Notes on Titus

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Titus

With translation of an amended text.

Introduction.

The Epistle before us has a character a good deal in common with those to Timothy, particularly with the First Epistle, but not without a certain answer to the Second also. Order however is a prominent feature. A charge for its maintenance was given to Titus, rather than that care for doctrine which is so conspicuous, though order is not forgotten, in the First Epistle to Timothy. Without doubt the different circumstances called for these differences of object. Salvation shines brightly throughout.

There is another thing which modifies them all. Titus, though a trusty companion of the apostle, and his own child according to the faith no less than Timothy, did not stand in the same place of intimate affection as the younger labourer, into whose heart the apostle could pour out his feelings, sorrowful or bright, without reserve. This we saw strikingly in the Second Epistle to Timothy; it has no place in the Epistle to Titus where the exigencies of the work and of the workman occupy (with saving grace and the moral order of the saints) the Epistle. It is remarkable that Titus has no mention in the Acts of the Apostles,1 where we hear so much of Timothy. But there is no warrant for supposing that his visit to Dalmatia subsequent to the present Epistle had anything in common with the state of Demas. The frequent and most honourable mention of his service in

the Epistles of Paul ought to leave no doubt of his fidelity and devotedness from first to last.

In Galatians 2 Titus comes before us in a deeply interesting manner. He was one of the “certain others” from among the saints at Antioch, who went with Paul and Barnabas to the great council at Jerusalem. No one was a more suited companion of the apostle; for Titus was a Greek, and so an uncircumcised man. He was therefore just a case in point. Must this Gentile believer be circumcised? Must he keep the law of Moses? The apostles and the elders, with the assembly as a whole, decided against any such compulsion. As the apostle Peter pointed out; the Holy Spirit had already decided the question by putting no difference between the circumcised and the uncircumised believers. Their hearts alike were purified by faith, and the heart-knowing God had given the Holy Ghost to both. It was to tempt God by putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which the fathers or the sons of Israel never were able to bear. Salvation is wholly through grace and by faith, consequently as open to the Gentile as to the Jew. If Moses had in every city those who preached him in the synagogues, it was now for all Christians a question of preaching our Lord Jesus Christ. The boldness of faith in the apostle was entirely vindicated at the council. And the grace already manifested in the call of Titus was confirmed by apostolic authority, not alone among the Gentiles, but in Jerusalem itself.

Some have confounded Titus with Timothy, and deliberately argued that the latter was Luke’s name for the same person. Whatever may be the ingenuity of the argument, scripture is wholly opposed. Timothy is expressly said to be the son of a Jewish believing

woman; and Paul took and circumcised him, not by compulsion, but on account of the Jews who were in those places where his father was known to be a Greek. The characters of the two men stand before us also with no small distinctness. For Titus had none of the yielding and sensitive spirit of Timothy; but as he was more mature, so was he also more courageous. Hence we find him sent to Corinth in the very critical circumstances of the church there, after the apostle had written his First Epistle out of much affliction and anguish of heart with many tears.

Paul had not only blamed their worldliness and carnal vanity, but had peremptorily called for the severest exercise of discipline in the cave of an unclean person who stood very high in the estimate of many. He was deeply burdened in spirit and anxious about the result; so when he came to Troas for the gospel, and when a door was opened to him in the Lord, he had no relief, because he found not Titus, “my brother.” Taking his leave of them, therefore, he went off to Macedonia, which was the adjacent province. But there God that comforts the lowly comforted him by the coming of Titus; for he had learnt that the Epistle had produced the happiest effects, and among the rest longing, mourning, and zeal for the apostle. The apostle therefore had the deepest joy. Their grief was according to God. It had wrought repentance to salvation never to be regretted; ‘. earnest care, clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what longing, yea, what zeal, yea, what avenging: in everything ye proved yourselves to be pure in the matter.”

The apostle bore witness to the joy of Titus, because his spirit had been refreshed by them all. The boasting of

the apostle, as he calls it, was not put to shame, but found to be truth, and his inward affection was more abundantly toward them, while calling to mind the obedience of them all, how with fear and trembling they received him — a state of soul which grace alone produced, especially in such as the Corinthians.

And the apostle in the same Second Epistle to the Corinthians mentions his exhorting Titus, as having made a beginning before, to complete in the Corinthians their purposed liberality toward the suffering saints in Jerusalem. So had done the churches of Macedonia, which were as poor as the Corinthian church was rich. He thanked God for putting the same earnest care for the Corinthian saints into the heart of Titus; who, being himself very earnest, went forth to them of his own accord, and with him the brother whose praise was in the gospel through all the assemblies, sent by the apostle as he was chosen by the assemblies, for the ministration of this grace. The apostle, providing things honourable not only before the Lord but before men, avoided taking it upon himself but gladly helped it on.

It is to this servant of God, of long standing and ripe experience in the work, that the apostle now writes. For Crete had a most unenviable name in the ancient times; and when the freshness of grace and truth is no longer felt, evil characteristics like theirs are apt to rise again and display themselves. To maintain the glory of the Lord, in the help and correction of the saints there, was the urgent object of the Epistle to Titus. We shall see in the detail how wisely and worthily of God this fresh design was laid on the apostle’s companion and fellow-labourer on their behalf.

Titus had been already left in Crete among other things for the authoritative nomination of elders; but the Epistle itself demolishes all thought of the permanent charge of a diocesan; as it also gives no countenance to the sole exclusive place of “the minister.” He was to join the apostle at Nicopolis. The statements of Eusebius and others are negatived by scripture.

Titus 1

“Paul, bondman of God and apostle of Jesus Christ according to faith of God’s elect, and full knowledge [or acknowledgment] of truth that is according to piety” (ver. 1).

Bondman “of God” is unusual. Thus in the Epistle to the Romans it is “bondman of Jesus Christ.” So it is in the Epistle to the Philippians, where Timothy is associated with the apostle. Here alone it is “bondman of God and apostle of Jesus Christ.” No Christian ought to doubt that there is special suitability between that relationship to God and the Epistle. “God,” as such, is prominent in all the pastoral Epistles rather than “Father,” where “bondman” could not be appropriate or rightly conceivable. Nevertheless it is only to Titus that the apostle presents himself as here he does. We may be thereby assured from this fact that it falls in with the character of the Epistle before us even more than with any other of the pastoral letters.

The sixth chapter to the Romans may help a little to explain why. The great truth in the latter portion of this chapter is that, though we are under grace, we are bondmen to Him whom we obey. Once alas! we were bondmen of sin; now having got our freedom from sin, we have become bondmen to righteousness (ver. 18) and

to God (ver. 22), having our fruit unto holiness and the end life eternal. A similarly fundamental depth is found in the Epistle to Titus: only here Paul predicates the term of himself, not of believers in general. If he calls himself ‘. apostle of Jesus Christ,” he takes care previously to say that he was “bondman of God.” It was important for Titus to take heed to this. At the very outset it was a solemn reminder from the Holy Spirit. If the apostle did not often so speak, it was always true; and the expression of the truth here seems intended of God to be a fresh lesson to Titus, and the rather because in the circumstances before him it might easily be forgotten. Practice if right should be based on principle.

Titus was called to a serious but highly honourable charge. Had it been only to exercise oversight, he who aspires to that desires a good work. But Titus was called amongst other things to establish overseers: clearly a far more delicate and responsible service. Self-importance might here readily enter, as it has often done even with most excellent men. Hence the apostle, who had authorised and directed Titus in that high service, begins with that emphatic statement, “Paul bondman of God.” All was worthless, if the will of God were not done. The Son of God shows the perfection of a life wholly devoted to that one object, and first set it before all as a moral jewel of the first water. In order to do His will in that perfection, He emptied Himself, taking a bondman’s form, coming in the likeness of men; and then when found in figure as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, yea, death of the cross. In that perfection He stands alone; nevertheless He forms others according to His own blessed pattern, and none more evidently than the

inspired man who now writes to Titus as “bondman of God.”

Titus was not, and could not be, like Paul, “apostle of Jesus Christ;” but was it not open to him to be, no less than the apostle, “bondman of God “? His special position was according to the grace of the Lord Jesus, and he would fulfil its proper functions all the better if he valued, as the apostle did, the being “bondman of God.” His own will was thus to be forfended; and the apostle implies this in an introduction so peculiar and impressive. For he expressly describes himself as God’s bondman. We may be sure that the words were not lost on Titus, but that he laid each deeply to heart. Christians as such are said in Rom. 6:22 to be freed from sin and enslaved, or made bondmen to God; so that the principle is clear and sure. Who needs to remember it more than an honoured minister of the Lord?

There is another peculiarity here which has greatly perplexed the learned. As is too usual in a difficulty, they have departed from the plain and obvious meaning of the text, not by a daring conjecture in the way of emendation as a substitute for it, but by a version, to say the least, of an arbitrary nature, which is quite uncalled for in the context. Two of the ablest recent commentators have joined in discarding “according to,” and in adopting “for.” But this is to lose the peculiar force of the scripture before us, and to construe kata; as equivalent to eij”. To be apostle of Jesus Christ “for” the faith of God’s elect is a commonplace. As in all such proposals, it is no doubt an easy way of understanding the clause; but the truth intended vanishes. “according to faith of God’s elect” has the same ground as, and no less reason than, “according to piety” just afterwards,

with which these commentators do not all tamper, though one at least deals in the same latitude here also. It is safest to translate correctly, even if one is obliged to feel or own we have no exposition to offer of which we are assured. The Revisers, therefore, as well as the Authorised translators, have acted more faithfully. Very possibly they might not have been able to explain the propriety of the phrase; but at any rate they have done no violence to the text in their respective versions. They have left the word of God for others to explain in due time, according to their measure of spiritual insight.

Is then the apostolic statement so hard to be understood? Not so, if we are simple. Aaron was anointed priest according to the law. There is now an entire change; a new system rests upon an altogether different basis. We have no longer the first man dealt with morally, or helped ceremonially There is the Second Man' the East Adam. Faith, therefore, is come and revealed. It is no longer a question of any being guarded under law: believing men, even of Israel, were no longer under the old child-guide. Paul, the Jew, and Titus, the Gentile, are alike sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus, as is carefully explained to the Galatians.

Hence Paul here describes himself as "apostle of Jesus Christ according to faith of God's elect." Men are disposed to regard Christianity as a continuance of Judaism and an improvement on it more or less. But the entire system of legal ordinances has come to its end; Christ had effaced it, and taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. The ancient people of God are for the time completely eclipsed, with all the peculiarities of their probationary status. Man is viewed universally as wholly sinful and lost. It is now a question of what God

has wrought and given, as revealed in the person of Christ; and hence, therefore, of faith on the part of God's elect. The elect nation is not now the platform of His ways. "Go ye into the whole world and preach the gospel to all the creation." What is external in Christianity may be more or less apprehended by the world; but here the apostle points only to what is unseen and eternal, and God's elect alone enter in and enjoy. Thus we see that in this short Epistle there is more than one pithy, yet full, exhibition of the gospel in its deep moral power; wherein it is more distinguished than the two Epistles to Timothy. This is in keeping with the "faith of God's elect," and helps to illustrate why the writer describes himself as apostle of Jesus Christ according to that pattern.

At the same time it is instructive to note that in the two Epistles to Timothy the apostle describes himself in a way strikingly akin to what is found here. For in the First he says, "apostle of Jesus Christ according to commandment of God our Saviour and Christ Jesus our hope," and in the Second, "apostle of Jesus Christ through God's will according to promise of life that is in Christ Jesus." In every case the preposition bears its most ordinary sense, not "for" but "according to;" but each has its appropriate bearing. In the First it is according to our Saviour God's command, and hence is a testimony of glad tidings to all, and Christ Jesus, Man and Mediator, our hope. In the Second it is through God's will according to promise of life in Christ Jesus. Whatever be the ruin externally of Christendom; there is strengthening in the grace that is in Christ:Jesus, and the firm foundation of God stands.

