. 23). But he was sure that these "bonds and troubles" would not hinder him from fulfilling his course, and that, he was sure, was destined to lie in the west.

Already he had planted the flag of Christ in the eastern Mediterranean. "From Jerusalem right round to Illyricum," he says, "I have been able to complete the preaching of the Gospel of

Christ"(xv. 19). Not that the work of evangelisation was finished. Paul was quite aware that even in the east much still remained to be done. The churches he had founded were few and weak, and they had many problems to face. There was opposition without, and often dissension within. But at least the work had been started, and it was steadily growing. The strategic points had been occupied, and, as time went on, the surrounding country could be gradually conquered. Paul had opened the way, and others were following his footsteps. The eastern Mediterranean was being evangelised in many directions, and now the time had come to turn to the west. And for him the west meant Rome.

Rome had long been in his mind. "I must also visit Rome," he kept saying to himself (Acts xix. 21), for Rome had cast a spell upon his heart from which he could not escape.

In his travels up and down the eastern Mediterranean he had seen much of its work, and what he saw very greatly impressed him. Rome, he realised, was the mistress of the world, the power that tamed the nations and ruled them with an even hand. She achieved the work that King Arthur aspired to. She

> drave
> The heathen; after, slew the beast, and felled
> The forest, letting in the sun, and made
> Broad pathways for the hunter and the knight.

The Pax Romana was a real thing. From Britain to the Sahara, and from the Euphrates to Gibraltar, Rome was the queen of the nations. On every road were her legions, and in every city her magistrates with their rods and axes, symbols to all that saw them of a justice that was strictly enforced and on the whole honestly administered. Rome stood in the eyes of men for security, peace, and ordered government. She was the author and preserver of civilisation. Her iron fence held back the hordes of the German forests and the eastern deserts, and, so long as her power remained undiminished, the world was free to enjoy its happiness and prosperity. The world owed everything to Rome, and Paul, like most thinking people, was perfectly aware of it.

Personally, Paul felt that he owed a tremendous debt to Rome. Thanks to the magnificent system of roads, he had been able to travel swiftly and comfortably from place to place on the errands of the Kingdom, and, in times of danger, Rome, through her officials, had often intervened to save him. They had rescued him from the mobs that attacked him (Acts xix. 35; xxi. 32), and they had refused to prevent him preaching the Gospel (Acts xviii. 13-16). They might not themselves feel any particular interest in the doctrines he proclaimed, and they might even suggest that much learning had made him mad. But they were determined to see that civil order was maintained, and they

did their utmost to restrain the forces of evil that Paul's preaching often aroused.

Paul did not disguise his admiration for Rome. He was proud of his citizenship (Acts xxii. 28), and he encouraged his converts to think well of the Empire. "The existing authorities," he says in this Epistle, "have been constituted by God." "The magistrate is God's servant for your benefit": "magistrates are God's officers bent upon the maintenance of order and authority. Pay them all their respective dues, tribute to one, taxes to another; respect to this man, honour to that" (xiii. 1-7).

As Paul thought of Rome, his heart went out in yearning toward it. He coveted Rome for the Gospel. If only he might preach the Gospel in Rome, if only he might win the imperial power for the Kingdom and persuade it to use its tremendous resources for the service of Jesus Christ —Paul felt that then he could finish his course with joy and the work of his life would receive its consummation.

Paul was first and foremost a missionary. His one passion in life was to be a "priest of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the service of God's Gospel" (xv. 16), "my ambition always being," he says, "to preach it only in places where there had been no mention of Christ's name, that I might not build on foundations laid by others" (xv, 20). Like all true missionaries, he was con-

stantly dreaming dreams for Jesus Christ. It was, indeed, his dreams that kept him going, and always at the heart of them was the picture of Rome, Rome converted, Christianised, subdued for Jesus Christ, Rome with the Cross instead of the sword in her hand, going forth to the north and to the south and to the east and to the west, to win the nations of the world for the service of the Kingdom. What a vision it was, and how worthy of the man who was the greatest missionary of Christ the world has ever seen! His ambition as a missionary knew no bounds. If, like Carey, he did not have an actual map of the world before him as he sat and dreamed, the map, nevertheless, was there, engraved on his heart. Always his mind flew westward—to Rome, and even beyond it, to Spain and the "shores of the utmost west."

As he sat in the house of his friend Gaius, whom for all time he has immortalised as "my host and the host of the Church at large" (xvi. 23), there came to him the news that Phœbe, "a deaconess of the church" in the neighbouring town of Cenchreæ, was setting out for Rome (xvi. 1), and it seemed to him that this was a chance he must not neglect. He would write to the brethren at Rome and acquaint them with all the dreams and yearnings that were surging through his heart, and perhaps, as a result, he would gain their sympathy. Without their help,

his dreams of evangelising the west could never be realised. Therefore, calling Tertius (xvi. 22), he bade him take his materials and write at his dictation, and the result was the Epistle to the Romans.

CHAPTER II

THE PURPOSE OF THE EPISTLE

PAUL, we have seen, had it in mind to visit Rome in preparation for a campaign in the western Mediterranean, but he knew he could never carry it out by himself. He needed an influential Church to stand behind him. In his eastern work he had always had the support and sympathy of the church at Antioch, and he was hoping that the church at Rome would agree to back his efforts in the west.

Naturally he had heard a great deal about the work the church at Rome had accomplished. "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all," he says, "because the report of your faith is over all the world" (i. 8). "I do yearn to see you," he continues, "that I may impart to you some spiritual gift for your strengthening—or, in other words," as he tactfully puts it, "that I may be encouraged by meeting you, I by your faith and you by mine" (i. 11). But he did not hide from them that his main concern was the spreading of the Gospel. "To Greeks and to barbarians, to wise and to foolish alike, I owe a duty," he says. "Hence my eagerness to preach the Gospel to you in Rome as well" (i. 14-15); yes, and beyond Rome to the world at large. The

western world was laid on his heart, and he hoped that the church at Rome would help him to fulfil his missionary ambition. "As I have no further scope for work in these parts," he says—the eastern Mediterranean, he means—"and as for a number of years I have had a longing to visit you whenever I went to Spain, I am hoping to see you on my way there, and to be sped forward by you after I have enjoyed your company for a while" (xv. 23, 24). To be "sped forward" in his work of evangelisation by the church at Rome, to have the church at Rome as his partner in the work of winning the western world—that was his deepest desire, and the brethren at Rome could see it as they read his Epistle. He wanted their help; otherwise why should he trouble to write, and why should he state his intentions for the future so clearly and definitely?

At the moment he was content merely to mention his proposal. He knew that many things would require face-to-face discussion, and he did not attempt to go into details. But if he was to succeed in his purpose, there were two points that he felt he must keep in mind as he wrote his Epistle. First of all, he must try to get the whole church united in his support, and then he must give them some idea of the Gospel he preached, so that they would know what he was committing them to.

He had no jurisdiction over the church at

Rome. He had not himself brought it into being, nor had any other apostle. The church had been founded by unknown disciples, and Paul could only appeal to them as an approved servant of Christ.

From his closing chapter it is clear that many of the members already knew him. He gives us a list of his friends at Rome, and it is surprising to see how great the circle is. Some of these people, like Priscilla and Aquila, had been his colleagues; others were his fellow-countrymen, and had shared his prisons; many had rendered him service at one time or another in the course of his wanderings; and they were all dear to his heart. Busy though he was, he never forgot them, and he knew that he could count on them for loyal support. They would warmly welcome him when he arrived, and they would do their utmost to gain for his plans the sympathies of their fellow-believers.

But these friends of Paul were not by any means the only Christians at Rome; there were others, very likely indeed the majority, and they knew him only by repute. They had heard of his doings in the east, and some of the reports, we may be sure, were far from friendly. Paul, we know, had many critics, and even enemies, people who followed him about from place to place, trying to hinder his work, and doing their best to drive him out of the mission-field alto-

gether. They distorted his Gospel (iii. 6), and cast aspersions on his character. They endeavoured to poison the minds of people against him, and they no doubt had their sympathisers in the church at Rome. Paul knew that he must win the support of every Christian at Rome if he was to do the work he wanted in the west, and somehow he must remove the suspicion of those who at present were inclined to distrust him.

He therefore wrote in a friendly spirit, and even on debatable points he endeavoured to avoid the note of controversy. Only a little while before, in the hottest epistle he ever wrote, the Epistle to the Galatians, he had dealt with some of the questions he mentions here, but in how different a spirit. There, we can see the flash of the eye and feel the passion in his voice; he is carried away by the vehemence of his argument, and he does not spare his opponents. Here, the fires are damped down, and, though he does not, because he dare not, conceal his convictions, he writes quietly and persuasively. He has set his heart on winning the whole church in Rome for the evangelisation of the west, and he wishes to carry everyone with him.

His main difficulty lay with the section of the church that was Jewish. He does not disguise the fact that he is still the apostle of the Gentiles (xv. 16). He believes that there "is no partiality about God" (ii. 11), and the Gospel is "God's

saving power for everyone who has faith, for the Jew first and for the Greek as well" (i. 16). He cannot imagine that anyone who knows anything at all about the grace of God in Jesus Christ will want to limit it to those who are circumcised and keep the law of Moses. But, on the other hand, he makes it clear that he is himself a passionate Jew. He realises that the Jews have been greatly favoured of God (ix. 5), and his heart is filled with "endless anguish" (ix. 2) as he thinks of their present attitude to the Gospel. He is willing, indeed, to be "accursed and banished from Christ" (ix. 3), if only he can win them for Christ. The Jews were his kinsmen according to the flesh, and he feels no price would be too big to pay for their salvation. The problem of their relation to God was always before his mind, and in three whole chapters of this Epistle (ix.-xi.) he gives us the fruits of his meditations.

All through the Epistle Paul maintains the conciliatory spirit. He is writing as a missionary with a great task before him, a task that needs the support of both Jews and Gentiles. He desires to "go down into the pit" of the western world for the sake of Christ, and he asks the brethren at Rome to "hold the ropes." His one concern is the salvation of men, and he argues that all who love Jesus Christ in Rome can co-operate with him in his task. "There is no distinction of Jew and Greek," he says. "The same Lord is Lord of

them all, with "ample for all who invoke Him." Everyone who invokes the name of the Lord shall be saved. But how are they to invoke One on whom they do not believe? And how can they believe in One of whom they have never heard? And how can they ever hear without a preacher? And how can men preach unless they are sent?" (x. 12-15). In particular, how is the one man who longs to carry the Gospel to the Western Mediterranean to go forth on his mission unless all Christian disciples at Rome, both Jew and Gentile, unite in sending him?

But that inevitably raises the question of the Gospel Paul desired to preach. The brethren at Rome might be as eager as Paul to win the western world for Jesus Christ, but, until they were sure of his message, they might reasonably hesitate before they pledged themselves to send him out as their messenger. Every Candidate Board must be satisfied as to the general outlines of the Gospel its representatives desire to take to the world, and in this Epistle Paul endeavours to meet what he feels is quite a legitimate demand on the part of the church at Rome.

The Epistle is thus a statement of the Gospel as he himself understood it. Not that the Epistle says everything. It is not, as it is sometimes called, "a compendium of Christian doctrine." That it was never intended to be. There were many things Paul believed that he did not attempt to

say here. He simply desired to give to the church at Rome some idea of the message he wanted to take to the western world, and hence he deals with only the most vital things—the fact of Sin, and the meaning of Salvation. Rightly has this Epistle been described as the Fifth Gospel. It is the Gospel according to Paul, and it is as vital to the interpretation of the mind of Christ as any of the other four.

With this Gospel, as Paul has stated it, it is the purpose of this book to deal. In these days, when many of the old terms have become hardened and fossilised by the process of centuries, it is desirable to see, if we can, what they mean. Once the Gospel was real and living as it came from the heart of Paul, and with all the passion of his nature he urged men and women to commit themselves to it. Sin for him was a desperate reality, and the only hope for the world was the Salvation of God made available in Christ. Is all this, after the lapse of nineteen hundred years, a message that thinking people with a modern outlook can receive, and can we feel so keenly about it that we shall want to carry it to all the world?

PART II

SIN

CHAPTER I

THE REALITY OF SIN

PAUL begins his statement of his missionary message with a declaration of the appalling need it was designed to meet. He makes it clear that in his view the world, apart from the Gospel, is doomed. It is held in the grip of an evil power that is steadily destroying it. Men everywhere, like Laocoon and his sons, are caught in the embrace of a mighty serpent which has coiled itself round them, and will not be shaken off. With every movement the stranglehold only becomes tighter. Man sees his inevitable doom approaching, and from his lips there bursts the frenzied cry of agony and despair: "Miserable wretch that I am: who will rescue me from this body of death?" (vii. 24).

It was this sense of the appalling reality of sin that made Paul cling so passionately to the Cross. In the Cross he saw the only hope of deliverance. Christ to him was more than Guide, Philosopher, and Friend; He was more than an Example, more than a Teacher. In the deepest and truest sense He was a Saviour, a Redeemer, the only Saviour, the only Redeemer, and Paul could never cease to sing his praises. "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift," he cries (2 Cor. ix. 15). "The

victory is ours, thank God. He makes it ours by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. xv. 57). Sin was the awful background against which the Gospel stood out in bold relief, and, apart from the Gospel, Paul could see no hope for the world.

Paul's whole position was thus determined by his view of the awful reality of sin. Sin for him was the basic fact in moral experience, and, until it was dealt with, he could see no hope or peace for man.

All this sounds strangely remote to some minds to-day. "As a matter of fact," says Sir Oliver Lodge in some oft-quoted words, "the higher man of to-day is not worrying about his sins at all, still less about their punishment."[1] This is not to say that the higher man of to-day is right. But such is apparently the fact. Everywhere we are told that the "sense of sin" has gone. Preachers strive in vain to produce it, and, as a consequence, the Gospel does not seem to grip the modern mind as it should. People do not feel their need, and they cannot therefore appreciate the remedy.

The reason for this undoubtedly is that they look upon sin as very largely a theological fiction which has now been exploded by modern culture.

Sin, it is said, took its rise in the story of the Fall, and it has gained its hold through the morbid feelings it has fostered. Because Adam and Eve

[1] "Man and the Universe," p. 220.

ate an apple in the Garden, and so disobeyed the commandment of God, the whole race ever since has been sentenced to the infinite wrath; man has been reduced to the level of a "fallen, morally depraved, hell-deserving sinner"; and the Gospel has had to be invented to procure for him a way of salvation. On a few verses in Genesis there has been built what Renan calls "the frightful dogma that during the centuries has filled humanity with sorrows and terrors."[1]

It has been the task of modern culture to destroy this "dogma," and, as a result of half a century's labours, "the higher man of to-day" has now been freed from the nightmare that oppressed so heavily the minds of his ancestors. He no longer believes in the Fall, because he has been taught that the story in Genesis is only a myth; at best a parable of moral experience, but, not, as people imagined, a record of actual fact, and not therefore to be taken too seriously. "There is no other dogma," says Renan, "built so much as this one on the point of a needle," and now that the point of the needle has gone under the dissolving acids of criticism, the foundation of the "dogma" has disappeared, and people have ceased to trouble about it.

Moreover, science has shown that the Fall was really a "fall upwards." Man is the subject of an

[1] "Essay on Amiel."

evolutionary process. He has slowly climbed out of the abyss of his animal ancestry, and his face is set towards the stars. He is a "steadily rising, morally and spiritually progressive creature," and the forces within him will bear him on to his wonderful destiny.

The so-called "historical basis of sin" has thus been exploded, and we can therefore give up "worrying" about it. "There's nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so." Sin is a frailty of what Christian Science calls "mortal mind," due to lingering too much in the shadows of morbid introspection. It has its roots, says Renan, in "some touch of melancholy and depth of intellectual austerity, analogous to Slavonic pessimism." "What is, in fact, so singular is that it is the souls least open to sin which torment themselves about it the most, seek for it persistently, and, under pretext of ridding themselves of the evil that they do not possess, are continually dissecting and tearing themselves open with strokes of the scalpel." Sin, indeed, is a sign of morbidity, and we must resolve to conquer it and keep a healthy mind. "Amiel," says Renan, "reproaches me strongly for not taking sin sufficently into account, and he asks me two or three times, 'What does M. Renan make of sin?' The fact is, as I was saying in my native town the other day, I believe that I simply ignore it."

The whole idea of sin, in Renan's view, is

wrong. "Nothing, in my view," he says, "can be more opposed to the ideas that ought to prevail in the future. What we ought to augment is the sum of happiness in human life. It is not of sin, of expiation, of redemption that henceforth we should speak to men; it is of kindliness, of gaiety, of indulgence, of good humour, of resignation."

All this would have startled the Apostle Paul considerably. It would have seemed to him incredible that a man could write about sin as if it were only an illusion to be scattered and destroyed by cheerfulness. Sin for him was the fundamental reality in moral experience; wherever he looked, it stared him in the face, and he could only conclude that "the god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers to prevent them seeing the light" (2 Cor. iv. 4).

This, Renan would say, is only a further proof of Paul's gloominess of mind. "It is a very remarkable fact," he tells us, "that the elements of this pessimistic Christianity are drawn from St. Paul. Jesus and Galilean preaching are forgotten; no longer are we under the influence of direct light from the sun of the Kingdom of Heaven." Paul cannot escape from the shadow of Adam's transgression; he is obsessed by the story of the Fall, and, as a result, we have the terrible "dogma" that has been the nightmare of men ever since.

But is it conceivable that so great a thinker as

Paul would have been content to poise his belief in the reality of sin "on the point of a needle"? And, even if he had done so, is it likely that he would have "convinced the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" simply by drawing conclusions from one or two verses in Genesis?

As a matter of fact, his references to the much-debated verses in Genesis are singularly few,[1] and it is safe to say that his views of the "exceeding sinfulness of sin" and the need of a spiritual dynamic would have remained the same if the third chapter of Genesis had never been written and the transgression of Adam never heard of. Paul thought he saw in the Genesis story an explanation of some of the facts in life that distressed him. But the facts themselves were not created by the explanation he gave, and they remain what they are, even when the explanation is denied. Paul's belief in the reality of sin was based on experience, and, whether we accept his statement of its origin or not, sin remains what he said it was, the most appalling fact that man, as a moral being, has to deal with.

Paul, it cannot be too strongly urged, was no mere doctrinaire, sitting aloof from contact with the world and constructing theories about life that had no relation to fact. He was first and foremost a missionary, and for the sake of the Gospel he

[1] Additional Note: Sin and the Fall.

was constantly testing his message in the crucible of actual experience. His appeal was always directed to the conscience of his hearers. People might not accept his explanations, but they could never gainsay his facts, and, when he spoke to them of sin, they knew that he was dealing with something in life that was terribly real, something that only God Himself was able to destroy.

Paul's Gospel was rooted in experience, and every missionary, whether he works as we say "at home" or "abroad," knows that any gospel that is effective derives its power from that fact, and from that fact alone. A truth that is to grip the heart must be capable of being tested by those to whom it is spoken. It is not enough to quote texts or traditions. These may have their own authority, and they may seem to us to throw light on points that must otherwise remain obscure. As intelligent people we are bound to form for ourselves opinions as to the way, for example, in which sin entered the world and infected the whole of humanity. But these opinions must rest on such evidence as we have before us, and it is quite conceivable that they may be wrong because the evidence we have is either insufficient or wrongly interpreted. But will the Gospel of redemption as we have to preach it be in any way imperilled by that fact? In other words, whether people accept our views about the origin of sin or not, will they feel that sin itself, as we speak about it

to them, is a deep and terrible reality? That, after all, is the thing that finally matters, for our attitude to the salvation the Gospel offers is determined not by what we think of Adam, but by what we think of ourselves.

Paul was as keenly aware of this as we are, and hence in this Epistle he demonstrates the reality of sin long before he makes even the slightest allusion to Adam. He appeals to living experience, for living experience is the only Court of Appeal whose decisions are accepted everywhere.

CHAPTER II

THE UNIVERSALITY OF SIN

In his discussion of sin Paul follows the strictly scientific method. He begins, that is to say, with life as he knows it, and from a wide induction of the facts of experience he draws his conclusions.

He lived, as we know, an active life. Like Tennyson's Ulysses, he could have said

> Much have I seen and known, cities of men,
> And manners, climates, councils, governments.

He had travelled up and down the eastern Mediterranean, had mixed with people of every sort, and had discussed with them the deepest questions in life. Jews and Gentiles, Greeks and barbarians, freemen and slaves, wise and unwise—he had conversed with them all. He had lived with the simple villagers in the highlands of Galatia and the busy folk that thronged the cities round the Ægean Sea. He had heard all kinds of opinions expressed about politics, race, religion, and morality, and he had observed the divergencies of creed, and caste, and point of view. He was one of the most widely travelled men of his time, and he brought to bear on the problems of humanity a breadth of vision and a keenness of judgment

that were distinctly unusual. Hence whatever conclusions he came to were based on a wide observation of facts. They were not, that is to say, the rash assertions of a superficial amateur, they were the carefully balanced judgments of a highly trained observer.

Paul noted, to begin with, that men are fundamentally the same, and he would have listened approvingly to Shylock's claim to his rights as a human being; except that where Shylock puts "Jew," Paul would have put "Man." "Hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? if you tickle us, do we not laugh? if you poison us, do we not die?" In the deepest experiences of life man is everywhere the same, and the differences of race, and colour, and class, and temperament are largely superficial. Underneath the white or black or yellow or brown, there is what the Chinese boy called the "man colour," and the "man colour" is the same all the world over.

Paul, of course, traced this fundamental oneness of humanity to its common origin in God. "There is," he says, "one God and Father of all, who is over us all, who pervades us all, who is

within us all" (Eph. iv. 6). He quoted with approval the well-known line—

"We too belong to His race."

"It is in Him," he said, "that we live and move and exist"; "it is He who gives life and breath and all things to all men" (Acts xvii. 25-28). God is our Creator and apart from Him we cannot even exist.

But Paul goes further than this. Our relation to God, he claims, is more than that of creaturely dependence. We mean more to God than anything in His universe, and we stand to some extent apart from all other living things. We can speak of God as our Father. He has made us in His own image, with what Wordsworth calls "high instincts" that bind us to Himself, and it is His desire that there should be established between us and Him a living bond of fellowship. "All nations," said Paul, "God has created from a common origin, to dwell all over the earth, fixing their allotted periods and the boundaries of their abodes, meaning them to seek for God on the chance of finding Him in their groping for Him; though, indeed," added Paul to avoid misunderstanding, "He is close to each one of us" (Acts xvii. 26, 27).

All this involves a relationship between God and man that must inevitably make itself felt. On our side it shows itself in that restless hunger in

the soul that expresses itself in religion. We cannot permanently be satisfied with the things of time and sense, because God has made us for Himself. He has "set eternity in our hearts," and only eternity can satisfy our needs.

On God's side this relationship demands that in some form or other He make Himself known. He knows the sort of world we live in and He cannot allow us to go on by ourselves. He realises the responsibilities of His own Fatherhood, and He therefore seeks to disclose His mind and heart to us. That of necessity means revelation. Nowhere in the world has God left Himself without a witness. Wherever man is He has spoken, and some ray of light from His presence has pierced the darkness that surrounds us.

That light, Paul admitted, is not of the same quality everywhere. "There are varieties of talents;" though the one spirit is behind them all (1 Cor. xii. 4) God does not give the same degree of revelation to everyone. This is especially clear when we compare the Gentiles with the Jews. Paul was sometimes asked, "What is the Jew's superiority?" (iii. 1). If God speaks to all, wherein lies the religious superiority of the Jews over all other peoples? Paul had never any difficulty in replying. The answer to him was obvious. Nowhere in the world was there a manifestation of God comparable with that given to the Jews. The Jews were, in the distinctive sense, the people of

God, and they knew, as no other nation did, the mind of God for man. They had been "entrusted with the Scriptures of God"(iii. 2). "Theirs is the Sonship, the Glory, the covenants, the divine legislation, the Worship and the promises; the patriarchs are theirs, and theirs, too (so far as natural descent goes), is the Christ" (ix. 4, 5). No one who knew the religions of the world as Paul did had any doubt about the moral and spiritual superiority of the Jewish faith.

It was possible then, as, on a larger scale, it is possible now, to create a science of Comparative Religion, and it is all to the good that the faiths of the world should be reverently and carefully studied. Even the lowest should be dealt with as a sacred thing, and we should rejoice to note whatever there is in any of them that speaks of the infinite goodness and mercy of God. There is no place in the world so dark but there is some fragment of sky above it, and, as we compare the religions of the world, we can give God thanks for the measure of revelation that there is in them all.

But that does not mean that we treat all religions as of equal value. It is absurd to say, for instance, that the Christian religion is on the same footing as the religion of, say, the aborigines of Australia or the peoples on the banks of the Congo. They are all religions, and they all speak of God's interest in man and man's deep yearning for God.

But by every test of experience the Christian religion stands supreme above all others. It has greater and better things to say both of God and of man, and it has within it a moral power that other religions conspicuously lack. The more we study comparative religions, the more we see how much the Christian religion stands by itself, and the more we feel the urge that makes us missionaries.

But our belief in the uniqueness of the Gospel does not in any way diminish our belief in the universality of revelation. That, on any true understanding of God's relation to man, is inevitable. God is the Father of all, and He must therefore in some "form" or "fashion" (Heb. i. 1) speak to all. God, as Paul said to the simple people at Lystra, has never left Himself without a witness (Acts xiv. 17). In even the darkest sky He has set some star, and the most backward peoples know something of His mind.

In this Epistle Paul draws attention to two evidences of this. There is first the witness of creation without. "Whatever is to be known of God," he says, "is plain to them. God Himself has made it plain—for, ever since the world was created, His invisible nature, His everlasting power, and divine being, have been quite perceptible in what He has made" (i. 19, 20). Nature, as Carlyle said, is the "time-vesture" of God, and it reveals Him to the wise and thoughtful. Every-

where men have been impressed by the signs of God's presence in the universe.

> The heavens declare the glory of God,
> And the firmament sheweth His handiwork
> (Ps. xix. 1).

"God," says Virgil, "pervades the whole earth, and the spacious sea, and heaven profound." By the time Paul wrote, says Professor Flint, reason had "discovered the chief theistic proofs still employed, and attained in many minds nearly the same belief in God which now prevails."[1] From the universe men arrived at conclusions about God's wisdom and power and goodness. They saw that the "bountiful Giver" did good in "giving rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, giving them food and joy to their hearts' content" (Acts xiv. 17), and thus they had a basis on which religious faith could rest.

But, says Paul, the evidence of creation without is reinforced for men by the evidence of "the moral law within." "When Gentiles who have no law (in the Jewish sense, that is) obey instinctively the Law's requirements, they are a law to themselves, even though they have no law; they exhibit the effect of the Law written on their hearts; their conscience bears them witness as their moral convictions accuse, or, it may be, defend

[1] "Theism," p. 24.

them" (ii. 14, 15). There is in every man what Kant calls "the categorical imperative," the sense of "oughtness," the feeling that he owes an obligation to a moral demand that comes to his soul, and that, Paul unhesitatingly declares, is "the voice of God that speaks within." A hand unseen is laid on our life, and instinctively we ask ourselves, "What doth the Lord require?" There is the sense of moral constraint, the urge to do the right as we see it, and by our response to that our destiny is determined.

Thus, all over the world, says Paul, God speaks to men, through the universe without, and the moral law within. Sometimes this is called "natural," as distinct from "revealed" religion. But this is a false distinction, for all religion rests on a revelation of some sort, and without God's approach to the souls of men, religion would not be possible. It is God that speaks in nature, it is God that makes the moral demand on the soul, and always it is His spirit that moves us to seek the higher and better. "No one," said Christ, "is able to come to Me unless he is drawn by the Father who sent Me" (John vi. 44), and thus even "natural" religion has behind it that yearning of the Eternal Father for the sons of men which we know in the Gospel as grace.

Here, then, we have the universal appeal of God to men. In every land under heaven He has made Himself known, and to every soul of man

He has spoken in one way or another. No man can truly say that he knows nothing of God. God's will is written in the world without and the moral imperative within, so that, whatever men choose to do with the light they receive, they cannot honestly say they never had it, and for their refusal to walk by it "they have no excuse" (i. 20).

This is where the tragic reality of sin comes in. God has spoken in His various ways to men. But what in experience has been the result? Have they eagerly listened to His voice and hastened to carry out His purposes as they came to see them? On the contrary, says Paul; and his message here has the endorsement of all the serious thinkers of our race. Men have found the demands of God irksome or inconvenient. They have formed ideas and plans of their own, and they have preferred their own will to God's. In "impiety and wickedness" they "hinder" or rather "hold down" and "suppress" "the Truth" as God reveals it to their conscience by His Spirit (i. 18). The high road of moral obligation is difficult or inconvenient, while the low road of self-gratification seems easy and pleasant, and, taking the line of least resistance, therefore, men turn away from God, they assert themselves against Him and follow the "devices of their own hearts," and thus they fall into sin.

Sin thus means the refusal by man of the per-

ceived will of God. It is described in the New Testament by various names—lawlessness, transgression, disobedience, offence, and, most frequently, by a word that means "missing the mark." But always at the heart of it there is the same idea, the rejection by man of the demands that God, through the conscience, makes upon us, and the resolve to live as we ourselves determine.

Sin, of course, reveals itself in different forms, and some sins we might say are coarser and cruder than others. Every decent-minded person, for instance, shudders at some of the sins that Paul refers to in connection with the Gentiles (i. 24-27). These are such glaring forms of wickedness that they carry at once their own condemnation, and it is precisely here that the danger for most of us lies. Sin becomes conventionalised, and in our own minds it becomes identified with certain specific evils that we can easily recognise and frankly condemn. To be guilty of these evils is to be a "sinner," and a "sinner" is thus someone who is outside the recognised moral pale.

This is how the matter was generally regarded by the Jews. We all know that "publicans and sinners" formed a definite class in the community; they were social and moral outcasts; their "sin" had driven them out from the company of the respectable. Hence the Pharisee in the parable (Luke xviii. 10-14) did not cry like the publican,

"O God, have mercy on me for my sins!" He did not regard himself as a "sinner" in that way. He could honestly thank God that he was "not like the rest of men, thieves, rogues, and immoral, or even like yon tax-gatherer." He was exempt from the common "sins," and hence he was not a sinner.

In the same way the Jews drew a clear distinction between themselves and the Gentiles. Among the Gentiles "sin" was notorious, and Jews would have agreed that Paul's indictment in the opening chapter of his Epistle to the Romans was thoroughly justified. The Gentiles were sinners, and the terms were regarded as really synonymous (Gal. ii. 15; *cf.* Matt. v. 46, 47, with Luke vi. 32-34). Hence the difficulty the Gospel had in procuring conviction of sin among the Jews. It was the hardest thing in the world to make the Jews believe that they were "sinners" as well as the Gentiles (Gal. ii. 17) and as truly in need of salvation.