Here he adds another particular. Paul was His apostle also according to full knowledge (or acknowledgment) of truth that is according to piety. This is the more remarkable, because we find him very soon afterwards speaking of his having left Titus in Crete to set right what was wanting, and establish elders in every city, as he had ordered him; but he in no way describes his own apostleship as being according to such a direction of authority. The delegation is not to be doubted in any way, and it is of high moment in its place; the apostleship is characterised after another pattern altogether. It was “according to faith of God’s elect, and full knowledge of truth that is according to piety.” Its stamp was not merely ecclesiastical but Christian, and its Christian description is the only thing on which the apostle here insists, even when he is about to notice the charge he had given Titus for ecclesiastical order.

If Christianity is bound up with the faith of God’s elect, it is for that very reason also with “knowledge of truth that is according to piety.” “The law was given by Moses; grace and truth came into being through Jesus Christ.” Shadows and outward observances are now treated as vain. The body is of Christ. The truth must be known by faith, truth that is according to piety: else the apostle would have disowned it as having no living link with Christ. With this the reader can compare 1 Tim. 3:16, where the truth of Christ’s person is laid down as the secret or mystery of piety.

The apostle pursues what has been already begun in describing his mission. It was “upon hope of life eternal which God that cannot lie promised before the times of the ages (or everlasting),2 but manifested in its own seasons His word in a preaching, with which I was

entrusted, according to command of our Saviour God" (vers. 2, 3).

Life eternal is really given to the believer now; and this is a revelation by no means uncommon in the writings of our apostle. Its present possession is emphatically prominent in the writings of John, whether the Gospel or his First Epistle. But Paul frequently treats it according to its future display, as in the Synoptic Gospels. In the well-known passage of his, Romans 6:22, 23, we have it clearly: "Ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end life eternal. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is life eternal in Christ Jesus our Lord." He looks on to life in glory.

Here he describes his apostolic work in preaching as conditioned by the hope of life eternal. It is thus wholly different from the expectations of the pious Jew in Old Testament times, grounded as they were in the main on the promises of God to the fathers. If a prophet spoke of eternal life at all, it was bound up with the future kingdom of the Messiah. Under His sceptre the Israelite looked for every outward blessing, for all honour and power as well as goodness from God, for the display of beneficence and of blessing in every form; and all this will surely be accomplished on earth, without fail or stint, according to the word of the living God.

The apostle's work had a wholly different character; for it was based upon the total rejection and the heavenly exaltation of the Lord Jesus, whereby that hope of life eternal is realised now, and in a way altogether superior to the testimony of the prophets (Ps. 133, Dan. 12). So the Lord as the great Prophet on Olivet declared that the living righteous of the nations, who are severed from

the wicked, enter into life eternal when He shall have come as the Son of man in His glory. Even the sheep realise their place but little: grace will abound exceedingly. But the apostle proceeds to show that the promise which the Christian actually enjoys goes not merely beyond the prophets, or the human race on earth, but back into eternity. This was necessarily a promise within the Godhead. The God that knew no falsehood promised it before the times of the ages. So we saw in 2 Tim. 1:9, that God saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace that was given us in Christ Jesus before the times of the ages. It was a promise within the Godhead when neither the world nor man yet existed, and therefore had a far higher character than promises made in time to the fathers.

These times, stamped with distinctive principles on God's part, are occupied with the history of man's trial and failure in every form. First we see him innocent and in paradise, with everything good around him, and put to the simplest test of obedience in a single, and in itself slight, exception. This was enough: man fell, not deceived like the woman, but ensnared through her in known deliberate transgression. Was man any better when an outcast left to himself, with the sentence of death before him? "And Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Therefore was man with the lower creation swept away from the earth. A spared remnant passed through the deluge in God's mercy, and the earth came under new conditions; for the sword of government was now instituted of God.

After a vain attempt (as we see in Gen. 11) by unity to make a name in the city and the tower of Babel, Jehovah scattered them after their families and tongues in their lands and their nations. Then, when idolatry had overspread the earth, by promise was man called and chosen and separated unto Him in the person of Abraham and his descendants. But even when they reaped the blessing by divine deliverance from oppressing Egypt, they did not appreciate the riches of divine favour. Therefore, when blessing was proposed at Sinai on the condition of their own obedience, the people unanimously answered, “All that Jehovah hath spoken we will do.”

On such a ground sinful man never did and cannot stand. “By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight.” Law may give knowledge of sin, but is never power against it. “For the law worketh wrath” (Rom. 4:15). “The strength of sin is the law,” says our apostle (1 Cor. 15:56). The law “was added because of transgressions” (Gal. 3:19); for sins were there long before; but when the commandment came, its violation made them overt acts of transgression, and thus sin became exceeding sinful. Law could only provoke and condemn sin.

Hence justification is gratuitous by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Therefore, says he elsewhere (Gal. 3:10), “As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.” It is a statement of uncommon force; not as many as have broken the law, but as many as stand on that ground or principle. “For it is written, Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.” The law could curse, not save, a sinner.

Now this is cited from Deut. 27, in which chapter the facts stated are as striking as the words of the apostle to the Galatians. For Moses charged the people to stand, six tribes on mount Gerizim to bless them, and six upon mount Ebal to curse. But in the sequel of the chapter we have the curses carefully recorded, which the Levites were to say to all the men of Israel, without one word of provision for their blessing! “As many as are of [or, from, by, on that ground] works of law are under curse.” There is no blessing provided or possible on legal footing. Only those that are of faith are truly blessed, none others. “And the law is not of faith.” It works wrath and a curse: not that the law is not righteous (for the commandment is holy, just, and good); but man is sinful. “The law entered by the bye that the offence might abound.” It is a ministry of death and condemnation. Sin was long before the law, as we see in the race of fallen Adam. Sin is not “transgression of law,” but lawlessness (1 John 3:4). The law made its evil plain and inexcusable rebellion against God’s known commandment.

So the prophets, who exposed the growing rebelliousness of Israel, and even of favoured Judah, kept thundering in their ears; whilst they ever reminded them of their only hope in the coming Messiah, “that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to those that believe.” At length, when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, become of a woman, become under the law. But the Jews refused Him, yea abhorred Him; so that His staff, Beauty, was cut asunder that He might break His covenant which He had made with all the peoples. For how could there be the predicted gathering, or obedience, of the peoples unto Him, if His own received Him not? They did worse; they

weighed for His price thirty pieces of silver, and the field of the potter became the field of blood, Aceldama. Then His other staff, even Bands, was cut asunder, that He might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.

The last link was broken in the cross of the Lord Jesus, even for the two houses of Israel. But sovereign grace through that very cross laid a foundation for an entirely new work, of which the Son of man, exalted at the right hand of God in heaven, is the author and crown. While Israel and the nations wholly disappear for all that was predicted of earthly blessing and glory, the Head of the new creation is revealed on high, and the Holy Ghost sent below. Thus a door of mercy lies open to every believer on terms of indiscriminate grace. This is Christianity for the faith of God's elect, according to which Paul was apostle. Could his office have a nobler character? Along with it goes that new building of God, the church, the body of Christ.

Thus we see that what the God incapable of falsehood promised before the times of the ages now shines upon the believer. What was first in purpose was last in accomplishment. Here, however, it is rather in purpose and upon hope, that "life eternal" comes before us. It is no less true that "this life is in His Son." There is no such life in any other. The first Adam was at best but a living soul; the last Adam a quickening Spirit. As Christ our life is risen from the dead, such is the character of the life we receive in Him. It is life after redemption was effected, that those who are quickened together with Him might have all their offences forgiven, dead with Christ and risen with Him, and even, as the Epistle to the Ephesians adds, seated together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Here, however, the apostle does not dwell so much on heavenly association as on the wondrous fact that the life of the Christian is life eternal, promised before the world began, outside of times or dispensations in God's dealings with man on the earth. It derives its character from Him Who is eternal, the Way and the Truth, the Head, centre, expression, and object of all the purposes of God. This we have now, as we shall have in glory with Himself; and therefore is it said to be grounded on or conditioned by "hope."

Nor is there anything vague or uncertain. It is not a law requiring what at best may, yea must, fail of fulfilment; for failure is invariable in man's hand. It is God's word manifested in a preaching which had His authority mace good by His "truth," the sure revelation of His mind. "We are of God (said another apostle): he that knoweth God heareth us." Not to hear is the spirit of error. During man's probation, law put him to the proof characteristically. Now God manifested His word in its own seasons. There was a divine work to speak, according to "full knowledge of truth that is according to piety." It is not for exercising the intellect. Piety is the model and aim.

Now, therefore, is the due time for bringing all out plainly. "In its own seasons He manifested His word in a preaching, wherewith I was entrusted according to commandment of God our Saviour." This is the "mystery of the gospel" (Eph. 6:19), or at least it is a part, and an important part, of it. Ever since the apostle was sent forth on his mission, the greatest impulse was given, and that full development which we find written in his Epistles. It was embodied in Christ, Who died, rose, and was glorified in heaven; but the Holy Spirit was given in

order that God's word as to this might be manifested; and manifested it was in Paul's preaching beyond all others, "according to command of God our Saviour." For never before did this title "Saviour God" receive such an illustration; never again can it be after such a sort, even when the glory shall be a defence, a cloud of smoke by day and a shining flame by night, upon every dwelling place, upon mount Zion, and upon her assemblies. And it is all the more glorious, because it is a secret known only to faith, and preached therefore, instead of being established in power and visible display. Therefore is it now a "commandment of God our Saviour." When glory dwells in the land of Israel, as it surely will under Messiah and the new covenant literally enjoyed by the earthly people, there will be no room for any such commandment. It will then be the day for the triumph of the most High God, possessor of heaven and earth, on the downfall of Satan's power. It will be a day, not so much for testimony by the word, and hence for faith, as the manifestation of divine power and glory in the subduing of all adversaries by the Son of man reigning over all peoples, nations, and languages Then too shall the world know that the Father sent His Son and loved those who now believe on Him during His rejection, when they behold them perfect in one and displayed in the same glory as was given to their Lord.

The address follows: — "To Titus, genuine child according to common faith: grace and peace from God [the] Father and Christ Jesus our Saviour" (ver. 4).

Thus we see the apostle gives Titus the same designation as Timothy in his first Epistle: only there it is simply "in faith"; here it is "according to common faith." They both believed the same truth of Christ, Paul

the Jew and Titus the Gentile. It is not only that there is one body, the church, but a faith common to all Christians, common to the highest in spiritual place, power' and authority, with the least saint, were he a Scythian or a slave, that calls on the same Lord rich in grace toward all that call on His name.

But it will be observed, that Timothy is styled "beloved child" in 2 Tim. 1. Accordingly the apostle unbosoms himself to him as he does not to Titus. Nevertheless Titus thoroughly possessed his confidence, as he was entrusted with the important and delicate task of an apostolic envoy in Crete. It is the mistake of the old divines to confound this position with the gift of an evangelist, perhaps because Timothy was an evangelist. This Titus is never called. The truth is that the charge over doctrine, or the commission to appoint elders, is quite independent of an evangelist's gift. Titus had here a work within the church, not without; though no doubt an evangelist might also be appointed to such a charge by an apostle. But an ecclesiastic charge and the exercise of an evangelistic gift have a wholly distinct character, and in themselves no single link of connection. They might or might not be united in the same person.

According to the oldest MSS. and Versions, "mercy" is omitted in the verse; but Chrysostom is quite wrong, followed by Damasus, in asserting that "mercy" is only spoken of in 1 Tim. 1:2, for it is equally found in 2 Tim. 1:2. Here also Lachmann stands with the Received Text in giving it as found in the mass of the junior MSS. and the Versions, supported by the Alexandrian and a few other uncial copies.