Always this difficulty comes where sin is conventionalised and made equivalent to departure from accepted moral standards. But sin, the New Testament says, is something deeper than this; it is essentially a question of the soul's attitude to God. Do we or do we not accept His authority and order our lives according to His demand? Or, putting it in general terms, are we all we know we ought to be? And does the imperative

of conscience receive from us the response it should have? Admittedly, the standard of moral insight is not the same in everyone, and there are therefore wide variations in the level of character that, say, Gentiles and Jews can attain. But at its root, the question for everyone is simply, Am I true to the light as God gives it? And, put in that way, there is only one possible answer. All alike are guilty; everywhere there is a wide discrepancy between what is and what ought to be; even the holiest and best has failed and come short of the glory of God, Jew and Gentile, Christian and non-Christian, Brahmin and outcaste, "true believer" and "infidel"—all alike are guilty; all alike are "under sin" (iii. 9).

> There is none righteous, no, not one,
> No one understands, no one seeks for God;
> All have swerved, one and all have gone wrong,
> No one does good, not a single one (iv. 10-12).

CHAPTER III

THE POWER OF SIN

FROM speaking of sin as he sees it in the world around him, Paul passes on to speak of it as he knows it in himself, and there is perhaps no passage in any of his epistles that is more interesting or more illuminating than that in which he describes his own moral experience. He paints himself as he really is; he does not attempt to disguise his struggles and failings; he tells us the naked truth about himself; and, as we read what he says, we see human nature as it fundamentally is. In the deepest things we are all alike, and, as Paul recounts his fight with the power of sin, we feel that what he says is true, and true for us as well as for him. His discussion (vii. 7-25) is autobiography in the timeless and universal sense, and hence, so long as men and women think deeply about the problems of life, it must remain as one of the greatest classics of the soul.

Paul points out that sin asserts its presence at the very beginning of the conscious moral life. There is, no doubt, in every one of us a period of what we generally call "innocence," a non-moral state, when the mind is only being formed and the self has not yet taken control of the life. But as soon as this time of "innocence" has passed and

we become aware of moral distinctions, when we have learned to see, that is, that there is a right and a wrong, a true and a false, a good and an evil, a higher and a lower, and as soon as we make up our minds to choose between them, at once we begin to realise the tremendous power of sin within us. We hear the law saying, for instance, "You must not covet," and immediately "all manner of covetous desire" springs to life (vii. 8). The command seems only to stimulate sin to activity, and hence, though we feel that covetousness is wrong, we find as a matter of fact that we do not cease to covet. The power of sin within us seems to insist that the spirit of covetousness continue, and we do not expel it from our lives merely because we see that covetousness is wrong.

So it is everywhere in the moral life. We hear the "voice divine that speaks within," summoning us to seek the good in preference to the evil, the right in preference to the wrong, the true in preference to the false, and, at the same moment, we realise that something within us is determined not to let us obey. It suggests that obedience is inconvenient, or undesirable, or demands too great a price, or even is impossible for people like us; it confuses the mind and clogs the will; it brings pressure of every kind to bear upon us, and we discover that in a terrible sense, we are prisoners, "in the thraldom of sin" (vii. 14). Sin is already entrenched within us when we awake to moral

consciousness, and, as soon as we try to escape from its clutches, it begins to exert its power, and we realise our moral helplessness. Sin, says Lord Morley, is the "horrid burden and impediment in the soul,"[1] and, do what we will, we cannot get rid of it.

Life is thus a constant struggle for freedom to be as good as we want to be. We know that the Law, with its moral ideal, is "holy and just and for our good" (vii. 12). We realise that what it offers us is something worth while, and, in our highest moments, we yearn to possess it for ourselves. We "agree that the law is right" (vii. 16). But the problem comes when we set out to do what the Law suggests. At first, perhaps, we are confident of success. We "hitch our waggon to a star" and resolve to go where it leads us. The "heavenly vision" swims across our sky, and we say we will not fail it. As Emerson, with his cheery optimism puts it:

> When Duty whispers low "I must,"
> The youth replies "I can."

Yes, but can he? The middle-aged man is not quite so sure. He says, "I ought to," or "I should like to," but he knows the sluggishness and frailty of his nature too well to say much more. Sin has become a bitter reality, and its power is a problem that seems to baffle solution.

[1] "Miscellanies," vol. i., p. 344.

Paul sees himself as a dualism. On the one hand there is "the inner self," or the mind (vii. 23), and on the other there is the "flesh" (vii. 18), each with its own ideals and tendencies, and each endeavouring to gain control of the personality. There is a higher and a lower. "I cannot understand my own actions," says Paul. "I do not act as I want to act; on the contrary, I do what I detest. For in me (that is, in my flesh, or, as we might say, my lower self) no good dwells, I know; the wish is there, but not the power of doing what is right. I cannot be good as I want to be, and I do wrong against my wishes" (vii. 15-19). The conflict in the self is unceasing, and sin refuses to yield. We can see the good, and in our hearts we know we ought to possess it, but sin holds us back, and every effort we make in the upward direction is met by a corresponding pull on the part of the lower self. We are like men battling to reach the shore, feeling that our life depends on our success, and yet aware all the time that the undertow is sucking us back, and we seem helpless to escape; we struggle and pant and strain; but we are fighting against the ocean, and we are almost driven to despair. The problem of sin is our inability to master it.

Paul's main contention here is undeniable. Sin, however we account for it, is a terrible power that holds us in its grasp and refuses to let us go. So long as we are content to accept its yoke it remains

quiescent. But once the moral ideal awakens within us and we make up our minds to pursue it, sin exerts its force to hold us back, and the result is failure and disaster.

All down the ages men have been aware of the moral tragedy that sin creates. Again and again, through poets, philosophers, and prophets, there have come visions of the golden age that is yet to be, Utopias and Republics have been described, ideal social orders where men and women are able to achieve the life they have so long dreamed of. Swords will be beaten into ploughshares, and spears into pruning-hooks; the wolf will dwell with the lamb and the leopard lie down with the kid; greed and cruelty and selfishness will be swept away; there will be "no more wailing or crying or pain, for the former things have passed away" (Rev. xxi. 4). All in those days will be as it ought to be. But always the problem arises: How can these wonderful ideas be realised? How, in face of our manifest moral impotence, can we "build Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land"? How in fact can we become as individuals and communities all we want to be?

Here and there, by statesmanship or human effort of one kind or another, some hoary evil has been destroyed, some stronghold of Satan has been pulled to the ground. But another always seems to take its place, and sin emerges once more to confront us. We hew down the tree in one

generation, but it sprouts as vigorously again in the next, and sin asserts its presence in human life as definitely as ever it did. It seems impossible to escape from its power, and hence from human hearts there rises a cry for deliverance. "Miserable wretch that I am: Who will rescue me from this body of death?" (vii. 24).

CHAPTER IV

THE PENALTY OF SIN

SIN is a contradiction of the purpose of God, and as such, it inevitably produces its consequences.

Paul shows us what some of these are, especially in the case of the Gentiles. Three times, in connection with their choice of the wrong way of life, he uses the phrase, "God gave them up" (i. 24, 26, 28), and, he points out, "they receive in their own persons the due recompense of their perversity" (i. 27). Sin brings with it a process of moral degeneration, and Paul enlarges on the case of the Gentiles because in them the truth is so clear.

First, there is the refusal to give God His rightful place. "Though they know God, they have not glorified Him as God nor given thanks to Him." Instead, "they have turned to futile speculation till their ignorant mind grew dark." They have sophisticated their own conscience and beclouded the light God has given them; with the result that they have lost all sense of direction. "They claimed to be wise, but they have become fools," and, as a result, "they have exchanged the glory of the immortal God for the semblance of the likeness of mortal man, of birds, of quadrupeds, and of reptiles" (i. 21-23).

The perversion of the religious instinct marks the first stage in the process of degeneration, and that is followed by the utter collapse of decency and morality. Very terrible is the picture Paul gives us of life among the Gentiles. "They are filled with all manner of wickedness, depravity, lust, and viciousness, and filled to the brim with envy, murder, quarrels, intrigues, and malignity—slanderers, defamers, loathed by God, outrageous, haughty, boastful, inventive in evil, disobedient to parents, devoid of conscience, false to their word, callous, merciless" (i. 29-31). Men and women could hardly sink lower than these Gentiles; they have reached the level of the beast, and they have thereby denied their birthright as sons and daughters of God.

It should not, however, be argued that Paul regarded the Gentile world as totally depraved. He was far too sane a thinker to draw a sweeping conclusion of that sort. He was quite aware that among the Gentiles there were multitudes of men and women who did their utmost to live by the light that was in them. The darkness of the night was broken by stars that God Himself had lit, and Paul did not dream of denying it. There were Gentiles who put many of their Jewish contemporaries to shame. With far less knowledge of God, they produced much worthier lives; they had no law like the Ten Commandments, and yet they obeyed "instinctively the law's require-

ments" (ii. 14). For that, every credit was due to them, and Paul was frankly prepared to say so.

But, when every allowance was made for these "Gentile saints," Paul felt bound to add that they did not greatly affect his general conclusion. Wherever he went in the eastern Mediterranean, vice and ignorance and superstition abounded; religion, as it was, seemed helpless to give dynamic to character, and the Gentile world as a whole was sadly and terribly "lost."

It has been argued that Paul's description here is not in accordance with the findings of anthropology. Paul assumes in man an original knowledge of the will of God, then a conscious rejection of it, and, as a result, idolatry, ending in immorality and barbarism. Anthropology, on the other hand, assumes that man has climbed steadily upwards from a lower to a higher condition, and the process is thus the opposite of what Paul declares it to be.

But Paul here was simply dealing with facts as he knew them. Quite possibly his conclusions in this direction or in that would have been modified if he had been acquainted with the vast field of knowledge that science has to-day revealed. But his point in this Epistle was simply that sin produces decadence of character in all who practise it, and his own knowledge of contemporary conditions gave him the illustration he wanted. The Roman world was notoriously in a state of religious

and moral decline, and the explanation lay, Paul argued, in the fact of sin. Men had forsaken God, and, as a result, there was the degeneration that everyone could see.

Sin always brings its penalty, and once the seed is sown the harvest begins to come. There is "a law of sin and death" (viii. 2), and, once it is set in motion, its consequences are inevitable. Decay sets in, and the higher nature begins to go to pieces.

"Nothing is easier than to revert to savagery," says Robert W. Chambers, in a recent novel.[1] "Ploughed land, uncultivated, very quickly sprouts new forests. Fruit, grains, garden flowers, allowed to straggle, become like the wild stock from which they sprang. Fat swine become shaggy wild boars again; dogs grow into wolves, cats into lynxes—even the Spanish barnyard cock turns mongrel and many-coloured, and runs, or flies, through the woods like any wild-fowl.

"So man. For, in a savage land, if he become lonely, discouraged, without purpose, the rags of civilisation slip from him like rotting garments; and man's first shelter, the wilderness, draws him home again, godless, naked—a fierce and wary thing that sleeps, and feeds, and slinks, and slays, until the fate that dooms all wild things overtakes him also."

So often it has happened. Prosperous civilisa-

[1] "The Sun-Hawk," p. 164.

tions have decayed and disappeared. Whole nations have been eaten up by the sins they would not, or in the end could not, abandon. "The history of the world is the judgment of the world," and wherever we look, we discover the stern decree that sin does not go unpunished. Deterioration sets in, and the end is utter collapse.

So it is in individuals. Sin creates its own penalty; it honeycombs the character and undermines the sources of strength; it destroys the vision and darkens the passions, and the result is moral ruin.

Paul's inclusive name for all this is death. "Sin's wage," he says, "is death" (vi. 23). Sin and death are so interwoven that, as soon as we get the one, we get the other. "Sin came into the world by one man, and death by sin, and so death spread to all men, inasmuch as all men sinned" (v. 12). Sin is the seed, and death is the harvest. But death in what sense?

Not death, we are told, in the physical sense. For death is part of the created order, and without it we cannot conceive existence going on. Death, in the process of the generations, is inevitable, for death simply removes one generation for the sake of another. Thus, death is as natural as birth, and science declares that it existed in the world long before sin appeared. Sin, therefore, did not make it, and the "law of sin and death" must be spiritually understood.

To all this Paul would have answered that even physical death, as men and women know it, is so completely coloured by sin that whatever science may say of its place in the natural order, death, as we ourselves look forward to it, is part of the "wage" of sin. Death is seen by us through the murky shadows of fear and doubt that sin has created, and to speak of physical death apart from its spiritual associations is to speak of something that, in human experience at any rate, does not exist. Doubtless, if sin had never been, we should have looked at the whole thing differently; we should have seen physical death against the background of the Father's love, and we should have seen it transfigured. But, as it is, we live in a world that sin has marred, and sin has made death, as it has made everything else, very different from what God intended it to be. Before we can meet death victoriously its sting must be drawn, its power must be removed; and this, says Paul, is precisely what Christ accomplishes for men and women through the Gospel. In Christ the saying of Scripture is realised.

> Death is swallowed up in victory.
> O Death, where is your victory?
> O Death, where is your sting?

The victory is ours, thank God. He makes it ours by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. xv. 54, 55).

Death in any sense is associated with decay, and it is undoubtedly of decay in the moral sense that we mainly think when we discuss the wages of sin. Sin defiles and destroys the temple of God; it weakens the will, corrupts the passions, sears the conscience, blinds the vision; it mars the image of God in man, and when it has "finished" its work, "it brings forth death" in the saddest and truest sense, death to all that is good and noble and god-like. Nothing is left but the sense of the might-have-been, the bitter feeling that life has been wasted and that things can never be again what they were. "To be thus," says Manfred—

> Grey-haired with anguish, like these blasted pines,
> Wrecks of a single winter, barkless, branchless,
> A blighted trunk upon a cursed root,
> Which but supplies a feeling to decay—
> And to be thus, eternally but thus,
> Having been otherwise!

Can there be any "death" that is more real or more distressing than that? And that is the death that sin inevitably brings. Adam eats his forbidden fruit and is thrust forth from his paradise; Esau receives his mess of pottage and loses his birthright in the process; Judas gets his thirty pieces of silver and finds them burning his soul. Sin exacts a bitter price from all its victims, and in the deterioration of character it brings about, it reveals its close connection with death.

We need not paint lurid eschatological pictures

to give reality to "hell"; we need only emphasise the relationship of sin and death, and show how cause moves irresistibly on to produce effect. "The drunken Rip Van Winkle in Jefferson's play," says William James, "excuses himself for every fresh dereliction by saying 'I won't count this time.' Well, *he* may not count, and a *kind heaven* may not count, but it is being counted none the less. Down among his nerve-cells and fibres, the molecules are counting it, registering and storing it up to be used against him when the next temptation comes. Nothing we ever do is, in strict scientific literalness, wiped out." It is in many ways a terrible message, but in an age of moral slackness it is desirable to have it stressed. "Sin's wage is death," and from that, except by the grace of God, there is for man no way of escape.

Here, then, to sum up, we have a world under sin. All alike are partakers in the one common frailty. Not even the wisest or greatest is exempt. In all lands and in all conditions, wherever we get men and women, we get the fact of sin, and in every life it works in the same way. Slowly and steadily it weaves its cords around its victims. At first they hardly feel their bonds, and they are sure they can break them at will. But, as life goes on, they discover that their sinful habits have tied them hand and foot; they are the victims of a power they cannot destroy; and they realise that,

in a deep and tragic sense, they are in danger of death. They must find a way of salvation, and they ask themselves, they ask their neighbours, they ask the universe around them, "What must I do to be saved?"

ADDITIONAL NOTE

SIN AND THE FALL

It is commonly assumed that the third chapter in Genesis plays a large part in Scripture. But that is not borne out by the evidence. The references to it in the Old Testament are singularly few, and are confined, for the most part, to allusions to the Garden of Eden as the ideal of beauty and bliss (Joel ii. 3; Ezek. xxviii. 13; xxxi. 9, 16, 18; xxxvi. 35). There are two passages where the name of Adam is mentioned in connection with transgression (Job xxxi, 33; Hos. vi. 7), but in these passages Adam simply means "men," and should be so translated (as in the margin of the Revised Version). In the New Testament the position is much the same. In the Book of the Revelation there are references to the Garden, more especially the tree in the midst of it (ii. 7; xxii. 2, 14, 19); the devil is described as "that old serpent" (xii. 9; xx. 2); but nothing is said about the Fall. In the Gospels the third of Genesis is nowhere mentioned, and, so far as the teaching of Christ is concerned, it might be said to be non-existent. The Scripture as a whole is thus singularly silent on a point where most people imagine it speaks rather freely.

But what about Paul? it may be asked, for Paul is admittedly the crux of the problem. Surprisingly enough, even in Paul the references are few; at most a possible five, and none of them can fairly be said to give us the conclusions that are sometimes drawn. Three of the passages are allusions to Satan (Rom.

xvi. 20; 2 Cor. xi. 3, 14), but, beyond suggesting that Paul believed in the Genesis story, they really tell us nothing. The vital passages are in 1 Corinthians xv. and Romans v., and it is necessary to say a word on each of these.

In Corinthians xv. Paul is dealing with immortality, and in connection with this he draws a comparison between Adam and Christ.

> For since death came by man,
> by man came also the resurrection from the dead;
> As all die in Adam,
> so shall all be made alive in Christ (21, 22).

Adam is the head of humanity on the physical side, and through this fact comes death; Christ is the head of the new humanity, and through our connection with Him we enter into life.

> The first man, Adam, became an animate being,
> The last Adam a life-giving spirit (45).

There is no reference here to the Fall or to the fact that death was the result of Sin. We can no doubt read that into the passage, but nothing is actually said about it in the passage itself, and Paul's whole point may be summed up in the saying that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Realm of God" (50). On the physical side, by our connection with Adam, we are mortal; it is only by virtue of our relationship to Christ that we conquer death and enjoy victory over the grave.

This leaves us with only one passage, surely a somewhat limited foundation for the conclusions that are often drawn as to original sin, inherited guilt,

total depravity, etc. In Romans v. Paul is discussing the redemption that God has provided for men in Jesus Christ, and he makes the statement that "sin came into the world by one man, and death came in by sin; and so death spread to all men, inasmuch as all men sinned" (12). Sin thus had a beginning in "one man's trespass" (18), and the result was "doom for all" (18); death followed hard on the heels of sin, and, having found an entrance into humanity, it continued its destructive work and spread to all men "inasmuch as all men sinned."

Sin, in other words, had a definite beginning in Adam, and as a result of Adam's sin death got its footing in the race. Paul in this simply accepted the point of view of his Jewish teachers. But, like them, he specifically guards himself against misunderstanding, and it would have been well if later theologians had been as careful in their statements as he was. "Death," he says, "spread to all men inasmuch as all men sinned," and this means that whatever the effects of Adam's transgression may have been, the sense of individual responsibility in his descendants was in no way affected. Every man receives in himself the reward of his own iniquity.

Paul thus does little more than assert the facts: (1) That sin had a definite beginning in Adam; (2) it brought death in its train; (3) in some way or other it infected all, because all are members of the race and partakers of Adam's nature. But (4) that does not mean that all are guilty because Adam was; every man for himself yields to the pressure of sin, and every man, therefore, puts himself under the power of death.

Paul confines himself strictly to the facts of experience. He sees that there is such a thing as racial solidarity through a common origin in Adam, and he argues that this has its bearings on the universality of sin. Sin came into the world by "man's first disobedience," and, ever since, it has been at work to create an atmosphere that is favourable to its own development. Generation has succeeded generation, and all have asserted themselves against God, with the result that the power of sin has been intensified. This, in fact, is a sinful world, and sin has been so long in it that it has cast its taint on everything.

But while Paul affirms his belief in the results that have come from the fall of Adam, he makes it at the same time abundantly clear that sin, however it gets its foothold in our lives, is real only when it appears in individuals who yield to its suggestions, and he nowhere suggests that sin exists where the moral consciousness has not yet come to life. Most of the trouble that has arisen in connection with this whole subject lies in regarding "original sin" as a reality that somehow exists in the soul before it has arrived at its own moral self-consciousness; God's doom is therefore conceived to rest on humanity altogether apart from definite personal transgression. "Nothing," says Professor Denney, "has been more pernicious in theology than the determination to define sin in such a way that in all its damning import the definition should be applicable to 'infants'; it is to this we owe the moral atrocities that have disfigured most creeds, and in great part the idea of baptismal regeneration, which is an irrational, un-

ethical miracle invented by men to get over a puzzle of their own making."[1]

Sin and the unconscious are, in the nature of things, contradictory, and Paul never wastes his time, or ours, in discussing things that are in their essence unreal. For him, sin is only known in moral experience; it is a conscious departure from what is seen to be morally right, and sin, in any other sense, is something Paul knows nothing about. Whatever we may think about Adam, the one sure fact in the moral consciousness is the sense that our sin is fundamentally our own. The form it takes may be determined by circumstances we ourselves do not directly make. But the thing itself, the acceptance of the sinful suggestion, whatever it is, and the resolve to act as it suits us, though we know our higher self is against it—that is always and only ours, and, as a matter of fact, we can never finally persuade ourselves to think otherwise. We cannot be serious with ourselves and hold Adam guilty of our transgression; in our hearts, we know that the transgression is ours, and it is to that fact that the Gospel makes its appeal.

There is a passage in Shakespeare's "King Lear" that has a bearing on this subject: "This is the excellent foppery of the world that, when we are sick in fortune—often the surfeit of our own behaviour—we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars: as if we were villains by necessity; fools by heavenly compulsion; knaves, thieves, and treachers, by spherical predominance; drunkards, liars, and adulterers, by an enforced obedience of planetary

[1] "Expositors' Greek Testament" on Romans v. 12.

influence; and all that we are evil in by a divine thrusting on" (Act I., Scene 2). We may say all that if we like, and we can bring Adam's name into it as well. But we all know perfectly well that it is nothing more than "the excellent foppery of the world," and, behind the excuses we make, there is the deep sense that sin is something that ought not to be, something for which we ourselves are responsible.

PART III

SALVATION

CHAPTER I

THE SOURCE OF SALVATION

EVERYWHERE Paul saw a world in desperate need, and on every side he heard the cry of the Philippian gaoler, "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts xvi. 30). That cry, as Paul heard it bursting forth from the hearts of men, expressed two things: First, the sense of utter need. Men and women, as they thought of life in their serious moments, were afraid; afraid of the inscrutable forces of the universe without, and afraid of the subtle forces of evil within. They knew they needed protection, guidance, comfort, inspiration, peace. They desired to be rid of the burden of fear and anxiety and loneliness and guilt that oppressed them. Above all things, they longed for power to deal with life as they felt they wanted. The sense of utter need was very real.

But, along with that, there came the sense of their own insufficiency. Men had tried in all sorts of ways to meet the need in themselves. They had exerted all their power and ingenuity. They had built elaborate schemes of self-defence against the evils that threatened them, but always in vain. Sooner or later life proved too much for them. "The enemy came in like a flood" and they had no "standard" they could "lift up"

triumphantly against it. Pain and death and sin proved as cruel and intractable as ever, and men were forced to go beyond themselves, to seek in the Power that pervaded all created things the help they so sorely needed. Thus it was that religion was created. It came into being by a sheer necessity of the human soul, and, as men and women cried out for salvation, they turned instinctively to God. It was the need of salvation that gave to religion its place in life.

So it has always been, and so it always is. Religion is universal, and under the most adverse conditions it survives because man everywhere needs what he feels that only religion can give. "The way of man is not in himself," said a prophet long ago. "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. x. 23). Man needs salvation, and for salvation all over the world he turns to God.

No doubt his ideas here are not always the same. Salvation, as Dr. Glover reminds us, is a "vague term," and "it makes all the difference" to our view of salvation "from what, and to what, or for what, and by what means" we conceive the salvation is brought.[1] Every religion has its own ideas on these points, and some of the ideas are extremely crude. But, behind them all, there is the one fact that creates religion itself, the fact

[1] "Jesus in the Experience of Men," p. 39.

that men everywhere feel the need of salvation, and in their distress turn to God to find it. Without God, they feel, they cannot be saved, and thus we have prayer, aspiration, yearning, the Godward look of the soul.

Those who are familiar with the Greek drama will remember the *deus ex machina*. In certain plays, and these not by any means the most elementary, the situation became so complicated that human ingenuity was powerless to solve it, and God Himself was brought on the scene. He descended to the stage, and by the exercise of infinite wisdom and power, He solved the problem that had baffled everybody. This was not, as it might easily seem, a cheap way of getting over an awkward difficulty. The *deus ex machina* was a serious contribution to human thought, and it was adopted by some of the greatest thinkers that ever lived. It was simply a way of saying that the tangles in life can never be straightened out till God comes down to our help.

This is especially clear when we deal with the fact of sin. There are many things in life which a man can get for himself, but the power to deal with sin is not one of them, and no one has said that more emphatically than Paul. Man, he declares, can never achieve salvation apart from God, and, even with the highest ideals and the noblest intentions, he is doomed to failure. Paul's experience of the power of sin gave him a deep impres-

sion of man's moral impotence. The Law, the moral ideal, that is, does its best. It speaks to the conscience, and endeavours to rouse the will to seek the good and true. But it can never accomplish the salvation it aims at, because it is "weak through the flesh" (viii. 3). It encounters, in other words, a weakness that it cannot overcome. Nothing it can say or do can galvanise the weakness into strength, and, though it can point the road, it cannot enable men to take it. God must come in. There must be in moral experience the *deus ex machina*. The Gospel is one with every religion in saying so, only it says it more emphatically and clearly. Apart from God, salvation for man is impossible, and therefore to God man instinctively turns.

But the question at once arises: on what terms can the help of God be obtained? How, in other words, can God be induced to undertake the saving work that men and women desire? Every religion has addressed itself to that problem, and every religion has given its own answer.

Broadly speaking, religion as a whole has followed the line of "merit," that is to say, it has suggested that God can be induced to give to men and women this help if they in their turn can prove to Him that they deserve it. People must win the favour of God, and by their loyalty to His demands they must so "put themselves right" with Him that He will agree to do what they ask.

They must, for instance, bring Him presents; sacrifices, perhaps, or gifts of various kinds that they offer Him through His priests. They must observe the tabus He imposes; they must beware of defiling His holy places or eating the food He regards as unclean. Or they must go on pilgrimages to the sacred shrines and bathe in the sacred rivers. They must fast on the appointed days and carry out the rituals that religion prescribes. They must put themselves, in other words, in the right relation to God, and God will then come down to save them.

In the higher religions this is put more definitely from the ethical point of view. It is pointed out—we believe rightly, of course—that God is not to be bribed by mere material offerings. "The cattle on a thousand hills are His"; "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." Sacrifices, tabus, pilgrimages, gifts—all these can mean so little, and they are so apt to take the place of spiritual qualities. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? saith the Lord. I am full of the burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs or of he-goats. Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto Me; new moon and Sabbath, the calling of assemblies—I cannot away with iniquity and the solemn meeting" (Isa. i. 11-13). Religion must be ethical if it is to be any-

thing. "Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow" (Isa. i. 16-17). Always the requirement of God is virtuous character.

With much of this the Gospel, of course, is in sympathy. Its whole view of religion is essentially moral, and it lays its emphasis all along on the need for a worthy life. Nothing, said Christ, can take its place. "It is not every one who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' who will get into the Realm of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven" (Matt. vii. 21). Nothing can be accepted as a substitute for obedience to God's demands on the soul, not even prophecy or miracle-working. The inward man is to be renewed day by day, and every Christian is to aim at being perfect as the Father in heaven is perfect (Matt. v. 48). No one who has read the Sermon on the Mount can have any doubts about the ethical quality of the religion of Jesus. Nowhere is the standard of character put so high, and nowhere is the moral demand stated so strongly.

But, though the Gospel of Christ would commend the higher religions for their emphasis on the ethical, it suggests at the same time that they have made the same mistake as the lower religions. They have emphasised "merit" as the

ground of acceptance with God; and in that they have hopelessly erred. They have landed themselves in a difficulty from which on the basis of "merit" there is no way out. For the higher we put the ethical demand of God, the more impossible we make it for man to fulfil it. "To do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with God"—who of mortal men can meet that noble conception of the requirement of God?

> Oh! how shall I, whose native sphere
> Is dark, whose mind is dim,
> Before the Ineffable appear,
> And on my naked spirit bear
> The uncreated beam?

The only solution for the problem that ethical religion raises must lie in an increasing emphasis on the need for God's help. There must be the *deus ex machina,* for without it life on the scale of the truly ethical is utterly impossible.

But the question at once arises: Will God come to our help in the way we need? Is He so interested in us, so concerned for our welfare, that He will undertake to save us? The answer to this is in the Gospel. It offers us the salvation we crave for, and it offers it on terms that all can accept. In the language of the prophet it says to us, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Isa. lv. 1). The

Gospel declares that men can have a salvation that is full and adequate and complete on the ground of God's free gift to their soul. "Merit" has nothing to do with it. Man stands still and sees the salvation of God. The situation at one time seemed hopeless, "But now," says Paul, "we have a righteousness of God disclosed apart from Law altogether; it is attested by the Law and the prophets, but it is a righteousness of God which comes by believing in Jesus Christ. And it is meant for all who have faith. No distinctions are drawn. All have sinned, all come short of the glory of God, but they are justified for nothing by His grace through the ransom provided in Christ Jesus" (iii. 21-24). Nothing could be plainer. Salvation is free, and God's only requirement is that humility on the part of men which will enable them to stretch out their hands to take it.

To people like Paul, disheartened by the struggle to be good, the Gospel comes as a true evangel. It is light in the midst of darkness, hope in the midst of despair. They have been trying, as the religions of "merit" have suggested they should, to reach God in order to gain His help; now they learn to their amazement that God has already come to them. They need not strive to put themselves "right with God"; God Himself has made everything right, and the salvation men seek is even now waiting for their acceptance. The Gospel is

God's dynamic, made available for morally impotent men and women by His own free grace, and, if they will only trust themselves to it, it will enable them to achieve the salvation they covet, that salvation which at one time seemed so remote and unattainable.

All this has been admirably put in a recent novel.

"'People have come to think of religion as a weakness. They've got to think of it as power. Power. It's that or it's nothing. There is Power. It's all there. Like learning to swim, or drive a car, or anything. Confidence does it. Hurl yourself on to Nothingness—nothingness somehow responds. As Uncle Tom would probably say, we walk by faith, etc.'

"'You mean, God responds.'

"'Yes. If you press the button, the bell rings. Power comes. I've seen it in heaps of recoveries from neurasthenia, as well as what Uncle Tom would call sudden conversions. The power's there, chunks of it, if we could only connect. The world's sick for want of power—power to be well, power to be kind, power to laugh instead of cursing, power to be big enough for the occasion, bigger than outrageous fortune. We all *know* what to do—where to go. Christ's done that for us. There are plenty of signposts up.'"[1]

[1] Christine Orr, "Hogmanay," p. 128.