It is difficult however to resist the overwhelming external evidence; and the inference would be, that the apostle's heart was drawn out to desire "mercy" especially for Timothy, whilst he contented himself with the wish for "grace and peace" in Titus' case, as he commonly did in writing to the saints generally. In the Epistle to Jude "mercy" is put in the foreground, with "peace and love" following, for those addressed on the broadest possible ground. This insertion is quite as exceptional for the saints in general, as the omission of it is to Titus. There saints are regarded as the objects of special tenderness, as they were exposed to the most imminent danger, from the growing rush of evil towards the last gulf of apostasy. But if "mercy" is not here expressly before us, "grace" really implies it; for it is the fountainhead from which mercy flows, and peace is the issue ever to be desired, no less than the ever-flowing fountain and channel — "from God the Father, and Christ Jesus our Saviour."

"For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldest order further the things wanting, and appoint elders city by city, as I directed thee. If any one is blameless (or, unaccused), husband of one wife, having children faithful, not under charge of profligacy, or unruly" (vers. 5, 6).

There is no doubt that the apostle left Titus in Crete only for a time in the fulfilment of the charge given him. Not a hint appears of his permanent residence there, but plain proof that he was to leave Crete for other quarters and different work. It is remarkable that the form of the word "left" has been changed from rather earlier days; and that this change falls in with permanence. So it stands in the commonly received text; but the best

authorities followed by the critics agree that the original form quite coincides with the temporary character of the mission of Titus. The apostle's stay in the island was brief. Titus was left there for a while. Neither is said to have planted the gospel in Crete. It seems highly probable from Acts 2:11,3 that the glad tidings had been conveyed there almost from the great day of Pentecost. It was a question therefore for Titus to follow up that setting of things in order which the apostle began.

Even at Rome we learn from the first chapter of the Epistle that Paul longed to see those there, that he might communicate some spiritual gift to them, in order to their strengthening. Still more would this be called for in the far less frequented island where Titus was left. There would be things wanting which the short stay of the apostle could not suffice to complete. Further, there was the need of elders to be appointed, which was regularly, and sometimes long, subsequent to the gathering of the saints. It is implied that several cities, perhaps many, had assemblies in them, and that elders were later appointed in each. Bp. Ellicott is quite right in questioning the statement of Jer. Taylor, "one in one city, many in many" (Episc. § 15). It is a strange, as well as certainly a precarious, statement from an Episcopalian, though natural enough to one of dissenting ideas. There is nothing here to limit eldership to one person in each city; there may have been several. This would of course be modified by circumstances; but we know from elsewhere in the New Testament that plurality of elders in any given assembly was the rule, and so no doubt it was at Crete. Church order, though flexible, had a common principle and character. "For this cause," says the apostle to the Corinthians, "have I sent

unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved child and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you to remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church" (1 Cor. 4:17: compare 1 Cor. 11:16; 1 Cor. 14:33-37).

It should be observed, as a consideration of the greatest moment. that the apostle does not specify a particular gift as requisite for these local charges. Scripture takes marked care to guard from that dangerous confusion, which was soon to characterise Christendom, and to form the separation of clergy from laity, which is in fact a return to Judaism, and a denial in both principle and practice of the distinctive fulness of privilege for the church. It is not that a gift and a charge might not be combined in the same individual; but they are in themselves, and for most who have but one or the other, altogether different. The gift was one given by Christ to the church and from the greatest to the least, apart from all intervention of man. This can no more cease to be than Christ can abnegate His grace and living functions as the Head of the body. The charge of "elders" or "bishops" required not only fitness but also choice or appointment by competent authority defined by scripture.

Another weighty fact is that, so far from being interrupted by His ascension to heaven, Eph. 4:8-10 is precisely demonstrative, that only from Him on high were they given, and given till we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. As no right-minded Christian will aver that this is attained yet, so neither should he doubt the unfailing grace of Christ. Power in external testimony

may not adorn the assembly, when unfaithful and no more a visibly united light as once here below. Yet the love of Christ cannot refuse all that is needed for the perfecting of the saints, unto ministerial work, unto building up of His body.

But elders or bishops were a local charge and depended for their nomination on-those who had discernment to choose and authorise (ultimately from Christ, to appoint them). Hence we never see them in scripture, among the Gentiles at least, save as chosen by apostles, or by apostolic men like Timothy or Titus expressly commissioned to that end. The democratic idea is a fiction; had it been of God, it would have saved much trouble, and simplified matters outwardly, to have left their election with the assembly. But it is never so heard of in God's word. All power and authority is in the hands of Christ, Who wielded it through those He chose. Hence He called personally the twelve on earth, as He called Paul from heaven; and they did directly, or indirectly through fitting agents as here before us, appoint elders, assembly by assembly, city by city. The assembly might look out deacons; but elders needed and had a different source, the authority of Christ through men whom He chose and fitted to select them. How solemn a consideration this is, alike for Nationalists and Non-conformists, here is not the place to discuss at large. If they are spiritual and of single eye, they can scarce fail to see how far present arrangements are alien from scripture; how fallen the church is, if it were only in the matter of gifts and charges. Alas! it is but a particular case of a ruin far more comprehensive and appalling.

Moral qualities and circumstances in accordance with them are here as elsewhere insisted on for elders. "If

any one is blameless (or, unaccused).” How censure others, if open to it himself? “Husband of one wife.” If married, he must have but one wife; for many heathen had several, that is, at one time; and Jews discarded a wife with facility when they liked another more. “Having children faithful, not under charge of excess (or, profligacy), or unruly.” Next to personal probity stands family relationship; and as plurality of wives would bar (whatever the suitability in other respects), so too a disreputable offspring. How could he rule the house of God, who had already and manifestly failed in his own home?

The characteristics required for the office are now set out. “For the bishop (or, overseer) must be blameless (or, free from accusation), as God’s steward; not self-willed, not passionate, not quarrelsome (lit. remaining over wine), not a striker, not a seeker of base lucre; but hospitable, a lover of good, sober-minded, just, holy, temperate, holding to the faithful word that is according to the teaching, that he may be able both to encourage in the healthful doctrine, and to convict the gainsayers” (ver. 7-9).

It is plain that there would be no force in the reason thus alleged, if “the bishop” and “the elder” were not identical. Titus was to appoint elders in every city as the apostle charged him: — “If any one is blameless, etc., for the bishop must be blameless,” etc. Hence the Episcopalian is obliged to give up his idea that the bishop and elders in scripture represent two orders of officials, and driven to look for the prototype of the modern diocesan in such a one as Titus. But the Epistle itself, and other scriptures, refute the supposition of any

such permanent functionary, though Titus of course did appoint elders in Crete.

The elder is expressive of the dignity of the person derived from the respect due to age; not that the elder must needs be an aged man, but one of experience. Thus the title was derived and applied even if there was no great age, where suitability for the position existed. The bishop, or overseer, expresses rather the nature of the office, which was to take account morally of the saints, and to maintain godly order. Oversight in short was the constant duty privately and publicly.

Hence it was a primary requisite that the overseer should himself be blameless, or free from charge against him, as God's steward. He had a governing post, and therein a moral responsibility to God. The apostle in 1 Cor. 4:1 speaks of himself and of his fellow-labourers as "stewards of God's mysteries." Here we find no "mysteries" referred to. These were not the sacraments so called, but the new and hitherto secret truths of the New Testament revelation. Nowhere in scripture is baptism or the Lord's supper characterised as "a mystery," though the superstitious usage soon came in like a flood after the inspired apostles passed away. Popery, ever gross, avails itself of this abuse in Eph. 5:32, where "the mystery" of the church's union with Christ is used for the godly walk of husband, and wives; as if it gave countenance to the notion that marriage is "a sacrament. "

Yet what is the result of this unnatural rendering? "This is a great sacrament; but I speak in Christ and in the church:" a transcript of Jerome's Vulgate, and a gross travesty of the divine mind in the inspired Greek. Even

Cardinal Cajetan and Dr. Estius expose the error. It is false in both substance and form, but serves, as error well suits, to sanction a sacrament of purely human invention. In no sense is “mystery,” still less “sacrament,” said of marriage, but in respect of Christ and in respect of the church; which are so united that He is the Head, and she the body. This mystery is indeed great; and it is the sole one here spoken of. Mark the emphasis, But I speak, etc. in contrast exact, though anticipative, with human thoughts. Then in the following verse he turns to the natural relationship, instituted of God in Eden and sanctioned ever since, in total opposition to a “mystery.”

Again see its inconsistency when we apply the test of scripture. Has Popery ever instituted “the sacrament of piety” (1 Tim. 3:16)? On the forehead of the great harlot that sits on the seven hills God has inscribed, Mystery, Babylon the Great, etc. This has equal claim, that is none, to be “a sacrament”; if one, how ominous, and awful!

Even the seven who in the early days of Acts. 6 were chosen for the external work of “serving tables,” were appointed over this business by apostolic imposition of hands. Probably the like hands were similarly laid on the elders who were not chosen by the disciples. But it is expressly said of those elected to diaconal work. They in particular required and had its support for what else might have seemed only secular.

Now it is of some importance to observe that the elder, or overseer, might not be a teacher; still less did he stand in the higher place of apostle or prophet. Nevertheless he must be “apt to teach,” as we shall see

confirmed ere long in this very context, though not possessed of the teacher's distinct gift. But whatever his duty, he must act as God's steward, manifestly identified with the interests of His house. This would give seriousness of purpose, as it supposes moral courage with men and dependence on God and His word.

He must be "not self-willed," or headstrong. It is the grossest mistake that self-will implies courage, though it may lead to rashness or even recklessness. Nothing gives so much quiet firmness as the consciousness of doing the will of God. One can then be lowly and patient, but uncompromising. We are as children of God elect according to God the Father's fore-knowledge unto obedience as well as the blood-sprinkling of Jesus Christ. No principle takes precedence of that obedience for practice. It is the true exercise of the life of Christ given to us. Self-will haughtily disregards both God and man. How shameful in an overseer!

Again, he must be "not soon angry" or irascible. Scarce anything enfeebles authority more than proneness to the explosions of anger. The weight of a rebuke, however just it might be, is apt to be lost when a man is overcome with angry heat. Calmness gives weight and force to a needed rebuke.

The next negation is perhaps a figurative expression; literally it means not abiding long over wine or disorderly through it. Hence it comes generally to mean, "not a brawler." Undoubtedly the literal force of being addicted to wine or the like is excluded peremptorily. The fact seems represented by μέθυσος the habit by πάροινος. Even were a Christian free from the suspicion of so evil a source, the easily heated, the noisy and

quarrelsome, character is unfit to be, and unworthy of being, God's steward. The overseer must be no brawler.

If this unmeetness refers to some such source, the next goes farther down into the much lower level of physical outgoing: he is to be "no striker." Here there is a still less seemly violence, the one very naturally leading to the other. The overseer must be neither. If he is the wielder of authority locally, appointed by a still higher authority in the Lord's name, he above all must not degrade that Name by ways so opposed to His.

There is another characteristic which men in authority are not a little apt to fall into, but it is unworthy of an overseer: he must not seek gain by base means, he must be firm against greed of filthy lucre. He who is called to rule before God among the saints must himself watch at least as much against this debasing evil as against those of violence. With what face, if he were thus faulty, could he rebuke these sins, as is his duty?

How blessed the contrast with all these uncomely traits we see in Christ! And if every Christian is called to be Christ's epistle, how much more are the elders? How could one, known to tamper with any of these evil things, reprove the failure of others with any show of consistency?

The absence of evil qualities is not enough. The assembly of God is the only sphere on earth for the exercise and display of that which is divine. To steer clear, therefore, of the ordinary snares of men in office never could satisfy the mind of God. The overseer, without a thought of invitation or recompence in return, was called to be hospitable; and we know from other scriptures, that this was not to be exercised after the

manner of men but according to faith. So in the Epistle to the Hebrews the saints in general were called not to be forgetful of hospitality, for by it some have entertained angels unawares. It is plain therefore, that it was not in the least on the ground of previous knowledge, or of social equality. Had there been suspicion of a stranger, assuredly it would have excluded all such entertainment as God's word reports of old, and recommends now. So in faith and love Abraham received into hospitality, not angels only, but Jehovah Himself in the guise of man. Hospitality like this was not to be laid on the shelf, or vainly admired as a patriarchal virtue. Beyond question the overseer was not to be behind the saints in general, but to be a lover of hospitality.