CHAPTER II

THE GUARANTEE OF SALVATION

THE Gospel rests fundamentally on an assumption it makes with regard to God. God, it says, is the Father of men, and He cannot bear to see His children struggling with sin. He is the great Shepherd of humanity, and, because He sees His sheep scattered and torn and lost in the wilderness, many of them "sick and faint and ready to die," He counts no price too great to pay for their recovery. Men, it is true, have erred and gone astray by their own wilful folly. They have broken through the fences that God has erected, in the hope of finding in the seemingly green pastures of sin the nourishment they crave. God might easily say that He declines to accept responsibility for their present condition; they have left the fold, and they must take the consequences. But in the Gospel story God does not seem to argue like that. On the contrary, when one of His sheep has gone astray, He leaves the rest who are still secure and sheltered and goes out to seek the lost one. The Gospel, in fact, rests on its faith in the amazing love of God. Apart from the love of God it has no ground for its existence. But, given that God is all it says He is, given, that is, the idea that God is so filled with yearning and compassion for the

sons of men that, in spite of their sins, He clings to them and longs to save them, the Gospel can go on to say that salvation is freely offered to all who in humble trust will take it. The love of God is the basis of the Gospel.

But is this anything more than an idea, a mere hypothesis that has to be conceded before the Gospel can come into operation? Do we know as a matter of fact that God loves us in the way the Gospel says He does, or do we simply take it for granted?

The answer is clear in the New Testament, and the great text that to so many sums up the whole message states this unmistakably. "God loved the world so dearly that He gave up His only Son, that every one who believes in Him may have eternal life instead of perishing" (John iii. 16). The Gospel rests on historic fact, and the fact is contained in the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Apart from that, the Gospel could not even exist. There is a hymn that says:

> Oh! wide-embracing, wondrous love,
> We read thee in the sky above,
> We read thee in the earth below,
> In seas that swell and streams that flow.

It is doubtful if all this in itself could provide us with the proof we need of God's "wide-embracing, wondrous love." Multitudes of people have seen these things and yet have failed to discover

the Gospel in them. The Gospel, as a matter of fact, is not a deduction from nature at all; it is fundamentally and essentially a revelation in Jesus Christ. It is through Christ that we see the heart of God, and it is in Him that we discover that God has drawn near to men in saving power. "God proves His love to us by this, that Christ died for us when we were still sinners" (v. 8). "This is how the love of God has appeared for us, by God sending His only Son into the world, so that by Him we might live" (1 John iv. 9).

The Gospel has its basis in history, and it is this fact that gives to sinful men the pledge they need that their salvation is assured. God in Christ has come to them, and He has made it plain that, as far as He is concerned, there is nothing now between man and Himself. "His love unknown hath broken every barrier down," every barrier that sin and fear and guilt have erected. Men can look at Christ, and they can say with confidence that "by Him they now enjoy their reconciliation" (v. 11); "through Him they have got access to this grace where they are now standing"; they have "peace with God"; and they "triumph in the hope of God's glory" (v. 1, 2); they are "in Christ Jesus," and for them "there is no doom now" (viii. 1). Everything for salvation is effected in Christ. Salvation is the free gift of God, and we receive it from Him by an act of believing faith.

For Paul, of course, the final proof of this is in the Cross. The Cross is the point where the Gospel message reaches its focus. Men, says Paul, are "justified for nothing by His grace through the ransom provided in Jesus Christ, whom God put forward as the means of propitiation by His blood, to be received by faith" (iii. 24, 25). "Mark this," says Luther in a marginal note in his Bible, "this is the chief point and the very central place of the Epistle and of the whole Bible." The Cross is the very heart of the Gospel, and it reveals to us, as nothing else does, the attitude that God assumes to sinful men and women.

It suggests, first of all, that forgiveness is not a cheap and easy thing. Christ, as He said Himself, in some deep sense "gave His life a ransom for many" (Mark x. 45), and implied in that is the idea of cost. There was a price to be paid, and that price was His life. God, in justice to His own moral nature, could not ignore the fact that sin involves consequences; even in the act of forgiveness, He must "demonstrate His justice" and "show that He is just Himself," while He "justifies man on the score of faith in Jesus" (iii. 26). The Cross was grounded in moral necessity, and it represents the cost that man's redemption involved for God.

We cannot pretend to fathom all this; there are depths in Christ's experience of the Cross that no plummet has ever sounded.

None of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed;
Or how dark was the night that the Lord passed through
Ere He found His sheep that was lost.

During the time of the Redeemer's agony, we are told that "darkness covered all the land," and that darkness remains, however much we seek to explore it.

But out of the midst of it there does emerge to the clear light of day the glorious fact that, whatever forgiveness for us involved, God was ready to pay the price, and the Cross is the symbol of the love that refused to let us go. God would not give us up. He "loved His own in this world, and He loved them to the end." Sin erected what seemed to be insuperable barriers between us and God, and God in His infinite goodness, at immeasurable sacrifice to Himself, came in Christ and took them away. The Cross is the proof that God, in Abraham Lincoln's phrase, "gave the last full measure of devotion" to the salvation of men, and men, no matter how much they have sinned, can bury their fears and, on the ground of all that God in Christ has done, can receive the salvation that He so eagerly desires to give them.

Is there for men and women anywhere a more sufficient Gospel than this? We have here an assurance that the power we need is available. Sin need not hold us captives in its grasp. The

chains that we ourselves are impotent to break God can burst on our behalf. He has pledged Himself to us in the Cross, and we can look forward with humble confidence to our victory. It is true that the flesh is weak, and the forces arrayed against us are formidable. But "if God is for us—and in the Cross we know that He is—who can be against us? The God who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, surely He will give us everything besides. What can ever part us from Christ's love?" Many things will try, but "through Him who loved us" we shall be made "more than conquerors." God's love is everlasting, and, nothing, either actual or conceivable, will ever part us from it (viii. 31-39).

CHAPTER III

THE METHOD OF SALVATION

SALVATION in a sense is a something achieved. With the creation of it man has nothing to do. It is not based on "merit." No goodness of ours, no piety, no faithfulness can produce it. It is essentially a gift. "It is by grace you have been saved as you had faith; it is not your doing, but God's gift, not the outcome of what you have done—lest anyone should pride himself on that" (Eph. ii. 8, 9). The worst and the best stand on precisely the same footing here. All alike are recipients of God's mercy. "Boasting is ruled out absolutely" (iii. 27). Salvation is God's free gift to needy men and women.

But the gift, to become effective, must be received. God cannot force men to take what He wants them to have. He is bound to respect their freedom. At infinite cost He has removed the barriers between man and Himself; He has come down to earth to plead with His children "by the blood of His Cross" to forsake the sin that slays them; He has made it clear that He will "save to the uttermost all that come unto Him by faith." But then they must come; they must accept His offer of help; of their own free will they must make the response His grace demands, and that

response is what the New Testament means by faith. The Gospel, says Paul, "is God's saving power for every one who has faith" (i. 16); it is "on the score of faith in Jesus that God justifies" (iii. 26); faith, in fact, is on man's side the *sine qua non* of salvation.

It is important then that we should see what faith exactly is. The word, we know, is used in various senses, and it is not always understood.

Frequently it is defined as the equivalent of belief. "Only believe," we are told, is the appeal of the Gospel, and "believe" is interpreted to mean the assent of the mind to the statements the Gospel contains. The Gospel, it is said, is embodied in a series of facts that can be found in the New Testament. Jesus Christ came into the world, and taught, and suffered, and died, and finally rose again. In Him the Gospel of God was revealed, and the work He did on the Cross is the ground on which our salvation fundamentally rests. Faith simply means the acceptance of all this as true. We believe that God did in Christ the things the New Testament says; we accept the facts as the Gospel states them; and, on the ground of "the finished work," we claim salvation.

That there is much in this that is true no one would surely deny. Faith must unquestionably begin with belief, "Faith must come from what is heard, and what is heard comes from the word of

Christ" (x. 17). Indeed, it is this that gives urgency to the missionary appeal. How can people exercise faith if they never get the chance to know? "How are they to believe in One of whom they have never heard?" (x. 14). Faith must rest on knowledge.

But, for all that, faith and belief are not the same thing, and it is possible for a man to believe in one sense without having any real faith in Christ at all. The Apostle James put this point in a striking passage in his epistle. "You believe in one God," he says. "Well and good. So do the devils, and they shudder" (ii. 19). No one would say that in this case belief and faith are the same thing. The devils cannot deny the existence of God—no doubt they wish that they could, but even devils cannot gainsay the testimony of intelligence. They can say with perfect sincerity, "We believe in one God, the Almighty." But their character remains unchanged; they still continue devils; and their belief, correct though it is, does not move their lives in a Godward direction; they have no association with God, and therefore they have no faith.

The difference between belief and faith may best be understood by saying that belief has to do with facts, whereas faith has to do with persons, and, in the case of Christ, this means that while belief is content to accept the statements about Christ as true, faith goes on to build

upon them an attitude of trust and loyalty and affection. Belief says that Christ is real and that the things described in the New Testament are true; faith says, that being so, we can deal with Christ as a Friend and Guide and Saviour, we can make Him our own, and, in living contact with Him, we can experience His presence at work in our lives.

Faith is thus a form of friendship. It deals with Christ as One who is now alive, One who can be known and spoken to and trusted. Heart meets heart and soul meets soul; there is communion and intercourse of spirit; and though Christ is unperceived by the physical eye, His presence is felt by His people. There comes from Him a response to the outgoing of their soul in faith; space and time are annihilated; there is a sense of His living personality with us, and from the world unseen Christ emerges to give His power and peace and inspiration to those that trust Him.

It is faith in this sense of personal relationship to Jesus Christ that in the New Testament is regarded as the means whereby the salvation of God becomes effective in our experience. Various prepositions are used to express this idea. We have faith *towards* God; we believe *on* Christ, or *in* Christ, or *into* Christ. Always the idea is that in faith the soul goes forth in trust and love to unite itself with its Saviour and Lord, confessing

constantly its need of His presence and receiving constantly in response the help and power it seeks.

This means that faith, in the New Testament, is much more truly a life than an act.

It begins with an act, of course, the act whereby in simple trust we close with God's offer of salvation in Christ. Experience has shown us that we cannot make ourselves what we want to be, and when God comes to us in Christ, commending His love by the sacrifice of the Cross and saying that He will do for us all that we need, we humbly and gladly receive the gift He brings; we frankly recognise that without His aid we are lost, and by faith we lay hold of the grace set before us. This is usually spoken of as Justification, the act by which God, being received by the soul, counts us as "righteous."

But Justification is only the beginning. The salvation that God brings us in Christ has still to be wrought out in our lives. The flag of Christ has been hoisted above our natures; but the wild beasts have still to be tamed, the jungles cleared, the deserts reclaimed and made fruitful. Everything base and unworthy within us has to be subdued and conquered for Christ. Our character has to be thoroughly christianised; "the old nature which crumbles to ruin" has to be laid aside, and we are to grow "the new nature which has been created in the upright and pious character of the

Truth" (Eph. iv. 22, 23). All this involves a process, a process that must be slow and long, but, since Christ is armed with all the resources of God, a process that is certain to end in triumph.

This process, on our side, is contingent always on faith. We need Christ always, and therefore we must exercise faith always. He gives His grace in response to our faith; grace and faith are in fact reciprocal, and the work of salvation can be described on the one side as "from grace to grace" or "from glory to glory," while on the other it is always "from faith to faith."

The life of faith involves such intimate fellowship with Christ that by means of our faith we enter into something of the Saviour's experience. We identify ourselves completely with Him, and thus we share what is frequently described as "the mystical union." We repeat in ourselves His own great moments, and in thought, in aim, in spirit, we become utterly one with Him. "We are crucified with Him," crucified by our own self-renunciation that we may "free ourselves from any further slavery to sin (for once dead, a man is absolved from the claims of sin)"; we die with Him that we may share His burial and "grow into Him by a resurrection like His," "so that, as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live and move in the new sphere of life." Death, burial, and resurrection—they were literally His, and in a mystical

sense we make them ours, ours because by faith we unite ourselves to Him (vi. 11).

The whole aim of faith is union with the Saviour, and that means constant self-surrender, self-crucifixion, self-immolation on the altar of yearning for Christ. Passionately we trample our lower nature under foot that Christ may be all in all; every day we turn with loathing from the sin that holds, and every day we aspire to full possession by Christ. To get rid of self and put Christ on the throne of our life—that is what we as Christians crave for, and in a wonderful sentence Paul puts before us our ideal: "I have been crucified with Christ," he says. "It is no longer I who live; Christ lives in me; the life I live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20).

This attitude of constant aspiration on our part is answered, says Paul, by the gift of the Spirit. The Spirit is the Helper that Christ promised to send in His name, and, because we are "in Christ Jesus" (viii. 1), "we live and move not by the flesh but by the Spirit" (viii. 4). "Anyone who does not possess the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him" (viii. 9), but, in response to our faith, the Spirit is given. He comes to dwell with us and "assist us in our weakness" (viii. 26). He "pleads for us with sighs beyond words," and He ever works in our hearts to create a living experience of Christ. "The sons of God are those who

are guided by the Spirit of God," and "when we cry 'Abba Father,' it is the Spirit testifying along with our spirit that we are children of God; and if children, heirs as well, heirs of God, heirs along with Christ" (viii. 14-17).

Salvation is thus a process that is constantly going on. It is not mechanical but moral, and it is based essentially on the maintenance of personal relationships with Christ. "If you want to be perfect," said Christ, "come and follow Me" (Matt. xix. 21). Always He would have men enter into living connections with Him, for only so could they learn the ways of God and experience the power of His transforming companionship. In the days of His flesh the disciples walked with Him the fields and lanes of Galilee, listening to His words, asking Him their questions, watching the play of love on His face, and above all things learning to see how much He wanted to help them into that larger idea of life and communion with God that He Himself enjoyed. They came to understand how wonderfully He believed in their possibilities, and through their faith in Him they came to have faith in their own divine destiny as servants of God's kingdom. All that they were in their later life was created by His influence; they were what they were by the grace of God as they saw it in the face of Jesus Christ. Christ was their Source of power, their one inspiration.

As it was then, so it is still. By faith we enter into contact with the Saviour unseen; we discover that He is not dead but alive, the most potent reality in our experience, and, through our communion with Him, we receive His presence into our lives. He becomes the one Supreme Friend whose advice we can always seek and whose help we can always rely on. "The first time I had to defend myself," said Paul at the end of his life, "I had no supporters; every one deserted me. But," he adds, "the Lord supported me and gave me strength" (2 Tim. iv. 17), and Paul's experience has been confirmed abundantly since.

"Our faith," said John, "this is the conquest that conquers the world" (1 John iv. 4), and the explanation of that is to be found in the word of the Master in the Upper Room, "In the world you have trouble. But courage! I have conquered the world" (John xvi. 33), and our union with Him gives us the power that enables us to repeat His victory.

CHAPTER IV

THE EXTENT OF SALVATION

"SALVATION," says Professor Anderson Scott, "is really the most comprehensive term for what the apostle found in Christ. It includes all the chief factors in Christianity, whether in theory or in practice. It looks behind and before; it covers the initial experience, the present status, and the future consummation of those who are Christians. In its backward reference it includes all from which men have been saved through Christ, in its forward reference all that is secured to men in Him. . . . It is in fact hardly too much to say that Christianity was of interest to St. Paul only because it was a method of salvation."[1]

Salvation, we can thus see, is a term that covers a very wide area, and it involves everything that Christ came to do on our behalf.

I

As a rule, however, it is the negative side of the idea that is emphasised most. Salvation is taken to mean deliverance, deliverance from all that terrifies and disturbs and oppresses us; fear and guilt, and the wrath of God and the judgment

[1] "Christianity according to St. Paul," pp. 17-18.

that waits upon sin. "What must I do to be saved?" cried the gaoler at Philippi as his world came tumbling about his ears. It was safety, security, deliverance he wanted, and any salvation that was to be real had to provide it.

What was true in this case is true for human nature always. Salvation must come as deliverance, and this is especially the case with primitive man. In this strange and sometimes cruel world he feels his constant sense of peril, and from all the fear it brings he needs a Saviour.

"How and why," said an experienced missionary, "do so many of the heathen come near to Jesus as their Saviour? Not in the first case perhaps do they come to Christ for pardon out of a sense of the guilt of sin. What do these heathen know of sin? There is no word for sin in their languages. They know what crime is against their social laws, but that can be paid for, atoned for easily, by some form of payment, in money, goods, or slaves. The moral offence, the guilt of a sinner before God, they do not realise. But they are sensible of the trouble and difficulty and pain in their lives, which they commonly attribute to their evil spirit, who has them as much in its power as a master has his slave. So, while a heathen may little appreciate at first—I say at first—what sin is, and thus fail to take in what we mean by salvation and Saviour, his heart is yet drawn to this strong Deliverer, this new Master who is able

to save him from the evil one and not hand him back to that cruel power in his life, if he trusts and obeys Him."[1]

Fear is a dominant motive in many lives; fear of evil spirits, fear of death, fear of circumstances, fear of being found out, and, to the thoughtful mind perhaps deepest of all, fear of ourselves. We live in a world that is often shadowed by mystery, and at any moment we are liable to be confronted by forces that unman and destroy us. We are in constant need of a Saviour who is strong enough to deal with our fears, and such a Saviour we have in Christ. It is remarkable how often He spoke directly to this side of life. "Why are you afraid like this?" He asked (Mark iv. 40). "Have no fear, only believe" (Mark v. 36). A favourite word of His was "Courage!" (Matt. ix. 2; xiv. 27; John. xvi. 33); and His exhortation was based on an appeal to faith. Let men accept His salvation, He said, and they would find in Him the deliverance they needed. He was the "Strong Son of God," and He came to banish the fears that held men in thrall. Multitudes gladly confess that the power of Christ to deliver is all-sufficient. Always the disciples rejoice when they see the Lord, for they know that in Him they have their victory.

[1] "1910 World Missionary Conference Reports," IV. 295-296.

In the present Epistle this negative side of salvation is connected with the sense of guilt. "God's anger," says Paul, "is revealed from heaven against all the impiety and wickedness of those who hinder the truth by their wickedness" (i. 18). Our sin has put us wrong with God, and we lie under the sentence of His righteous wrath. Do what we will, we seem unable to put ourselves right with God, and our position seems utterly hopeless. Then it is that Christ comes and speaks the word of full forgiveness. God in His own free grace pardons all our offences, and, on the ground of His infinite love, we gain our acceptance before Him.

But in connection with sin, guilt is not the only problem. The past, we might say, for good or ill is done with, and we cannot amend it. What of the present? We need a deliverance that can deal with the "power" as well as the "guilt" of sin. Nothing, we saw, makes sin so terrible in human experience as our own inability to master it and drive it out of our lives, and it is the deep awareness of this that makes Indian religion so pessimistic. We are bound to the wheel of our own destiny, and the outlook for us is hopeless. How can we meet this doctrine of Karma which, honestly looked at, seems to have so much to say for itself? The only answer is the redemption that is offered in Christ, the redemption that "breaks the power of cancelled sin" and "sets the

prisoner free." "Sin," says a modern novelist, "might have been eternal; each abominable thing might have kept in our minds constant day and night from the moment it bred there; the theft we did might keep everlastingly our hand in our neighbour's kist as in a trap; the knife we thrust with might have kept us thrusting for ever and ever. But, no! God's good! Sleep comes, and the clean morning, and the morning is Christ, and every new moment of time is a new opportunity to amend."[1]

II

But salvation is more than deliverance. It has a positive side that we must not ignore. It not only means "to be safe," it also means "to be sound," and it was in that sense Christ used the word in connection with His miracles of healing. "Daughter," he said, "your faith has made you well" (Mark v. 34). The word is "saved," and salvation thus means soundness and health in place of weakness and disease. Sin has infected our moral and spiritual nature; it has atrophied our finest instincts; it has produced blindness and deafness and paralysis; it has created the impotence that curses us, and it has therefore unfitted us to carry out the purposes of God. It was as a great Physician that Christ came. "I have come," He said, "that they may have life and

[1] Neil Munro, "The Daft Days," p. 57.

have it to the full" (John x. 10). Salvation means moral and spiritual health.

Hence Paul in his Epistle to the Romans lays his stress on the relation that salvation bears to character. He hotly resents the suggestion that his Gospel leads to antinomianism. If Christ, said his critics, confers on us salvation apart from any merit of ours, "why should we not do evil that good may come out of it?" (iii. 8). Paul replies that no one would say such a thing who understood what salvation in Christ really involves. Christ, he maintains, saves us in order to make us what God wants us to be, and through the Spirit He gives us. He seeks to destroy the evil that sin has wrought and build up our characters in righteousness and true holiness.

A salvation that results in moral and spiritual slackness is, Paul would have declared, a perversion of the salvation that Christ came into the world to bring, and he would have denounced emphatically the type of Christianity that has sometimes been accepted as a substitute for the religion of Christ. Gibbon records the reply of an Armenian archbishop to a popular demand for the removal of the king. "He deplored the manifest and inexcusable vices of Artasires, and declared that he should not hesitate to accuse him before the tribunal of a Christian emperor who would punish, without destroying, the sinner. 'Our king,' continued Isaac, 'is too much

addicted to licentious pleasures, but he has been purified in the holy waters of baptism. He is a lover of women, but he does not adore the fire or the elements. He may deserve the reproach of lewdness, but he is an undoubted catholic; and his faith is pure though his manners are flagitious.'" An answer which Gibbon rightly concludes is "expressive of the character of a superstitious people."[1]

Archbishop Isaac was not, one would imagine, a great student of the Epistle to the Romans. If he had been, he would have observed that the closing chapters of the Epistle deal with the type of character that the Christian salvation is meant to produce. These chapters, some might say, are moral rather than religious. But Paul would have declined to accept the distinction. It is the aim of the Gospel, he argued, to present every man perfect in Christ. "Let us drop the deeds of darkness," he says in the famous passage that was used of God to the conversion of St. Augustine, "and let us put on the armour of the light; let us live decorously as in the open light of day—no revelry or bouts of drinking, no debauchery or sensuality, no quarreling or jealousy. No! put on the character of the Lord Jesus Christ, and never think how to gratify the cravings of the flesh" (xiii. 12-14).

[1] "Decline and Fall," Vol. III., p. 393.

There is for the Gospel no distinction of the kind that is often drawn between religion and ethics. Salvation, if it be real, must show itself in character, and Christ must express Himself in the thought and life of the believer, for " as He is, so must we be in this world." Sometimes the " doctrinal " portions of this Epistle are regarded as forming the substance of Paul's message to the world, but that Paul would have declared to be utterly untrue; the Epistle must be read as a whole, and the closing chapters must be regarded as the conclusion that the earlier chapters are intended to reach.

This emphasis of Paul on the positive side of salvation must never be lost sight of, and it must be especially stressed to those who come from the non-Christian faiths. In these non-Christian faiths, religion and morality as a rule are kept apart. Men and women are led to think that they can do the will of God even though their minds and spirits are steeped in sin. Their ideas of saintliness are often crude and imperfect, and they regard as " holy " men whose only qualifications seem to be a religious profession combined with dirt and greed and laziness. We cannot too often remind ourselves that salvation means fellowship with Jesus Christ, and that fellowship can hardly be possible unless we daily endeavour by the help of His Spirit to walk in His footsteps. An unmoralised salvation is a contradiction in terms. Those

who are Christians must aim at being Christlike, and the twelfth chapter of Romans, in the mind of Paul, is the inevitable sequel to the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth chapters.

Into all the suggestions Paul makes for our Christian conduct it is not necessary here to go. They are summed up in the appeal to "dedicate your bodies as a living sacrifice, consecrated and acceptable to God"; and, "instead of being moulded to this world, have your mind renewed, and so be transformed in nature, able to make out what the will of God is, namely what is good, and acceptable to Him, and perfect" (xii. 1, 2).

III

But salvation, Paul suggests, has social implications. We are members of communities, and as such have relations to other people which cannot be altered. We must work with them, play with them, and live with them; the only difference between them and us being that we are "in Christ," while they are probably not. We might argue that we could be better Christians in a nobler environment, and that may very well be. But Christ has put us where we are, and it is possible, as experience shows, for men and women, by the grace of God, to be saints even in Cæsar's household.

Scattered up and down Paul's epistles we find references of various kinds to the social implica-

tions of the Gospel, and on most of the relationships of life he has something sane and truly "inspired" to say. He does not pretend to deal with everything; he refers only to those things that were brought to his own immediate notice. He does not speak "ex cathedra"; the final authority in all matters of conduct, he frankly recognises, must be the Master Himself as he speaks by His Spirit to the soul of the believer. We must be prepared for differences of opinion about the practical bearings of our faith, and we must never arrogate to ourselves the lordship of souls. "Who are you," asks Paul, "to criticise the servant of Another? It is for his Master to say whether he stands or falls." "Every one must be convinced in his own mind" (xiv. 4, 5), and, so long as we seek the guidance of Christ, we can insist on our right to interpret for ourselves the social implications of our faith.

In the present Epistle Paul deals with only two points in our social relationships.

The first is concerned with the attitude that Christian people should take up to the civil authorities by whom they are governed, in this case the Roman Empire (xiii. 1-10). A little while before this, the Jews had been expelled from Rome for their turbulence, and, though they were now back in the city, they were still inclined to be restless. This fact had its effects, no doubt, on the members of the Roman Church, especially those

who were themselves Jews, and Paul felt it necessary to say something about it. Why, they asked, should the people of God give obedience to pagan rulers? and Paul replies by expanding the principle of the Master Himself. "Give Cæsar what belongs to Cæsar, give God what belongs to God" (Matt. xxii. 21).

"The existing authorities," says Paul, "have been constituted by God. Hence anyone who resists authority is opposing the divine order, and the opposition will bring judgment on themselves" (xiii. 1, 2). Rulers exist for the good of the whole community, and it is our duty to be loyal to them. Only evil-doers have cause for alarm. Christian people "must be obedient, not only to avoid the divine vengeance, but as a matter of conscience" (xiii. 5). "We must pay the authorities all their respective dues, tribute to one, taxes to another, respect to this man, honour to that" (xiii. 7).

All this, most Christian people would admit, is admirably said, and, in the normally governed state, no questions about it can fairly be raised. The one problem that arises is the problem of the unjust and tyrannical ruler. Are Christians to yield obedience on all occasions, and can kings, like James I. and Charles I., on the ground of this passage, claim that they are the Lord's anointed, with "divine right" to govern wrongly? Few would be prepared to go so far as this, and Paul himself would have said that every individual case

must be judged on its own merits. For instance, in 1642, both king and parliament claimed the obedience of loyal subjects, but they were directly opposed to each other, and men were forced to decide for themselves which of the two was the government that most nearly approximated to the mind of God. In exceptional cases every Christian must act as he believes the spirit of Christ is teaching him. The one vital point, however, is this, that good government must be maintained, and it is the duty of every Christian to make the state he lives in as much as possible "God's servant" for the sake of all.

In Paul's day that meant little more than yielding obedience to the lawful authorities. But in our time it means a great deal besides, for we ourselves in the last resort are the government, and every Christian should do his utmost to use his opportunities of service. We can vote, we can help to educate public opinion, we can stand for municipal or parliamentary office; we can, in our own several spheres, exert enormous influence, and for the sake of the Kingdom we ought to exercise our citizenship worthily. No man does all he might for God who does not play his part in the life of the community, and, had Paul been writing to-day, he would have emphasised service as much as obedience in connection with the state of which we are members.

The other point in social ethics that Paul dis-

cusses deals with the relationship that Christian people must hold to each other (xiv.-xv. 13). Even in Christ we do not all see eye to eye. There are diversities of gifts, and we look at things from different angles. There are therefore bound to be differences of opinion, some of them trivial, but others, perhaps, very deep and very serious. How are we, in view of these divergencies, to act towards each other, and what is to be our general rule of conduct?

Paul discusses this problem in connection with scruples of conscience. "While one man has enough confidence to eat any food, the man of weak faith eats only vegetables" (xiv. 2), and in the same way "this man rates one day above another, while that man rates all days alike" (xiv. 5). It is uncertain whether Paul is here referring to specific cases or only taking such examples as occurred to him. But, anyhow, the main point is this, that each of the men in question is firmly convinced that he is acting in accordance with the will of Christ, and there seems no way of bridging the gulf between them.

Paul's own personal sympathies are with the man who "has enough confidence to eat any food" and the man who "rates all days alike," and he suggests that over-scrupulosity is a sign of "weak faith." People are afraid to venture out on the high seas with Christ, and they therefore cling to old and well-established landmarks.

But Paul does not press his own point of view; for every man, he says, must recognise his neighbour's right to look at God through his own eyes. "The eater (of meat) must not look down upon the non-eater, and the non-eater must not criticise the eater"; there must be neither contempt on the one side nor censoriousness on the other, for "God has welcomed" both parties (xiv. 3), and we can hardly question His wisdom. After all, it is only God's opinion that really matters, and we should therefore "stop criticising one another" (xiv. 13).

But Paul goes further than this; it is not enough to respect our neighbour's conscientious scruples, he says; we must "make up our mind never to put any stumbling-block or hindrance in our brother's way" (xiv. 13). The danger is that the man of strong and robust opinions is apt to ride roughshod over the feelings of others; he is so sure of his own position that he becomes impatient with those who cannot accept it; and, as a result, he wounds and hurts consciences that are more sensitive than his own. Is this, asks Paul, the sort of spirit that a Christian ought to show to his neighbour? Truth, no doubt, must be maintained, and a man must be honest with his neighbours. But "honesty" is no excuse for gruffness and harshness, and the summary of social ethics for a Christian is that he must "love his fellowman" always (xiii. 9). "If your brother," says

Paul, "is being injured because you eat a certain food, then you are no longer living by the rule of love." "You must not break down God's work for the mere sake of food. Everything may be clean (in Paul's own personal judgment it is) but it is wrong for a man to prove a stumbling-block by what he eats; the right course is to abstain from flesh and wine or indeed anything that your brother feels to be a stumbling-block" (xiv. 15, 20, 21). No man can call himself truly Christlike who asserts his own opinions altogether regardless of their effect upon others. We must use tact and consideration in our dealings with people about us, and "we who are strong ought to bear the burdens that the weak make for themselves and us." "We are not to please ourselves. Each of us must please his neighbour, doing him good and building up his faith" (xv. 1, 2).