Nor this only; for we read next that the elder was to be "a lover of good," not merely of good men, but of goodness — an important guard in the exercise of much more than hospitality. Self-pleasing might readily enter otherwise; and the indulgence of self ever is the service of Satan. Christ alone shows us truly and fully what good is, making it not only attractive but of power for the spirit and the walk. The overseer therefore was to be a "lover of good."

Further, he was to be "discreet" or sober-minded. A man might easily carry the love of good into either a sentiment or an enthusiasm; but the Spirit of God gives sobriety. He is "a Spirit of power and of love and of a sound mind." Thus is everything kept in its true place, because through Him all is seen and weighed in the presence of God.

Hence the overseer was to be "just;" he must rightly estimate the relationship of others and his own: a most

important element, not merely in a general way, but especially for one in his place. Nothing would more enfeeble his weight than a failure in righteousness. Yet to be “just” is not enough. It is of course imperative; but there must be more along with it.

The overseer, it is added in due course as a higher call, must be “pious,” or “holy” in that sense, “ ὅσιος.” It is not separate from evil, but gracious and upright, and is so used particularly of Christ in the Old Testament, as well as in the New.4 It is that character of piety which appreciates God’s mercy, and is itself merciful. This was looked for in an elder, while he and all believers were ἅγιοι or saints.

Further, he was to be “temperate,” an expression much narrowed and so far misapplied in our day. Self-control not in one respect but in all is its real meaning. It is the quality of having every way and expression of feeling, or inclination, checked in the Christian by his sense of God’s presence, grace, and fear.

These are the moral qualities which the Spirit of God insists on for elders, positively as well as negatively. But there is an addition of great value in verse 9, “Holding to the faithful word according to the doctrine, that he may be able both to encourage (or exhort) in (or with) the healthful teaching, and to convict the gainsayers.”

Here the necessary aptness to teach appears in the peculiar and twofold obligation for which it was required. It might not be formal ministry in the assembly. The work of the elder lay as much, or perhaps even more, with the wants and dangers of individual saints in daily life. Such a one must adhere firmly to the faithful word. Uncertainty in his own perception of it,

uncertainty in his handling it for others, would proportionately undermine the task laid on him to execute. The elder was not however to act according to his own wisdom; nor did his authority spring from himself, any more than from those that composed the assembly. He was God's steward, and the Holy Spirit made him an overseer, not in a mere flock of his own ("my people," as men say, or "my church"), but in "the flock of God."

The faithful word, therefore, must be his standard for walk, as well as the source from which he drew whatever material he used; and this not to nourish questions or indulge imagination, "but according to truth and love." If invested with authority, so was he a man under authority. He was God's steward, that God's will might be done and the will of man repressed. God is not the author of confusion but of peace, Who will have all things done decently and in order. Thus the light of the faithful word must guide the elder and indeed the Christian. The doctrine he was himself taught can alone determine what that order is; and now it is permanently in scripture. To that faithful word of God, therefore, the overseer must cling, avoiding strange notions as poison. Nor was it for his own guidance only. The elders were to rule, and, as made such by the Holy Spirit, were solemnly responsible to "rule well." But if any were to be accounted worthy of double honour, it was especially true of those who laboured in the word and in teaching (1 Tim. 5:17), as some might if not all.

Now in the conflict of circumstances which would come necessarily before the overseer, there are two wants constantly claiming his care: as well the need to encourage some, as no less the need to reprove

gainsayers. Hence says the apostle in this passage, “That he may be able both to exhort (or, comfort) with the healthful teaching, and to convict the gainsayers.” For both, a single eye is needed; but the faithful word is the means or weapon of all moment, sharper than any two-edged sword, which can divide as well as wound. On the overseer would fall this duty from time to time, and the faithful word alone would enable him both to encourage with the healthful teaching, and to expose those who sought their own things, not the things of Jesus Christ.

In the later Epistles it is a sorrowful feature to observe how evil grows apace in the church of God. It had entered early, though apostolic vigilance and power held it in check; but it had never and nowhere entirely disappeared. Our Lord had prepared us for this, not as a question of fellowship for the church, but where the word of the gospel is sown in the world; for “the field,” as He interprets it, is the world. In that field tares were sown early by the enemy, and Christ’s servants were forbidden to root them out. This, from their prejudices as Jews, they would have been too ready to attempt. But the Lord lets them know that in the field wheat and tares, however sad their mixture, were to grow together until the harvest. It is for angelic hands to deal with the tares when judgment comes.

But meanwhile this is the day of grace, not of judgment. The servants of the Lord are to sow the good, not to essay the extermination of evil from the world. To root up the tares would be death at least. This, on the one hand, the false church avowedly executes in open disobedience of the Lord; on the other, discipline in the true church, even to putting away, is according to the

Lord's will. Indeed the church ceases to be the church where that unalienable obligation is declined.

Thus the Gospel of Matthew (Matt. 13) and the First Epistle to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 5) are in perfect harmony; but they refer to wholly distinct things. Wicked professors are to be put away from among the saints; they are not to be hurried out of the world. This the Lord reserves for the angels in the time of harvest, the end of the age. It is now sowing time, and the day of salvation. The judgment will fall by-and-by unsparingly; as grace should now reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. So it has reigned in the mighty work of redemption; so it ought to reign in the practical answer of the saints, individually or together.

It remains however that gainsaying abounds, the dark shadow which followed closely the glad tidings of God. "For there are many unruly ones, vain speakers and deceivers, specially those of [the] circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who are such as overthrow whole houses, teaching things which they ought not for filthy lucre's sake" (vers. 10, 11).

This we see even before the apostle's service closed. There were already "many" of these disorderly men. Whatever discipline might have done to clear the Lord's name, and safeguard the saints from corruption, this scandal abounded. It was a bitter sorrow for the heart of him who was soon to depart and be with Christ; and the more so, when he thought of the church, the beloved of Christ, so exposed to the attacks and wiles of the enemy. If grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, there were many now who bore His name whose speech was vanity,

not to edification, whose aim was their belly, not to serve the Lord Jesus; nor did they merely foam out their own shame, but deceived people's minds. They led away the unguarded and self-confident, even where there might be life Godward. Still more did they hurry on to destruction the borderers whose ear is ever open to that which accredits man, in ignorance of the truth of God which lays him in the dust.

These unruly persons were "specially of the circumcision." From without originally, yet more than the heathen had they knowledge of scripture, of course only of the Old Testament.

They were therefore quick to take the place of being a guide to the blind, a light to them that are in darkness, a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of babes. They had in the law the form of knowledge and of the truth. But if the name of God had been blasphemed among the Gentiles because of mere Jews who assumed the place of spiritual understanding, how much more was it about to be by the self-honour of these "many" men who were not circumcised only but baptised also! The apostle declares to Titus that they must have their mouths stopped. This of course could not be brought to pass by mere outward authority, but by the power of the word wielded in the Spirit. Titus seems one eminently suited for this work of vindicating God and His truth; as God would use his example and that of all who in faith act upon the apostle's word. Easy tolerance of evil may imitate grace, but is its shame and utter destruction. Grace maintains and is inseparable from the truth; otherwise it is no more grace, but a sham of good yet real evil, which demoralises, corrupts, and destroys. It is not only that God is dishonoured, but whole houses are subverted.

This expression is morally important, “whole houses.” It might be through the head of the house, whose faith was undermined, and whose ways were made loose. What havoc to the family I and the more surely, if some or many of the household were unconverted.:But even where all were converted, what a danger for them all! So much easier is it in this world to spread evil than to maintain what is good and true and holy.

No doubt the ways of these troublers were unruly; but evil teaching is still more pernicious, as it habitually clothes itself in thoughts which flatter human nature. Christ is not in it, Who is the life and nourishment of all who are born again. But these men were teaching things which ought not to be taught; and their aim was filthy lucre, not the glory of the Lord, but that which, as means or end, becomes an idol that tolerates lust and iniquity.

Evils are not everywhere the same; certain times and places have a character peculiar to themselves The Cretans had an evil repute beyond most, and this not merely with strangers, who might regard them with scanty affection, but even among their own countrymen, usually apt to be somewhat prone to indulgence of faults. So “One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, ‘Cretans [are] always liars, evil beasts, idle bellies’ (i.e., gorged gluttons). This testimony is true: for which cause rebuke them sharply, that they may be healthful in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men turning away as they do from the truth” (vers. 12-14).

The apostle here quotes an ethic poet, Epimenides of Crete, in order the more to enforce the confessed

dangers of those concerned. It is not to be supposed that he endorses him, this Gentile author, as a prophet of God. It was needful therefore to add, “This testimony is true.” But it does show how grace condescends to use whatever is true, though the source might be impure. In the same spirit the apostle cited a celebrated comedian, the more impressively to convict the Corinthians: “Evil communications corrupt good manners.” And if a heathen, not particularly circumspect over himself or in his plays, gave utterance to a sentiment so applicable to the danger at Corinth, it was the more severe a reproof from such a mouth to the careless saints there. Their levity deceived them; even Menander reproved them. So here one of themselves, a prophet of their own, as a heathen moralist, gave a true witness to the unreliable character, the mischievous activity, and the lazy self-indulgence of Cretans as such.

Natural character, which is all the unbeliever has, may be nothing for the life of faith. The Spirit of God works all that is good through Christ presented to the soul, as an object of faith, and spring of love, and giver of joy. But it is an important matter for the enemy, who skilfully acts upon the old man, if unjudged, to the Lord’s dishonour. Where there is unwatchfulness, a fall ensues. Therefore the evil nature affords constant danger. When Christ is really leaned on and looked to, the Holy Spirit gives entire superiority over evil. Here it is a question of those who are walking after the flesh: hence the humbling testimony is applied in all its force. Titus did well to bear it in mind; nor could a Cretan well complain of the apostle’s severity, where an eminent countryman of theirs had long since owned their racial character.

“For which cause rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound (or, healthy) in the faith.”

Pravity of conduct continually flows from something unsound creeping into the spirit. To be unsound in the faith is the high road to unholy ways. Here too we find the perverseness of Jewish fables. It had appeared even then, and undoubtedly long before. Religious imagination has wrought since to the incalculable evil of those that bear the name of the Lord. But there is more then “fable” to watch against, even “commandments of men turning away as they do from the truth.” Never trust the practical exhortation or the moral ways of those who, having once professed the truth, turn aside from it. There is no greater evil ordinarily in Christendom. It has an apostate character. For God’s word will never mingle with man’s commandments: where it is essayed, in the long run the human element really prevails, and the divine becomes a powerless form.

We have to do with the truth, not with fable; and we are under grace, not under commandment of men alienated from the truth. Neither imagination nor human morality can mingle with Christian revelation. Scripture alone furnishes a bright sense of its living relationships and its glorious prospects, with which fable and the unspiritual mind can never compare. Nor can human commandments rise above their source; they are of the world, and therefore perishable. The word of the Lord abides for ever, and judges alike both fable and human commandment. “To the pure all things [are] pure; but to the defiled and unfaithful [is] nothing pure; but both their mind and their conscience have been defiled” (ver. 15).

Duty depends upon relationship, and relationship on the revelation of God in Christ our life. Otherwise we are only in our sins. Such once were we all: not all gross, nor all externally shameful, as were some. But now through grace we were washed, but we were sanctified, but we were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. Such then is the source of Christian purity; and it is so much the more truly ours, because it is of God; Who, as He has called, will also keep His own, through our Lord Jesus — loved in the world, and loved unto the end. To such all things are pure, because they themselves are pure. It is no question now of abstinence from this or that; of allowance of legal sanctity; of fleshly uncleanness. The will of God as expressed by His word directs the believer, as we see its perfection in the Lord Jesus.

This, and not the law, is the true rule of life for the Christian. Without Christ there can be nothing but a rule of death. And to the defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure. What was forbidden provoked the flesh to desire it. Stolen waters were sweet; and so it is still where Christ is unknown. Nothing is pure to the defiled and unbelieving, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled: an awful sentence morally, but most true. It is not only that their lower nature is corrupt, but the highest part of them, even that which ought to delight in good, and presumes to discuss divine things and God Himself, is no less defiled. Religion in such a condition is at least as impure and loathsome as anything else.

It will be said, no doubt, that such persons know not God. This is undoubtedly true. They know neither the Father, nor Jesus Christ Whom He did send; yet they may, or even do, profess to own God, as men now in

Christendom, save the openly hostile and unbelieving. “They profess to know God; but in works they deny [him], being abominable and disobedient, and for every good work reprobate” (ver. 16). This surely is not religious progress. The germ of it was even then in apostolic days. The fruit abounds everywhere in our day; and it will be found advancing more and more to greater ungodliness. For their word will spread as a gangrene. It suits the fallen nature of man. His pride is pampered by it, and his will delights in it. Departure from the will of God in a moral way prepared for the gradual rejection of all revelation; for men are ashamed to profess what they hate, as well as what evidently condemns them. God’s word sanctifies. It judges the will of man, as well as all its outward workings and effects. It brings in God and His will, which grace makes the directory, the food, the joy of the new man. Instead of this Satan presents fable on the one hand and commandments of men on the other, both which shut out conscience as well as God Himself.

It is evident that these instructions of the apostle are in full accordance with the teaching of the Master in Matt. 15, especially vers. 10-20; Luke 6:40-45; 11:34-44, and elsewhere. Christianity in the practical sense works outwardly from within: unless the soul be purified in obeying the truth, as with all that believe, there is neither the Father’s name hallowed, nor sin truly judged, nor unfeigned love of the brethren. Neither can there be the worship of God in spirit and truth, any more than drawing near to the Father. All must be superficial and of the natural man. There can be nothing divine till one is born of the Spirit; whereas the gospel carries the soul, in the sense of God’s favour in Christ, far beyond

into peace, liberty, and power. For Christ is not only life but the deliverer in the fullest sense, as He is the revealed object before the soul from first to last.

Thus He, the unchanging One, changes all things for us, and if any one is in Christ, it is a new creation: old things have passed away, behold, all things are become new; and all things are of the God Who reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. Such is the nature, such the character and ways, of God as He has now made Himself known to us in the gospel. How hateful to Him, and ungrateful for man, how base and rebellious in itself, to turn back from a revelation, so wondrous and blessed and complete, to the beggarly elements of Judaism! yea, lower still, to the filthy defiling puddle of human fable and commandments! It is man's religion using as much, or rather as little, of God's word as suits a deadly deceiver; who is behind it all, and avails himself of that little in order to claim divine authority and avoid the reproach of slighting the revelation of grace and truth in Christ the Lord, But the pure in heart, as they shall see God, are enabled to discern present dishonour done to His word, His Son, and the mighty work of redemption; before the light of which these religious efforts and vanities of men flee away as darkness in presence of the day.

We are not in the immediate context directed to the person of Him Who makes all this folly and evil manifest; nor have we dogmatic unfolding of the gospel; but grand moral principles of the utmost moment are laid down. There is room for all, but each in its season, as God is pleased to suit His word to every one who hears the Shepherd's voice. "To the pure all things are pure." How plain and assuring to those who are subject to the Lord!

How vain, in presence of such a declaration, to say that "the church" forbids flesh to be eaten on a Friday or in Lent! The value of a real fast is not denied thereby: it is really of grace in presence of adequate passing occasion, and never in the New Testament a general law, still less the sham of eating fish and eggs. Scripture, however, goes farther still, and, not content with maintaining the holy liberty of the Christian, denounces solemnly those who would infringe it.

"But to the defiled and unfaithful nothing is pure, but both the mind and the conscience are defiled." Having part neither in divine nature nor in divine light, to which they plainly prefer human thoughts, feelings, and authority, they necessarily become a prey to the enemy whose malicious pleasure it is to dishonour God in man's dark and alien ways. Defilement accordingly taints every spring of inward and moral affection, as it pervades their entire life, be they or not openly corrupt, and at any rate unfaithful.

Here we do well to watch against a too common misconception of the opening words of ver. 15. They do not mean "to, or in, the mind of the pure," but for their use. How many victims of passion and lust, particularly among men and women accepted as holding a sacred position, have vainly sought to extract from this holy saying an excuse and cover for their iniquities! May we be kept from every illusion of the flesh and every delusion of our subtle enemy.

Open apostacy is not here in question; for they profess to know God, while in works they deny Him. They are guilty in their despite of any divine revelation, yet more if they scorn the fullest and last. For, as men

acknowledge, the corruption of the best thing is the worst corruption. Such a state paves the way for apostacy.

It is in vain to boast in such a state of knowing God: as the Jews did of old, so do the superstitious now. But they alike prove the unreality of their boast; because “in works they deny Him, being abominable and disobedient, and for every good work reprobate.” Hypocrisy, or at the least self-deception, is the inevitable result of their false position and state. The pretension to extraordinary holiness which essays to exalt self by ignorantly slighting God’s creatures, instead of using them holily and thankfully to His glory, opens the door to Satan who drags such into all defilement of flesh and spirit, yea into abominations contrary to nature itself. Estranged from the truth and grace of God, and abandoned to self, what hope can there be of repentance? What more terrible moral sentence than that which the apostle pronounces, “for every good work reprobate (or, worthless)?”

Titus 2

In contrast with the injurious and profane trash, of which we have been just warned, the apostle now exhorts his trusted child and fellow-servant, entering into details which we may profitably follow with all care. It is interesting to note how the apostle directs Titus to carry himself in his work toward the saints according to age and sex. It differs not a little from that which he laid down in the Epistles to the Ephesian and the Colossian saints. There he is addressing the saints directly; and the order he adopts is precisely and best suited to that purpose. He begins with the subject rather than the

superior of each co-relationship. Thus he exhorts the wives before the husbands, the children before the parents, and the slaves before their masters. It is the true moral order, where the apostolic appeals were written to the saints that filled these relative places. The principle is that those in the subject position should take heed to their duty, as a most important means for the smooth working of such as held the higher relation. But all are put in mind of Him Who has given the light and grace of God on each and every place a saint stands in, that God may thus in all things be glorified through our Lord Jesus.

Peter in his First Epistle (1 Peter 2:18) with fervour and consoling interest exhorts, not exactly “slaves,” but “household servants” (oijkevtai); but there is no corresponding word to masters. In 1 Peter 3:1 he speaks to “wives” at some length, and then briefly (ver. 7) turns to “husbands” likewise.

But here our apostle is writing to his confidential fellow-labourer, working alone in Crete, and this modifies the case considerably. He commences with elder men among the saints, and then he turns to elder women, as objects for the special dealings of Titus. We may observe the wise and holy way in which the latter is told to admonish young women, not directly but through the elders of their own sex. Yet 1 Tim. 5:2 proves that scripture forbids an absolute rule in this respect. But purity is everywhere maintained, as is plain. What a contrast with the horrors of Romanism through the priest on earth that usurps the functions of the Great High Priest! He had passed through the heavens, and yet makes the throne of grace accessible with boldness to every believer, that we may receive mercy and find grace for

seasonable help. Yes, He does this perfectly, as it could not be done if every soul had an earthly priest of unexceptionable character and zeal for his exclusive care and benefit continually.

Here “young men,” to whom in particular Titus was to afford himself a pattern of good works, follow elder men and elder women in vers. 6-8. Then “bondmen” are to be objects of Titus’ charge in vers. 9, 10. But very strikingly the grand basis of blessing for all is put in immediate connection with the despised slave, though surely the truth and motives and effects were for every saint.

Thus the apostle begins, “But speak thou the things which become the healthful teaching: that elder men be sober, grave, discreet, healthful in their faith, in their love, in their patience” (vers. 1, 2). Scripture leaves no room for the thought that the saints need not diligent instruction. We learn what value for the apostle there is in continual exhortation. No doubt we have to distinguish between the healthful doctrine and the things which become it. All right practice flows from divine principle; and all divine principles are concentrated in the person of Christ. He therefore is and must be the substance, the exemplar, and the test; for He is the object set before us, as well as the life we have, and the nourishment of that life.

For this very reason does the apostle urge fidelity on Titus. If he was steward of God’s mysteries for the saints, he was no less to be a watchman on God’s behalf. He was therefore to speak what befitted healthful doctrine. This he could not do without Christ continually before his own eyes; nor would any profit as they ought without Christ before theirs. There may be certain

truths peculiar to certain times and seasons; but Christ is always in season; and, without giving Him His due place and connection withal, truth at any time is apt to fall flat, and, such is the infirmity of man, it may sometimes work dangerously. His grace is sufficient, as for the soul, so also for the servant; if he needs it for himself, he needs it for his ministry not a whit less.

Titus then was here enjoined by the apostle to speak the things which become healthful doctrine. Exhortation should ever follow teaching, as it flows from the same source, and needs to be continually fed with the fresh streams of truth. It will be observed that the word is not exactly “teach,” but “speak thou the things,” etc. The work of Titus was largely pastoral; and a vase deal of a pastor’s work lies in speaking face to face with the objects of his care. This does not at all supersede the value of public teaching, on the one hand; but, on the other, teaching in public will never supply adequately all that every day’s need requires. How many things may be happily nipped in the bud, which else would threaten danger to souls! Taken early, a kindly word may suffice; and what stimulus may be given by a few cheering words, where a soul might otherwise hesitate and in time turn aside! How much instruction also may be given individually, and with far greater impressiveness than in the general exhortations of public addresses! Again, how few there are who know how to speak privately in accordance with their healthful teaching! No doubt there may be legalism and a continual effort to preach in private as well as in public; but how happy when without restraint, and in unaffected love, there is fidelity everywhere, and the words at home are at least

consistent with what has been heard in the open congregation!

It is evident therefore that the language of the Epistle to Titus here is large enough to take in his service both privately and publicly: “but speak thou the things which become healthful teaching.” Another element has to be taken into account. The special relations of those that are addressed are themselves not an unimportant consideration for a servant of the Lord. And we learn how careful is the apostle as to the befitting ways of those who are mutually related (in the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians); as we see in the First Epistle of Peter with rather less prominence. Where mutual duties are pressed, the lesser or more subject relationship is regularly introduced before the greater. Thus the apostle exhorts wives before husbands, children before parents, and servants before masters. And this was done, one need not hesitate to say, in the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. For even supposing that the more authoritative relation were to blame, how important that the subject one should feel and act aright before God! “A soft answer turneth away wrath.” Nor is anything more comely than the incorruptible pearl of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price.

Here to Titus the charge is different, and as proper in its own place. The apostle began with the aged or elder men. The first duty laid down is, that they may be “sober” or temperate. If this become any Christian, the lack of it is serious in an elderly man: he above all should set an example of that moderation in spirit and conduct which bespeaks circumspectness and sense of the presence of God. One can understand how the

inexperienced mind of youth may break forth into extravagance of thought or conduct; but such a fault sits peculiarly ill on a man of years, even if he be not old in the knowledge of the Lord. Retrospect should not have been without effect now that he does know Him in the light of God.

But besides sobriety aged men should be “grave.” It is not only that experience may be turned to the account of sobriety, but to an aged Christian things around, things before, ought surely to be viewed with no levity but with seriousness, as we now look upon the things (not that are seen, but) unseen and eternal.