No lesson is more needed in Christian communities, especially in these days of democracy. It is not always easy to reconcile faithfulness to our own conviction with respect for other people's. We feel we must bear our witness; we must be true to truth as we see it, and no one would ask that it should be otherwise. But always we must "speak the truth in love," and we must remember that none of us can rightly claim to be infallible. Said Cromwell to the General Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland: "Is it therefore infallibly agreeable to the word of God, all that you say? I

beseech you, in the bowels of Christ think it possible you may be mistaken. There may be a spiritual fulness which the World may call drunkenness, as in the second chapter of the Acts; there may be, as well, a carnal confidence upon misunderstood and misapplied precepts which may be called spiritual drunkenness."[1] We must recognise our limitations, and we must, if needs be, agree in the brotherly spirit to differ. Let each man be faithful to his own convictions, but let him also allow other people to be faithful to theirs. It may seem to us unfortunate that all Christian people do not see things as we do. But there the fact is, and we must make allowances for it if we are to live together at all.

Supremely, however, every question of difference of opinion, like every other question of social attitude, must be looked at in the light of the love that the spirit of Christ creates. We dare not claim for ourselves the Master's name and, at the same time, by arrogant self-assertiveness in speech or in conduct, injure even the least of His little ones that believe in His name. We are not to be "like those who court human favour" (Col. iii. 22), but we must, for all that, think continually about our neighbours, and we must, above all things, keep in mind the example of Him who for love's sake, "did not please Himself" (xv. 3).

[1] "Letters and Speeches": Letter CXXXVI.

Christian people, in spite of all their differences, should be able to live harmoniously together, and, if they are all possessed by the Saviour's spirit, they will. "By this," He said, "every one will recognise that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John xiii. 35).

IV

There is one other aspect of salvation that we have not yet touched upon. Salvation with Paul has always a future reference, and no view of salvation can be adequate that leaves that future reference out of account.

In a sense, it is true, we can speak of ourselves as "saved," and this we commonly do. We have experienced in Christ the power of God, and we know that nothing can ever separate us from the love the Cross reveals. Christ has begun the good work in us, and we can believe that He will go on to the end. We have committed our lives to the Saviour, and so we are "saved."

But clearly, "saved" is here only potential. Our salvation is guaranteed by the Cross, but it has still to be wrought out in our lives. Hence Paul prefers to speak of salvation as a process. We are "being saved," and the Gospel is "the power of God that has salvation in view." Salvation is the "one far-off divine event" to which every one of us as well as "the whole creation moves." It is the goal that God has set before us,

and every day, as we grow in grace, we can say of it that "Salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed" (xiii. 11). We have a God-given hope in view, and, in spite of our present failures, frailties, and short-comings we persevere; it is our hope that saves us (viii. 24), and, though we are still in a world of sin and sorrow, we look forward to the day when Christ, "after putting down all other rulers, all other authorities and powers," "Himself will be put under Him who put everything under Him, so that God may be everything to every one" (1 Cor. xv. 24-28).

This future salvation Paul conceives as something already accomplished in the mind of God, and it stands ready to be disclosed as soon as the "Crisis" (xiv. 11) comes. "It is far on in the night," he says, "the day is almost here" (xiii. 12). Like all Christians in his time, he believed in the nearness of Christ's second coming. Much of the apocalyptic colouring of his early epistles had faded from his mind. But he still thought of the possible imminence of Christ's appearance in his own generation, and for him that meant the consummation of all things.

We know now that, in common with the whole early church, Paul was mistaken in his interpretation of the "Parousia." But he was certainly right in thinking that our salvation is essentially of God, and we must prepare ourselves to receive it. "Let us drop the deeds of darkness and put

on the armour of light" (xiv. 12). We are destined for divine things, and we must live as those who expect them.

What it all means we cannot possibly say.

> What no eye has ever seen,
> What no ear has ever heard,
> What never entered the mind of man,
> God has prepared all that for those who love Him
> (1 Cor. ii. 9).

But we know that life for us goes on. "We believe that as we have died with Christ we shall also live with him" (vi. 18); "He who raised Christ from the dead will also make your mortal bodies live by His indwelling Spirit in your lives" (viii. 11). We shall attain "our full sonship" and receive "the redemption of the body" (viii. 23). For this consummation of all our hopes "the entire creation" also waits, for it has been "rendered futile," not by its own choice but by the will of Him who thus made it subject, the hope being that creation as well as man would one day be freed from its thraldom to decay and gain the glorious freedom of the children of God" (viii. 20-22).

The future for Christian people is "bright with the promises of God."

> The best is yet to be,
> The last of life for which the first was made.

Salvation in the fullest sense is still before us, and, as we think of all that the Cross of Christ involves,

we say to our fears and doubts and uncertainties, "If we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son when we were His enemies, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by His life" (v. 10).

Here, then, we have the word of our salvation. Our need is met in God, and we have in the Cross His pledge of our redemption. There is for every one that accepts it a divine power that is all-sufficient to save to the uttermost, and even the most utterly depraved can look forward to standing at last "unblemished and exultant" before the presence of God's glory (Jude 24). The salvation of God is perfect and complete, and it is available for whosoever will.

Inevitably, therefore, our Gospel has a missionary outlook. It thinks of the need of man all over the world, and it yearns out of its own fulness to provide the adequate supply. "There is no distinction of Jew and Greek"; humanity at bottom is everywhere the same, with the same problems, the same sins, and the same deep yearnings for power. There is no "distinction" in need, and there is no distinction in grace. God desires to be to all what He is to any, and He longs for the day when those that have understood in any degree the salvation He offers will agree to co-operate with Him in bringing the needy sons and daughters of men to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus.

ADDITIONAL NOTE

SALVATION AND ELECTION

It is not necessary in a book of this character to discuss every problem that the Epistle to the Romans raises, but it seems desirable to say a word or two on the subject of election as it is dealt with by Paul in chapters ix.-xi.

We must bear in mind that these chapters were meant to be read as a consecutive argument addressed to a particular difficulty that Paul had in mind. He was deeply concerned by the refusal of the Jews as a whole to accept the Gospel, and, for his own peace of mind, he had to grapple with the problem it raised. Had God abandoned the Jews and put the Gentiles in their place? To many people it looked like it, and it seemed to imply that God had turned His back on the people He had first professed to love.

Paul replies to this charge by asserting three things: (1) God is absolutely free to act as He desires (ix. 1-29); (2) the Jews, as a matter of fact, have put themselves in the wrong by their own unbelief in the Gospel (ix. 30-x. 21); but (3) that does not mean that He has finished with them for ever, for, through the faith of the Gentiles, He hopes to provoke the Jews to jealousy and make them eager to recover the position they have lost, and thus He will be able to have mercy on all, Gentiles and Jews alike (xi.).

With the second and third of these points there has never been very much difficulty. All the trouble has arisen in connection with the first one. Paul states

his doctrine of the sovereignty of God in too abstract a fashion, and he makes use of expressions that have caused many innocent souls a great deal of mental distress. After all, God is what He is revealed to be in the Cross, and His freedom must not be dissociated from His everlasting love. It is because Paul has, for the moment, ignored the idea of Saviourhood that his language has so harsh a sound. God is not free to deal with us as though we were automata, and it would have been well if Paul had made this clear.

There is this, however, to be said in mitigation of Paul's language, that he was dealing with a definite situation. He was trying to demolish the self-complacency of the Jews, and it seemed to him that he would best do it by reminding them that God who had chosen them was equally free to reject them. But, having said that much, he goes on to remind the Jews that God's purpose of grace is still the same for all, and hence the eleventh chapter is, in Paul's mind, the ultimate solution of the problems raised in the ninth.

PART IV

THE MISSIONARY

CHAPTER I

THE MISSIONARY AS SLAVE

PAUL was a man of the most amazing gifts, and, whether we regard him as a thinker or as a man of affairs, he stands supreme among the greatest men that ever lived. No one in history has done more than he to shape the channels of human life and thought, and, measure him how we like, we cannot fail to appreciate his extraordinary powers. In almost every direction in Christian experience he was a pioneer, and we who come after him can do little more than try to walk in his footsteps and apply to our own conditions the principles he so long ago laid down.

But beyond all else, Paul was a missionary, and it is as a missionary that he would himself desire to be remembered. His whole interest lay in the redemption of men and women. "For your souls," he says, "I will gladly spend my all and be spent myself" (2 Cor. xii. 15); "woe to me if I preach not the Gospel"; "to all men I have become all things to save some by all means" (1 Cor. ix. 16, 22). The passion for souls never left him, and so deep-seated was his missionary enthusiasm that he traced it back to the purpose of God for his life. "The God who had set me apart from my very birth," he says, "called me

by His grace and chose to reveal His Son in that I might preach Him to the Gentiles" (Gal. i. 15). Paul was born to be a missionary, and, as soon as he discovered the fact, he gave it the dominant place in his life. Faithfully he could say of himself, "I did not disobey the heavenly vision" (Acts xxvi. 20). Wherever he went he strove to be an apostle of the Gospel of Christ. It was as a missionary he lived, and it was as a missionary he died; "life," he said, "means Christ to me" (Phil. i. 21), and his great career was his exposition of the statement.

In an epistle like this, that deals so definitely with sin and salvation, it is not surprising to come across phrases which throw light on Paul's missionary motives and ideals, and it is worth our while to examine a few of these.

Paul had no higher title for himself than that which he uses in the opening verse of this Epistle. He was a "slave of Jesus Christ," and that expression coloured his whole conception of his purpose in life.

It reminded him of all he owed to Christ, for, closely associated with slavery, was redemption, and Christ was Paul's Redeemer. He had come into the world to secure the release of Paul from the thraldom of sin, and He paid in Himself the price that was demanded. He gave His life a ransom for many (Mark x. 45); "it was not by perishable silver or gold that you were ransomed,"

said Peter, "but by the precious blood of Christ, a Lamb unblemished and unstained" (1 Pet. i. 18).

Paul could never forget his debt to Christ. He gazed on the Cross with a sense of unspeakable wonder. "The Son of God," he says, "loved *me* and gave Himself up for *me*" (Gal. ii. 20). Could there be greater, more wonderful love than this?

> From the highest height in glory
> To the Cross of deepest woe;
> All to ransom guilty captives—
> Flow, my praise, for ever flow.

As Paul thought of all he owed to Christ, he felt that nothing he could do could ever exhaust his obligation. He was ready to "spend and be spent"; his life, he said, was no longer his own, it belonged to Christ; he was "bought for a price" (1 Cor. vi. 20), and he must live henceforth no longer unto himself, but unto Christ who had died for him. The love of Christ controlled him (2 Cor. v. 14); that was the power that kept him from living for selfish ends, that was the constraint that made him a missionary.

It is safe to say that the motive for all missionary effort must be found where Paul puts it, in the thought of the redemption that Christ has bought. Without Christ we should be, in the saddest and darkest sense of the term, "lost" men and women; "devoid of hope and God within the world" (Eph. ii. 12). We owe everything to

Christ—our forgiveness, our hope, our peace, our inspiration, our power. We have only to say to ourselves, "If Christ had not come"; we have only to imagine—if we can—what life would be without Him, to realise that our debt to Him is unspeakable. From the slavery of sin Christ by His sacrifice has freed us; He gave us our freedom as sons and daughters of God; and our gratitude to Him can never die.

But the metaphor as Paul uses it here means more than redemption. We were slaves of sin, and Christ has redeemed us. But why? What had Christ on His mind when He came to the slave-market of sin and agreed to pay the ransom that secured us our liberty? Plainly Christ had a motive, and we are bound to ask ourselves what it was.

In Paul's mind there was never any doubt about the answer. Christ bought us from the slavery of sin to make us "His own purchased possession." We were not set free by His grace that we might thereafter do as we like. Many Christian people unfortunately seem to think so. But this is because they have never really thought the matter through. Christ, Paul suggests, has redeemed us to make us slaves to Himself. In a sense, by grace we only exchange one slavery for another. "Set free from sin, we have passed into the service of righteousness" (vi. 18). We are still under authority; our bodies and spirits belong to the

Master who bought us. He has paid the price and redeemed us from sin only that we may hereafter be His own, the slaves who in gratitude have accepted His will and pledged themselves for ever to His service.

Paul frankly recognised that he belonged body and soul to Christ. The slave-metaphor runs all through the passage, and behind every word that Paul uses about himself there is the thought of a mind and will that governs his own. Paul is a "man under authority." The Master has "called" him and "apostled" him, literally sent him away on the errands of the Gospel of God, and it was Paul's business to be faithful to the task assigned to him.

"You have not chosen Me," said the Master in the Upper Room. "It is I who have chosen you, appointing you to go and bear fruit" (John xv. 16). We are "apprehended of Christ Jesus," and from Him we receive the commission of our service. We are "chosen vessels," and we simply carry to whomsoever He sends us what He gives us. We are slaves of Christ, and it is ours to subordinate our wills completely to His.

Is there any other explanation of any one of us that is adequate? Christ has chosen us for Himself by His sacrifice, and henceforth we must live no longer unto ourselves but unto Him that loved us and gave Himself for us. We must daily and

hourly, under the spell of His Cross, give our lives to His obedience.

For what? There can hardly be any serious doubt about the answer. Christ gave Himself in life and death for the Kingdom; the great, broad purpose of redemption was always before Him; His one concern was to seek and save that which was lost. And so it must be with us. We must make His life's purpose our own; we must be to Him the eyes and hands and feet and lips He seeks for the expression of His spirit in the world to-day; we must co-operate with Him in His task of winning the world for God; and hence we must be missionaries.

CHAPTER II

THE MISSIONARY AS DEBTOR

No one can live long in the world without becoming aware of the debts he has accumulated. We are linked in every conceivable way to the world into which we have come.

If we take it at its lowest and think of our physical existence, we realise that we are heirs of a heritage that goes back for thousands and thousands of years. There is no more romantic story than that which science has given us of the long, slow process by which we have come to be what we are. Millennium after millennium, our ancestors have fought their way up the ladder of evolution, and we are, in the most literal sense, the "heirs of all the ages." Our debt to the untold millions before us can never be stated in words; we can only say, we are what we are because they by their efforts upwards, have made it possible.

But our debt on the physical side does not end with the past; it is going on steadily every moment of the present, and we keep ourselves on our present level of life because humanity everywhere is at work to sustain us. Other men labour, and we daily enter into their labours; our food and drink, the clothes we wear, the houses we live in,

the thousand and one things that go to make our life what it is—we owe them all to multitudes of men and women in every land under heaven. Every day we live we increase our debt to the world, and no single one of us can say that, in even the physical sense, he is self-made.

And if we have taken the broad view of this, how much truer it seems to become! Our whole life, mental and spiritual, has its roots in the soil of humanity, a soil created by the thoughts and ideals and inspirations of all the generations. Every nation has contributed to it; poets and thinkers and teachers of all ages and lands have poured the wealth of their genius into the common store, and from it, consciously or unconsciously, we have drawn what we needed. There are no geographical boundaries in the world of thought; east and west and north and south, the realm of the moral and spiritual is the common possession of all, and we are debtors to everyone else.

That being so—and who of us can deny it?—is it not our duty to impart to others as they have given to us? "Freely ye have received," said Christ, "freely give." It would be the grossest selfishness to do otherwise. We owe a debt to all humanity, and a debt becomes a duty. All nations have contributed to our welfare, and we ought to contribute to theirs. "To Greeks and to barbarians, to wise and to foolish alike," said Paul,

"I owe a duty" (i. 14). And if he felt that, how much more must we!