Then, again, Titus was to see that aged men be “discreet” or “right-minded.” Their position would give them a certain weight, unless there were painful incongruity in their ways and spirit. There are continual perplexities that appear in the practical life of Christians. Discretion therefore is specially needed, and in none so much as an elderly man; who, if he lack the energy of youth, is expected to show discrimination in the conflicting circumstances of intercourse one with another.

Further, they were to be “healthful in their faith.” It is very far from being enough that one know the Lord. It is well to be exercised in mind about the truth generally; but that very exercise exposes to mistaken thoughts, unless there be a single eye in looking to the Lord, and vigilance over one’s own ideas. Neither is it safe to set the mind on, however one may respect, this favourite teacher, or that, among uninspired men. The word is the great safeguard, but the word sought into as a revelation of Christ to the soul. Where this is done

prayerfully, there will be healthiness in faith; where man is trusted (whether self, or a leader, or a party), error is not far off. For God is jealous of a rival and will never endorse our leaning on the creature. He will have us to walk by faith, not by sight.

Nor does it suffice to be “healthful in their faith.” “In their love” is the next word of the apostle. The order is instructive. As faith alone introduces into God’s love toward us, so faith alone enables us to abound in the love of one another. There is scarce anything in which we are more liable to be deceived than in this divine charity, blessed as it is where real and holy. But it must be “faith working through love;” for faith brings in God, and God is love. It is not meant merely in what He has done for us, but in what He is and works in us. “He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love;” and “he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him.” This supposes not only the truth known and enjoyed, but present communion with Him Who has made it all known to us in Christ, and makes it good in those that are His; among whom questions are sure to rise which put the measure, and even reality, of love in us to the severest test.

There is another final want of which the apostle speaks: that the aged men be healthful — “in their patience” (or, endurance), as well as in faith and love. Evil abounds; but evil, where one abides in faith and love, will not seldom give the opportunity of being above it. It may cause suffering; but in this there is fellowship with the Master; and patience well becomes the aged saint. It was a primary sign even for an apostle; as few things seem more sad where it is lacking, particularly among elder men.

Exhortation is now given for the other sex. “That aged women likewise be in deportment reverent, not slanderers, not enslaved to much wine, teachers of good; that they may train (σωφρονίζωσι) the young women to be lovers of husbands, lovers of children, discreet [or, right-minded], chaste, workers at home,5 good, subject to their own husbands, that the word of God be not ill-spoken of” (vers. 3-5).

As aged men were begun with, so aged women come next. With such dress may not be so special a snare as it is to the younger; but it is of great moment that, not their apparel only, but their general demeanour, should beseem and be consistent with those who have to do with sacred things. For such is the full literalism of the word employed. This, therefore, holds the first place. They would naturally be somewhat less restrained, from their age, and habits in all probability contracted before their conversion to God. But grace is superior to all difficulties, and forms by the truth, instead of finding, that which is pleasing to the Lord. The doctrine, however sound, would be put to shame by irreverent carriage or demeanour which might appear in the attire, but covers much more inwardly and outwardly. Where they bore themselves as those who had the fear of God before their eyes, it would commend their profession. It is apparent that in 1 Tim. 2:9 the apostle directs Timothy in a way sufficiently distinct from his aim here with elder women. For there he speaks as to women generally, and καταστολὴ (while taking in far more than στολὴ) seems not so far reaching as κατάστομα a word primarily expressive of condition or even constitution, but applied also to dress.

The next snare against which they are warned is the abuse of the tongue. Aged women were not to be “slanderers.” Unquestionably it befits none that call on the name of the Lord; but as men are more exposed to the snare of rough or violent actions, so elder women to give vent to their feelings in unseemly speech when in any way crossed. Idleness too (and often at their time of life there is apt to be a suspension of activity) would give room for injurious gossip. The Spirit of God therefore warns, in the next place, against abusive language on their part, and especially in traducing others. Hen are so described in 2 Tim. 3:3; but women more, as in 1 Tim. 3:11 and here.

Again, their age, especially in the country before the apostle’s mind, would give them opportunity and desire for wine. Naturally, we all know that jaded body and tried mind might fall back on some such stimulant; as it is said in the last chapter of Proverbs, “Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts; let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.” But the word is plain, “not enslaved to much wine.”

Whatever may be the speculations of moderns, scripture will not bend to theory, but maintains liberty for the Christian in the use of every creature of God. Our Lord Himself personally and particularly disproved the assumption that all such use is evil in itself. Here too we have a clear proof that there is no absolute prohibition whatever. Timothy was even enjoined to use a little wine for his stomach’s sake and his often infirmities. Aged women are simply cautioned that they be not enslaved to much wine. Such excitement as it can give beseems

not those who, having Christ as their life, are exhorted to be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5).

But the apostle is not content with guarding them against snares. It was fitting from their age that they should be “teachers of that which is good.” By good in this clause he does not mean benevolent practice, but what was honourable (k αλοδιδασκάλους), what befitted themselves, and themselves in relation to the Lord. Aged women would have considerable opportunities. Set free from the calls on young and vigorous life, they have in old age a no less suited sphere of usefulness. Let them look to it that they be teachers, with the weight which experience gives, of that which is upright and comely. Whatever may be the tendency of nature, and the inclination from habit, grace brings in the name of Christ, and from Christ flows out all that becomes the saints, precious in God’s eyes, whether they teach or are taught.

Next, the apostle looks at their relation to younger women, with whom they would as the rule have a strong influence. How were they to use their opportunities? “That they may train the young women to be lovers of husbands, lovers of children.” Here they would be admirably in place, and with the Lord before their eyes their experience would prove invaluable for those that have to face the daily difficulties and dilemmas of human life. Not merely were they to school their youngers to be subject to their husbands; to cultivate affection in the home circle is particularly pressed. This would win with an adversary of the truth, where godliness might at first be repellent; along with it love to a husband and to children is indispensably to be cherished by the wife and mother. Christianity was never intended to enfeeble the

affections. If Christ governs, He is also the spring of sure unfailing strength. There is no trial with the husband or the child to which His grace would not apply; and the elder women were of all the most suited to cheer and confirm the hearts of their youngers, that they should not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good.

But there is another exhortation which fits in most suitably. They were to school their younger sisters to be “discreet” or right-minded: they might be liable to enthusiasm on the one hand, or to carelessness on the other. Discretion is therefore a most needed quality to preserve on the true path of godliness and wisdom in the midst of the difficulties of ordinary life.

Further, purity claims a great place in the exhortation of the elders to their youngers. They were to engage them to be “chaste,” in deed, word, and spirit; where the Spirit of God, revealing Christ, is of all power. How little it was known among the Greeks, and even among the Jews to their shame! Their very religion defiled the Greeks; it was the consecration of every corruption, and made them far more polluted than if they had none. So mighty and so essential a quality is purity in Christianity, that it outwardly and really proved a wholly new element, where grace was forgotten and truth almost effaced. Yet even then and there the very artists of Christendom, the sculptors and painters, not to speak of poets, manifested how deeply the light of Christ had penetrated their conceptions, as compared with the voluptuous remains of ancient art. But here it was no question of a surviving or novel sentiment, but of a deep unprecedented rectitude, proper to the relationship and due to the sex (to say nothing of the other), as God made

it, and now brought under the grace of Christ. Purity a selfish Jew, or a dissolute Greek, would not fail to appreciate in his wife and in family life.

The next thing pressed is that they be devoted to domestic occupation, — “workers6 at home.” One cannot but feel the gracious wisdom of such an exhortation as this; and it must have struck those who lived in heathen circumstances even more than ourselves, accustomed to the blessed contrast with heathen habits in days of Christendom, however degenerate. It is a fine example of the way in which the Spirit of God adapts Himself to the most ordinary duties in the present scene. See it in Christ, Who lived for so many years of His life subject to His parents, and Who, in the obscurest of conditions, advanced in wisdom as well as favour with God and man. It is He Who makes all these exhortations as simple and easily understood as they are morally elevating. He brings in His own grace as applicable to women as to men. He shows us the way in every sense, the pattern of obeying God, undoubtedly beyond all comparison; yet how many has He not led, and fashioned, and blessed, in that narrow path He trod in a wilderness where there is no way!

The next exhortation is of great value, following diligence in home-work. It is that the younger women should be “good (ἀγαθὰς)” in the sense of kindness. If Christ were not before their eyes, home-work might be despised as drudgery. But if the work were ever so well done, is this all that would satisfy or please a husband? Goodness diffuses happiness all round. Christ sheds a heavenly light on every earthly duty, answering to the riband of blue which God commanded the Jews to attach to their garments. But the exhortation to kindness in this

sort has special wisdom in following home-work. There is no place where it is more valuable and less frequent. Nothing short of the Lord's grace could make it a constant habit, where countless little occurrences would inevitably turn up to try patience. But with Christ before the heart goodness would hold on its unobtrusive way. They would labour and persevere as seeing Him Who is invisible.

Last, but not least, is the unvarying call for wives to be in subjection to their own husbands, that the word of God be not evil spoken of. What more irritating to a husband than the readiness on the wife's part to question his authority, or interfere with his plans? The habit of subjection is of all things the most suited to win a husband's ear; and assuredly the knowledge of Christ would give the secret of wisdom, whether he were a Christian or not. If he had experienced the danger and the evil of slighting advice, given very probably at his own desire, it would have the effect of producing the wish to hear again. But the wife's unjudged insubordinate spirit would completely counteract this happy influence, and make even what might be good to be shunned and disregarded. It was therefore of the greatest moment that the elder women should instil it into their youngers to be in subjection to their own husbands; and this not merely for the peace and profit of the household in general, and for the happy relation of the wife and husband, but "that the word of God be not blasphemed," or of evil report. The failure of a wife in adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour by subjection, even in that intimate tie, would not fail to bring reproach, not merely on herself individually, or her associates, but on the word of God itself. This may not

be quite just; but it proves what men expect from such as claim the possession of His favour; and these are bound to acknowledge their responsibility.

The apostle comes to a fresh clause in due order. “The younger men likewise exhort to be right-minded, in all things showing thyself a pattern of good works, in the teaching uncorruptness, gravity, healthy speech that cannot be condemned, that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil to say concerning us” (vers. 6-8). As there were specialities in dealing with elder men and elder women, Titus is instructed particularly as to the younger men; not, it may be observed, as to the younger women directly, who fell rather under the immediate care of the elders of their sex.

The moral propriety of this is obvious. There is no need of such delicacy as to the younger men. He was to exhort them to a right mind or discretion. But his own example is brought into the foreground now; any failure on his part in discretion would be peculiarly prejudicial to his godly influence with such youngers. Therefore it is said, “In all things showing thyself a pattern of good (καλῶν) works,” that is, of works right and honourable. For benevolence (ἀγ.) is not the point here, though of course it would not, and ought not to, be wanting. But benevolent characters often fall short in that which is comely (καλ.) or befitting the name of the Lord. They are too often weakly amiable, and ready to compromise for peace. It is therefore important to point out the true force of the word of God in this case, which all must feel once it is named.

Practical conduct, however indispensable it may be, is not everything. In his teaching he was to see to “uncorruptness.” No quality can be, at any time or with any souls, of greater moment. But especially the younger men have to be thought of. They are more or less acutely observant, as they would be sure to be stumbled by any failure in this respect. Compromise of truth or holiness is of all things most damaging to Christianity. And here we have to do with one very honoured, who yet does not stand in the specially elevated place of an apostle, but approaches more nearly to that which the Lord supplies from time to time for the need of the church. Titus was not inspired, nor had he such a place of authority as belonged to an apostle, save where expressly delegated. Nevertheless he. had a position of great honour and equally great. responsibility. It was therefore of all moment that he should be vigilant for himself. An apostle even was in no way absolved from the necessity, both in his walk and in his ministry, of continual watchfulness, and keeping his body under, and bringing it into subjection, as the great apostle phrases it in 1 Cor. 9. Here, however, it is in his teaching that Titus is exhorted to show uncorruptness: his practical walk and works had already been insisted on.