Missionary work is thus a moral obligation imposed upon us by our sense of duty to humanity. At its lowest, it could be argued that sheer devotion to truth should urge us to preach the Gospel. A scientist regards it as a crime to keep knowledge locked away from the world; if a fuller knowledge comes to him, he feels bound, by the very nature of his vocation, to communicate that knowledge to others not so fortunate as himself; and in the same way, we might say that we must engage in missionary work for the sake of correcting, and wherever possible, supplementing, the non-Christian faiths of the world. They are but "broken lights," often, alas! so dim that the face of God is distorted and misconceived, and it is unworthy and unjust that we, who know the truth so much more clearly and definitely, should keep it to ourselves. We are in honour bound to give to others the knowledge that has come to us.

But a scientist's devotion to truth is not enough to make a man or a woman a missionary. A missionary's zeal is kindled when he thinks of people who could mean so much more to the world for God and the highest things if only they knew of the "truth as it is in Jesus." We think of all the devotion and capacity that are given to the service of imperfect and unworthy religions. If only it were enlightened and inspired by the Gospel! If

only it were expended on the Kingdom instead of being wasted on "delectable things that do not profit"; if only, in fact, the zeal for God was "according to knowledge," what a glorious thing it would be for the world, and how much more speedily the reign of God would come!

The millions of the non-Christian world are men and women like ourselves, with the same yearning for the infinite Father, the same desire for "the peace that passeth all understanding," the same need for forgiveness and comfort and hope and courage. They are our brothers and sisters, made in the same image of God as ourselves, and we owe it to them, by the ties of a common humanity, to see that they receive the Gospel that has meant so much to ourselves. It is a crime to keep it from them, and God expects us to be faithful to them as well as to Him.

Many of the early missionaries, we should agree, had a very imperfect idea of their own vocation. They went to save "brands from the burning," and some of them, the heroic Jesuit missionaries in Canada, for example, seemed to think that so long as they sprinkled a few drops of water on a "heathen" brow they had accomplished his soul's salvation. But at least these men were aware of their debt to humanity, and sought to pay it. They could not sleep at night because the cry of perishing souls was in their ears,

and they went forth to deliver them from the flames of hell.

With a clearer knowledge of what our service for Christ involves, we must still feel the "burden of souls," the sense that we can never be free from our debt till we have done our utmost to give to others the word that has brought such life to ourselves. We owe it to our fellow men and women that they should be partakers with us in the riches of Christ, and not until all have heard the glad tidings can we consider ourselves discharged from our obligation to them.

CHAPTER III

THE MISSIONARY AS LOGICIAN

THERE is one passage in the Epistle (x. 11-15) which consists of a brief statement of the Gospel message followed by a series of questions. The Gospel message represents the premises from which Paul starts; each of the questions is a stage in the argument, and, by the time we have reached the end of the series, we are bound to feel that, on the basis of the premises, the conclusion is irresistible.

Paul begins, as he so often does, with an Old Testament quotation. This gives him, he feels, a foundation for his message that cannot very well be shaken. People might question the authority of Paul, but it was hardly likely that they would deny the authority of Scripture. Interestingly enough, the quotation as Paul gives it is not exact; so long as he gave the main drift of the passage he was satisfied, and a variation in the details did not trouble him.

"No one who believes on Him," he quotes (from Isaiah xxviii. 16), "will ever be disappointed." The original has "make haste" for "be disappointed." But Paul is concerned with the central idea, that it is faith that saves. Everything in the passage turns on "believing in Him,"

and that, for Paul, is the essence of the Gospel. It was true for men under all conditions. Salvation is God's gift in answer to faith, and Paul goes on to expand the point. "There is no distinction of Jew and Greek," he says. "The same Lord is Lord of them all, with ample for all who invoke Him." This Paul confirms by another Old Testament quotation, this time from Joel ii. 32. "Every one who invokes the name of the Lord shall be saved."

But, looking at this more closely, we are bound to observe that though the message is universal, it is centralised in the one Lord. "The word of faith which we preach," says Paul, "is this: Confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord—perhaps the first, and certainly the best of all the Christian creeds—believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, and you will be saved" (x. 8, 9). The Gospel is enshrined in the revelation of God's love in Jesus Christ, and for the New Testament "there is no salvation by anyone else, nor even a second Name under heaven appointed for us men and our salvation" (Acts iv. 12). His is a "Name above all names," and every tongue must confess that "Jesus Christ is Lord" "to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. ii. 9, 10); there is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all" (Eph. iv. 5); and there is one Saviour who for us men and our salvation came into the world, and lived, and died, and rose again. The Gospel,

in other words, is unique, and, says Paul, "whoever preaches a Gospel that contradicts the Gospel I preached to you, God's curse be on him" (Gal. i. 9). "I am the real and living way," said Christ. "No one comes to the Father except by means of Me" (John xiv. 6).

Does this mean that all other religions are insufficient? Undoubtedly; and in these days of religious liberalism that fact needs to be stressed. It is common to speak of Christianity—perhaps it would be better to say the Gospel—as though it were just like other religions, only superior. "But," says Robert E. Speer, "that is an entirely inadequate and misleading way to speak of it, for Christianity is not a religion at all in the sense in which these non-Christian religions are so described. Mahommedanism, for example, is the religion of a book; Buddhism is the religion of a method; Hinduism is the religion of a social system; Confucianism is the religion of a political philosophy. Now, Christianity has a Book; Christianity has a moral method; Christianity indicates social ideals; Christianity breeds political theories; but Christianity is not these things. Christianity is a personal relationship. It is not a religion at all. It is a life lived inside a life."

No one who knows anything at all about what they stand for would attempt to disparage other religions. Even the lowest and poorest of them is a sacred thing, and represents an attempt on the

part of man to climb the upward path that leads to God. Every religion should be regarded with respect. But when it comes to matters of "comparative" or "superlative," there can surely be no hesitation in anyone's mind. The Gospel of Christ towers far above its neighbours, and the next best is a very, very long way below. Apart from the experience of the Cross and all it represents, where is there in any religion a view of God or of man that can compare with the view we have in the Gospel? and where outside of Christ do we know of a moral dynamic that is adequate to human needs? The more we think of it, the more certain we are that there is for men and women only one way of salvation in any deep and true sense, and that is the way which Christ has opened. He is the one Lord, the one Saviour, and there is "not even a second Name under heaven appointed for us men and our salvation."

"Every one," we believe, "who invokes the name of the Lord shall be saved." "But," asks Paul, "how are they to invoke One in whom they do not believe? And how are they to believe in One of whom they have never heard? And how are they ever to hear without a preacher? And how can men preach unless they are sent?" And, when it comes home to our own hearts, how can they be sent if we refuse to send them?

If we grant the uniqueness of the message, the missionary obligation must follow, for ultimately

our interest in the work of spreading the Gospel is determined by our sense of what Christ really means to the world. If He is only one among many saviours, we shall be quite content to let Him do His saving work in His way, while they do it in theirs. But if, on the other hand, He is, as the New Testament declares He is, the only Saviour, woe is unto us if we do not preach the Gospel! "That," as Paul says, "we are constrained to do" (1 Cor. ix. 16); constrained by the knowledge of all it involves for needy humanity, Jew and Greek alike.

"If Christianity is true," said Archbishop Whately, "we ought to propagate it; if it is not true, we ought to change it."

CHAPTER IV

THE MISSIONARY AS ANATHEMA

THERE is a sense in which every true missionary must be "anathema" to a great many people. He stands for things they neither believe in nor want to see. He, consciously or unconsciously, criticises standards of life they themselves want to maintain, and, as such, he is unpopular, and many harsh and bitter things are said about him. But a true missionary does not mind being "anathema" in that sense of the term; indeed, he rather glories in it, for that is just what he ought to be to those people; if he were not, it might be seriously questioned whether he was honestly doing his work. "If the world hates you," said Christ, "remember it hated Me first. If you belonged to the world, the world would love what it owned; it is because you do not belong to the world, because I have chosen you from the world, that the world hates you"(John xv. 19). An awakened conscience is something people do not always like, and those who help in the awakening must expect to be unpopular.

But when Paul speaks of being anathema as a missionary of Christ it is not of the world he is thinking. "I could have wished myself anathema," he says. "I could have wished myself

accursed and banished from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my natural kinsmen" (ix. 3). So great is his love for them that he is ready to be a castaway if only by so being he can save them for the Kingdom.

Paul could not put his redemptive passion more strongly, for everyone knows that Christ represented to him the sum of all true existence. "For Christ's sake," he says, "I have learned to count my former gains a loss; indeed, I count anything a loss, compared to the supreme value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have lost everything (I count it all the veriest refuse) in order to gain Christ and be found at death in Him" (Phil. iii. 7-9). Christ was the end, for Christ was the beginning, and without His presence life for Paul was meaningless.

To say then that he could have wished himself "accursed and banished from Christ" was the most extreme form of perdition that Paul could conceive; it meant banishment to the outer darkness; it meant death in the only sense that was real to Paul. And yet, for the sake of his brothers, his natural kinsmen, he was prepared, he said, to make that his portion for ever. Could anything indicate a truer devotion? Could Paul more truly reveal his passion for souls?

Something like this must be the spirit of every missionary of Christ, whether his sphere is "at home" or "abroad." Without love to the utter-

most we can never impress the hearts of men and women with our reality. We need enthusiasm, conviction, whole-hearted devotion.

"Let my name be blotted out, but let France be free," cried Danton at the height of the French Revolution, and the same disregard of self for the sake of bringing salvation can be the only secret of power. It is the spirit of utter self-forgetfulness that makes a man or a woman a missionary.

"One type of Indian Buddhism," says Estlin Carpenter,[1] "looks to Avalokiteçvara, who made the famous vow not to enter into final peace until all things—even the worst demons in the lowest hell—should know the saving truth and be converted." Given a Church inspired by a spirit like this, we should speedily win the world. Obstacles would prove no hindrance; sacrifices would be regarded as privileges; we should feel that the end before us was worth all the cost it demanded, and, for the sake of saving mankind, we should gladly count ourselves anathema.

Something like this is the explanation of the Cross. "Jesus," says the writer to the Hebrews, "in order to reach His own appointed joy, steadily endured the Cross, thinking nothing of its shame" (Heb. xii. 2). He had the vision of a redeemed world before Him, and He did not hesitate to pay the price when the price was de-

[1] "Comparative Religion," p. 131.

manded. As He thought of all that men and women could be if He were only faithful to His saving vocation, "He humbly stooped in His obedience even to die, and to die upon the Cross" (Phil. ii. 8). He endured to the uttermost, but His love for us sustained Him, and His sacrifice of Himself made our salvation for ever a reality.

"As Thou hast sent Me into the world," He said, "so have I sent them into the world, and for their sakes I consecrate Myself that they may be consecrated by the truth" (John xvii. 19). To have fellowship with Him is to share His spirit, and to resolve like Him to "endure the Cross, thinking nothing of its shame," if only men and women thereby may be saved.

CHAPTER V

THE MISSIONARY AS PASTOR

THE Epistle to the Romans is usually regarded as a treatise in theology, and many people fight shy of it in consequence. This fact is extremely unfortunate in that it prevents them from appreciating one of the greatest books in the world, and it is a pity in many ways that they do not begin their study of the Epistle with the last chapter instead of the first; for in the last chapter we are brought face to face with the human, friendly, lovable Paul, and the picture left on our minds abides with us and, in consequence, we read his message more sympathetically.

His whole power as a missionary lay in his capacity for giving and receiving love. He entered into people's lives, and he made them feel that he wanted, if he could, to bear their burdens and solve their problems.

In the first epistle he ever wrote he gives us a delightful description of his apostolic work. "We behaved gently when we were among you," he says, "like a nursing mother cherishing her own children, fain, in our yearning affection for you, to impart not only the Gospel of God to you, but our very souls as well—you had so won our love" (1 Thess. ii. 7, 8). Paul spared himself no

pains in dealing with his converts, and when he built them into a church the cement he used was the love that filled his heart. He was willing to do anything for them, and, "like a nursing mother cherishing her children," he taught them and trained them by the very care and affection he lavished upon them. This passage, beautiful as it is, seems to gain in attractiveness when for "gently" we substitute the variant reading "as babes," and think of Paul, in Augustine's words, as "talking baby-language" among his babes in Christ. The great apostle was great because he was so tender, so gracious, so ready to give himself to the uttermost for the sake of his converts.

In our present Epistle this quality in his character comes out in the kindly remembrances he sends to his friends at Rome.

He had met them at some place or other in the course of his travels, and, in various ways, he had come into contact with them. Some of them had helped him in his work. But, whatever their relationship to him had been, he had never forgotten them. Though he was an incredibly busy man, moving about from place to place and immersed continually in the affairs of the churches, he nevertheless kept in touch with them all, and he knew when they went to Rome.

They were people of all types and conditions, but he had that real genius for friendship which refuses to lump men and women together. They

were all individuals, and Paul, by some epithet he attached to their names, showed them that he kept for each of them a distinctive place in his mind. They had all a relationship of their own to himself, and he did not forget it. "My beloved Epænetus—the first in Asia to be reaped for Christ"; "Andronicus and Junias, fellow-countrymen and fellow-prisoners of mine"; "that tried Christian, Apelles"; "that choice Christian Rufus, also his mother who has been a mother to me."

What a man this was! So unquestionably great as a thinker and as a statesman; scholar, preacher, pioneer of the faith; one of the outstanding geniuses of all time. And yet withal so delightfully human, so friendly, so lovable. He was a born leader of men, and that because he so gave himself to them in self-denying devotion that he won their gratitude and undying affection.

Paul was deeply interested in the men and women he sought for Christ's sake to help. He spared himself no pains in the course of his ministry, and all who met him knew that the rich warm blood of human sympathy coursed through his veins; and no missionary can do much for Jesus Christ, either "at home" or "abroad," who does not, like Paul, greatly love men and women. He must find constant joy in watching their endless variety of character, the little odd tricks of speech and behaviour and habit that give people

their individuality. His interest in life as he sees it going on before him should give zest and happiness to his work, and it should also create for him those opportunities of helping men and women that make his ministry truly worth while. The work is often hard and exacting. People show themselves thoughtless and careless. The response one covets does not always come, and sometimes we are driven to ask ourselves if, after all, we have not made a mistake in our vocation. There is constant need for the love which is "very patient, very kind, always slow to expose, always eager to believe the best, always hopeful, always patient" (1 Cor. xiii. 4, 7).

But, if the spiritual cost of helping people is great, as it undoubtedly is, the rewards are also great. For the missionary or minister who has the truly shepherd soul wins multitudes of friends, he discovers a wealth of generous affection in human hearts, and he has the joy of knowing that he has helped some lame dogs over the stile and made life easier and better for the men and women he has tried to serve. If for the sake of his vocation he leaves all and follows Christ, he finds that the Master's promise comes true in his experience. "No one has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for My sake and for the sake of the Gospel who does not get a hundred times as much in this present world—homes, brothers, sisters,

mothers, children and lands, together with persecutions, and in the world to come life eternal" (Mark x. 29, 30).

Missionary work, if it is done at all, is done through friendship, and that is true of even the Lord Himself. "Rich though He was, He became poor for the sake of us" (2 Cor. viii. 9); He came in love and sat down by our side; in speech and in deed He sought to show that He wanted to help us; and at last, in His death, He gave Himself to the uttermost on our behalf. Christ is the supreme Friend, and by His Gift of Himself He has gained the response He seeks. So it must always be. It is only through love that we can hope to awaken love, and those of us who endeavour to follow the Master in the service of the Kingdom must ever seek to live in His presence and drink of His Spirit, that we may become like Him and manifest the grace that He so supremely showed.

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Cook

The epistle to the Romans.

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