Next we hear of “healthful speech” or discourse Assuredly if any deposit of truth could give moral elevation to one in authority and gracious care of his youngers, it is the revelation of God in Christ and in His work. As there incorruptness shines and moulds the believer accordingly; so is the teacher of truth called to bear his witness with dignity in his bearing and ways.

Next, he was to show “gravity.” Only the Spirit of God could maintain this high character in his occupation with the younger men. There would not lack ample opportunity for discourse more or less light. Excitement is often most agreeable, as well to the speaker as to those that hear. But the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ claims gravity. “Sincerity” too appears in the A.V. None should wonder that this is an addition resting upon rather slender authority. It is pre-supposed in the uncorruptness which is already urged; only that “uncorruptness” goes far beyond “sincerity,” because it brings in that which is due to God and Christ, and not merely the honest character and way of him who teaches. The kindred word, ἀφθαρσία, is with similar feebleness misrepresented in Eph. 6:24; for people might be sincere enough who sully the “incorruption” which there conditions the love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is another quality, it seems, not confined to his teaching, though certainly not excluded from it. But the apostle presses “healthy speech that cannot be condemned,” sound in itself, and not open to just censure, not merely on the more formal occasions of doctrine, but in all connections with the younger men. Assuredly we must all feel the great importance of this, even though it be a characteristic in which we have to acknowledge our own frequent failure. One thing alone is an adequate safe-guard — the conscious presence of God. But let us not forget that as Christians we walk in the light, as God is in the light. We cannot avoid this if we have life in Christ, for He is the light of life; and he that followeth Christ shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life, as He Himself declared. Let us not be content with it as a fact, and a privilege that faith

boasts. Let us by the Holy Ghost see to it that we truly enjoy it, and that it be a consciously living actuality; not a mere abstraction into which carelessness would betray us,, as unbelief would make it an attainment to reward our fidelity. Is it not meant to be a reality in which we live here below, not for some believers but for all? In such a case healthy speech that cannot be condemned is but natural; but oh I how apt we are to sink below the blessed plane on which it is ours to stand in Christ the Lord.

The apostle next and finally gives moral aim to this last exhortation. “That he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say concerning us.” We have to consider not friends only but foes, with their readiness to malign what condemns themselves. Let us seek then to cut off occasion from those that seek occasion, that even the adversary, of whatever sort he be, may have no evil thing to say concerning us. The word for “evil” (φαῦλου) is so extensive as to comprehend things from light or slight to mean paltry and worthless; whereas κακὸν just expresses what is bad, and πονηρὸν activity of evil, or mischievous. The term used is precisely suitable.

It will be noticed that the critical reading is “us” rather than “you”: a confusion very frequent indeed in the MSS. In this case “you” is out of the question. It would have been “thee,” if it had referred to Titus; but the general application to the family of God is the better sense. The vulgar or T.R. reading was a change from “us” to “you,” which is wholly unsuitable. “Concerning us” (i.e. Christians generally) seems evidently the word which the apostle wrote and of course meant. The business of sound criticism is to eschew every human

importation, no matter how early, and to restore the original text which came from God through His inspired messenger.

Slavery was one of the grave facts which Christianity had to face, then universal, in some places existing still to a certain extent. Nowhere does the power of Christ's work more clearly or more decidedly prove its heavenly source and character, than in dealing with masters and slaves.

The apostle bids Titus exhort "bond-servants to be in subjection to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all things, not gainsaying, not purloining, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things" (vers. 9, 10). Here again subjection is the prime duty of such a relationship, and is accordingly put in the fore-ground — subjection to their Own masters. Occupation even in thought with others might only do mischief. No saint, no apostle or prophet, is free from the duty of subjection. Christ made its truth and its moral excellence plain to the faithful; for He, the Lord of all, manifested Himself a man, the pattern of absolute subjection in love and obedience of His Father, the Servant of all. What an example and motive for Christian bondmen?

"To be well-pleasing in all things" is sometimes a very great difficulty, it may be from the peculiarities of the master or from those of the bondman. Satan would love to insinuate that in any other circumstances they might better obey; and that it is in vain, as they are, to think of being well-pleasing "in all things" One's own master might be capricious or fault-finding. "Oh, if such a one were my master" But there is no lowering the claim of

Christ; and it is Christ, and Christ alone kept before the eyes, that enables a bondman to be truly subject and to persevere in all things, instead of giving up-sometimes at least in despair. For faith, not resignation, is the true divine antidote to the passion of despair, which is never to be thought of by a Christian. Who more than a Christian slave needs to remember God's call to rejoice in the Lord always? "For Christ also pleased not himself, but even as it is written, The reproaches of those that reproached thee fell upon me" (Rom. 15:3).

Further, the slave was to be "not gainsaying." Many a one could do or even bear much who finds it difficult to avoid contradicting or answering again in deed any more than speech; but the word of the Lord to the bondman is "not gainsaying." Is he not the Lord's freedman? Can there be such a manumission as His? Could money purchase emancipation like this? Let him give God thanks and go on his way rejoicing, forwarding and never thwarting his master's wishes to His Over-Lord and Saviour Whose eye is ever on him to cheer and guide.

Again, stolen themselves, or the children of those who were stolen, it was natural for slaves to have scanty respect for the rights of others whose very relationship was in general based on a wrong. But no reasoning is admitted on abstract rights as an excuse for "purloining." Is he not in his faith in possession of the true riches, which have no wings to flee away? Does he not look for the Lord to come and manifest it at any time, yet if He tarry at the best time? Is it for him to dishonour such a Lord, and to bring shame on all he believes and professes?

The apostle insists on Christian bondmen “showing all [or, every sort of] good fidelity.” They were really serving the same Master as their masters if Christians; and without the sense of direct responsibility to the Lord, as well as of His grace, how could they go on thoroughly aright? So elsewhere grace teaches and exhorts that, whatsoever they do, they were to work from the soul as unto the Lord, and not unto men.

Nor was it enough that they were not to be inconsistent and unworthy saints; but as the apostle here says, “that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.” There is nothing, on the human side of the effects of the truth, more admirable than its practical power on the heart of those once degraded or even depraved. See it in the converted robber’s bearing in the midst of the agonies of crucifixion. What newborn reverence! What confession of sins! What sense of righteousness! What boldness of Faith! Was not this, even then and there, to adorn the doctrine of our Saviour God?

God’s gospel is glad tidings to the highest earthly personage no less than to the lowest, though (as the rule) to the poor it is preached as alone generally accessible. No king, no queen, no emperor, but what is infinitely indebted, if the heart be opened, to the grace of God. But if steeled against it, the message is of salvation all the same. How unspeakably sweet then for those in the painful and trying position of slavery!

It was this that wrought so powerfully on the affections of the blessed apostle. Therefore is he drawn out by the Holy Spirit in the full and beautiful declaration of the message of God’s love. “For the grace of God appeared

bringing salvation to all men, instructing us that, having denied ungodliness (or, impiety) and worldly lusts, we should live soberly (or, discreetly) and righteously and godlily (or, piously) in this present age" (vers. 11, 12).

No statement can be conceived more in keeping with the design of this Epistle. For, although it be an episode (like another in the chapter that follows, Titus 3:4-7), both are stamped with that present living reality on which the apostle dwells constantly in his authoritative instructions to his own child according to common faith. It is not that God's own eternal counsels are left out any more than the hope of everlasting glory to come; but the aim is most manifest that all should converge on the heart for the practical ways of our pilgrimage here below. Nor do we read of any fellow-workman so suited to carry this out administratively as Titus in both his teaching and his governance or rule.

When the law was given by Moses, it was ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator. All kinds of partitions barred man's way; clouds of incense and veils rose up between the Israelite and God, Whose manifestation was only for one representative man, the high priest, for a passing moment and with ample blood, within the holiest. For the law was the test of man already fallen, that sin might appear in its true colours. If sin were there, as it was, the law could only work wrath; for disobedience then takes the shape of open violation or transgression. Therefore is it said that the law came in by the way (παρεισῆλθεν), that the trespass might abound, and that through the commandment sin might become exceeding sinful. Thus law in result must surely condemn the sinner. It could never justify nor save one guilty, being characteristically the ministration

of condemnation and death. How wise and merciful that such a system of moral experiment, with its temporal promises and earthly judgments, should have been restricted for a while, and to a single people!

The gospel is wholly different in nature and effect where received in the heart. Therein the saving grace of God did appear to all men; for all lay in the direst need: they were lost. And we can add from elsewhere God's righteousness is therein revealed — the righteousness of faith which justifies, instead of condemning; because its effiacacy is grounded on the accomplished and atoning work of Christ. Its character therefore, as revealing God's righteousness, is "bringing salvation;" and this not to a single people like Israel under the law, but "to all men." The grace of God revealing Himself in Christ and His redemption is too precious to be limited; it is in itself infinite, for God is love as surely as He is light; and both have come out fully in Christ and especially in His atoning death, God therefore is not of Jews only but of Gentiles also, Who justifies circumcision not by law but by faith, and uncircumcision through their actual faith, as we read in Rom. iii. if they do believe. A crucified Christ displays man as he really is. Jews and Gentiles are proved therein alike guilty and lost. But the love of God goes out "to all" alike indiscriminately, not judging by law but "saving by grace." Such is the gospel as here shown. It is no mere demand of works, no test of man, but distinctly founded upon the reconciling work of God Himself in Christ Who came and was here to do His will. It is therefore a revelation of His saving goodness for man to believe. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved; for with the heart man believeth

unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Nor is this all. While His grace presents salvation to all, it is also said to be educating us. The change from "all men" to "us" is important, and ought not to be overlooked. The one is the universal message of God, which may or may not be received. The other is the distinct effect, whenever souls receive that message in faith. And to what end does God's grace lead us on? "Instructing us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, and righteously, and godlily, in this present age." No mistake is grosser or more antagonistic to the teaching of the apostle, than, after believing the gospel, to cast the Christian on the law as his rule of life. It is not so. Christ alone remains, not only the Saviour, but the Way, the Truth, and the Life. In and through Him did the grace of God appear, and His grace alone saves by faith. But, besides, it educates us, having denied ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live soberly, and righteously, and godlily, in this present age. For repentance is as real as faith; and "ungodliness and worldly lusts" henceforth are hateful and denied. Either might work more or less to ruin the soul and dishonour God. In those who, believing in Christ, have a new and eternal life, a new character has to be formed; and old habits are and must be from the starting-point watched against, which once grew up unjudged in the days of our past evil and folly.

But that which is negative does not suffice for God as He reveals Himself in His Son. His grace, which goes far beyond law, instructs us, that we should live discreetly as regards ourselves, righteously as regards others, and piously in our highest relationship. For the present

course of things, or age, is an evil one. But Christ gave Himself for our sins that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of God our Father (Gal. 1:4). As it is here, in this world and during this age, that we spend a little while for the present, we are therefore called to be so much the more vigilant, if indeed we hear His voice. We await His coming to receive us on high in the Father's house, and to accompany Him from heaven when He appears to establish His kingdom visibly in power and glory.

This is what the apostle next pursues here. For there is another all-important branch of truth and full of rich fruit for the believer: "Looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (ver. 13).

It is the object before us which forms our character. The Christian object is the Lord in glory; we may say of it in this respect what David said of Goliath's sword, "There is none like it." Had it not done execution on him that had the power of death, that is, the devil? The essential thing for the soul's salvation undoubtedly is Christ and His work for us received in faith. But if the true hope be lacking to the believer, the blank even with that is irreparable. For the fact is so, even if energy of faith and love may do much to hinder the wiles of Satan; who would insinuate false hopes under fair pleas as a substitute for the "one hope" delivered to the saints. As Christ is the proper object of faith, and as the Spirit forms us practically by our beholding Him risen for us and in heavenly glory, thus transformed into the same image from glory to glory (as we read in 2 Cor. 3), so the right and divinely given object of hope is the coming of Christ to receive us to Himself.

Here the apostle presents it in a comprehensive way, not only the blessed hope, but the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. Grace, we know, did already appear (ver. 11), saving grace for all men. This they reject at their peril; for salvation cannot be otherwise, and the richer and surer the grace that saves, the guiltier is the unbelief that refuses or slights it. The grace of God alone leads into a walk of communion, and of practical righteousness for every day. But we need also to look for "the blessed hope and appearing of the glory" (ver. 13). These are the two parts which comprise the revealed object God would have before our souls.

The one article given to the two objects brackets them together, not at all as if they are identical, but as here expressly associated to convey the complex and combined outlook. "The blessed hope" is that which alone can satisfy the heart; it is to be in the presence of Christ on high, changed at His coming into His likeness and with Him for ever. "The appearing of the" divine "glory" is bound up with it, and follows in due time, as that display or the divine manifestation in power, which our renewed souls cannot but desire to the utter exclusion of moral and physical evil and of Satan's guileful energy. It is the Lord Jesus Who introduces the world-kingdom of the Lord and of His Anointed (Rev. 11:15). As He brought the grace of God here below, so will He bring the glory to appear in His day. He it is who is called "the great God" as well as "our Saviour" lest we might forget His essential nature, when He emptied Himself to become a bondman, and humbled Himself to the death of the cross, in accomplishment of the infinite devotedness of His love in redemption to God's glory. He

is no little God, as Arians feigned, but our great God and Saviour.

There is nothing nobler to act on the affections and the convictions, on the ways and ends, of believing man here below. Not in the smallest degree weakening the faith which works by love, it cheers and animates in the face of all which makes him groan; and we do groan now because, reconciled to God ourselves, we see nothing yet reconciled around us. Yea, we not only know a perishing world but we must add a morally ruined church. It is not simply the Gentiles still without God, but the Jews most of all hating the gospel of the rejected Christ. And what deliverance have we wrought in the earth? how far have we Christians, individually or together, reflected the heavenly glory of Christ as a testimony to those without? If the righteous with difficulty are saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?

Truly there is no ground for boasting save in the Lord, "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all lawlessness, and purify to himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good (καλ.) works" (ver. 14). Thus, when bringing in the bright future of God, which along can dispossess the enemy and deliver a fallen race and ruined world, carefully does the apostle remind our souls that all has been of grace. We have no claim, no desert; we stand by and to nothing but the Saviour Who gave not this or that merely, nor all possible other things, however precious, which He indeed and only could give, but that which is beyond all price, "Who gave Himself for us." God the Father had His blessed part in the inestimable gift. He knowing all gave Him and sent Him. He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him

up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?

The effect too answers to the cause: there is no failure, nor can there be, in the result for those that believe. What was His aim? “That he might ransom us from all lawlessness, and purify unto himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works.” Let us seek sedulously to make this good in our hearts, inasmuch as His grace would have a people for His own possession (not “peculiar” in words or manner, habit or feeling, but) for Him to have and delight in us as His own. How wondrous that He should care to have us, or make much of such a possession! What joy to the heart that so He feels and acts to us! May we for this be encouraged the more to be zealous of good works, not benevolent only but honourable and comely, not of forms or ordinances like Jews! nor of false gods like Gentiles, but of the fair and proper fruits of Christianity.

It is not only that the source lay in the unfathomable love of God, acting freely from Himself that He might surround Himself with beings brought out of all evil, with a nature given to them capable of enjoying and answering in practice to His goodness in the face of His and their enemy. The mighty work was laid on the Lord Jesus, not less God than the Father, and become man, so to defeat Satan and to save man at all cost. For indeed He gave Himself for us.

Here was the irrefragable ground of all the blessing. On the one hand sin could only be adequately judged in His death for us. On the other hand life eternal was only His to give consistently with God’s character, and that sacrifice which abolished our guilt and imparted

acceptance in His sight to those who without Him and His work were evil and lost. But for those that believe the result fails not, — that He might ransom us from all lawlessness (for the form might greatly differ) and purify unto Himself a people for His own possession.

God has a purpose to have Israel as His special possession in the land when Messiah reigns, and as Son of man has the far wider glory of a kingdom, where all the peoples, nations, and languages shall serve Him. But here it is the higher counsel of those who share Christ's rejection, know Him risen and glorified on high, and await His coming to join Him for heaven, and come forth with Him at His appearing.

"These things speak, and exhort, and reprove, with all authority. Let no man despise thee" (ver. 15). Arduous is the work of the ministry. Speaking, and exhorting, and reproving, must all have their place in faithful service. The truth needs to be spoken from God for the believer to know. But as flesh, world, and Satan make all possible hindrances, there is the constant want of exhortation. There may be will at work and evil may display itself. Reproof therefore is requisite for the forward or the laggard, the careless or the wayward. And "all authority" is thoroughly consistent with all humility. Woe be to those who despise Christ in the least of the servants whom He sends! Even the apostle did not escape slight from the refractory. "If any one thinketh himself a prophet or spiritual [for what will not vanity think itself?], let him recognise the things which I write to you, that it is the Lord's commandment" (1 Cor. 14:37).

Titus 3

From personal and domestic duties the apostle turns now to those which are more external.

“Put them in mind to be in subjection to principalities,7 to authorities; to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be uncontentious, gentle, showing all meekness toward all men” (vers. 1, 2).

As the apostle Peter presses similar exhortations on the believing Jews in his First Epistle, so did our apostle very fully in writing to the Roman believers, who were mostly Gentiles. Now he charges Titus, himself a Greek, to lay similar injunctions habitually on the Cretan brethren, whose countrymen were notorious for their insubordination and other vices to boot. Never was such an exhortation more needed than now, when the lawlessness of the age so rapidly increases as to shock all the right-minded. Lawlessness in the world is no less flagrant than a similar spirit in the church, though no doubt it is specially hateful in the temple of God, where the Holy Ghost dwells. But it is very possible for men to hold a rigid theory of obedience within the church, and to trample under foot and deny a similar responsibility in the world. They are not in this taught of God. Perhaps it is still more common to insist on obedience to the world’s authority, and to deny it in the church on the plea of its state of ruin. God’s word condemns all such selfwill.

Scripture however is plain and decided: it is not enough that it be for wrath’s sake, but for conscience. God is concerned in our subjection, for there is no authority but of God; those that be are ordained of God; monarchical, republican, or any mixture of the two, they are ordained

of God. “wherefore he that resisteth authority withstandeth the ordinance of God.” Nor does it matter whether it be a supreme ruler or those commissioned by him, as the apostle Peter lets us know (1 Peter 2:13, 14), “For thus is the will of God.” It was ordered in His providence that when the apostle wrote to the saints at Rome, one of the most cruel despots reigned: even so “Let every soul be in subjection to the higher authorities.” The worst ruler is better than anarchy. Nevertheless it is not because of this reason of utility that the word of God speaks. Whoever he may be, he is the minister of God for good. He beareth not the sword in vain. He is a minister of God, and avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil. If this doctrine is strange in our day, it is the more incumbent on the faithful, not only to believe, but to practise accordingly.

Next, Titus was to remind them to be obedient in a general way. That this is the force of the word is plain from the New Testament usage (Acts 5:29, 32; Acts 27:21). There is no sufficient reason to translate “to obey magistrates,” as in the A. V. On the contrary this is to lose an exhortation by making it a mere repetition of the former clause. Do people plead the rights of man? the true place of the saint is “to obey.” Do they abuse obedience, in order to set aside the authority of God? the answer is, “We ought to obey God rather than men.” But obedience always, and everywhere, is the duty of the saint. If not sure of the will of God, he ought to wait till he learns, being one of the elect in sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. We are neither Jews under law, nor are we lawless Gentiles. The spirit of obedience Godward, if not

always of man, it is therefore of the highest moment to inculcate.

But, further, the apostle would have Titus to press readiness for every good work. The saint is called not only to be a righteous man practically, but a good man. So our Lord here below went about doing good. If we cannot, like Him, heal those that were oppressed of the devil, we are here exhorted to be ready for every good work. It is a real and effective testimony to Christ where the truth is held and confessed along with activity in good: if Christ be not owned, the divine light which should shine is lacking. All then turns to glorify man, not God our Father.

But again, he would have them put in mind “to speak evil of no one.” This is no easy matter in a world where evil abounds on every side, and where so much of it is levelled at the children of God in both word and deed; but God’s word to us is plain, “to speak evil of no one.” There may be a duty to bear witness for a godly end. Let us take care that it is only thus we can be charged with so speaking. No part of scripture is clearer than this Epistle for reproving severely that which calls for it. This is not evil speaking, but of God and for God.

Moreover, it is very difficult for those who are in the truth not to seem “contentious” toward such as deny it, counting it unattainable or indifferent. With Christ before us, however, the clear place of the Christian is to be really far from any strife, though charity demands that we should bear our testimony to the truth, and always deal faithfully with our brethren. If the Jew was not to allow sin in his neighbour, how much more is the Christian to be watchful in love, and to speak truth, and

the truth, in love! This can only be with God before our eyes as seen in Christ. Then love is used and is never really contentious.

Moreover, we are called to be “gentle.” Here again Christ has left us an example that we should follow in His steps. None so withering in His exposure of hypocrisy and self-righteousness; yet none so tender and considerate even to the most faulty against Himself. He was meek and lowly in heart, and calls E[is own to take His yoke upon them and learn from Him, as the way to find rest unto their souls, where so much tends to ruffle and grieve.

Lastly comes “showing all meekness toward all men.” What self-judgment is called for! what continual walking by faith and not by sight! Christ before our eyes believingly can alone either call it out or sustain it, whatever the circumstances. It is not only meekness in fraternal intercourse, but expressly “toward all men,” and in every form of meekness. Who is sufficient for these things? Truly it is “of God”: none other source avails and as it is through His Spirit, so also and only with Christ before the eyes of the heart.

The apostle now draws a very dark yet true and life-like picture, not merely of what man is here or all over the world, but of what we ourselves were once in our natural state. It is evident that this was intended to strengthen the duty of subjection to authority on the one hand, and on the other the spirit of mild and meek bearing toward all mankind, in all those who bear the name of the Lord. Grace was to prevail and display itself all round. This has been far from always the fact among God’s children. And no wonder. They have been trained

up for the most part under the mistaken’ assumption that the law is the rule of life for the Christian. The consequence has been that the Christians so formed have manifested the spirit of earthly righteousness, much more than of heavenly grace. Necessarily in the measure of our uprightness we are really characterised by that which governs our thoughts and affections. If error rule there, as communion fails, the walk is proportionately perverted from the will of God. Christ being our life, risen and in heaven, so is His word in all its fulness the rule of our life, as the Spirit is the power which works and forms us as witnesses of Him to the glory of God.

No maxim more false than that the practical life is independent of the creed. Christ is set forth in the written word as the true rule of Christian life; and as He walked Himself, so He uses all the word of God in the power of the Spirit to create in us intelligence as well as divine motives flowing out of His love. Grace, therefore, is the predominant character of the Christian, the direct and essential opposite of law; yet grace reigns in every sense through righteousness. Undoubtedly God did of old test Israel by His law, and the commandment is holy, just, and good; but the object was to prove the impossibility of aught good in man, or to be got out of man. This the believer has to learn, and alone does learn, experimentally. On that ground nothing but the grace of God in Christ can deliver from guilt and sin, as well as from its consequences; but the practical effect is that the righteous import (τὸ δικαίωμα) of the law is fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. With those who theorise about the law, it begins

with ineffectual struggles, and issues in disappointment or in delusion.

Hence the importance for us, who, as believers in Christ, are now the objects of divine grace, that we should draw lessons of lowly love, not only from the incomparable grace which has saved us, but from the utter depths of evil out of which we ourselves have been saved. “For at one time even we were foolish, disobedient, gone [or led] astray, in slavery to divers lusts and pleasures, passing time in malice and envy, abominable, hating one another” (ver. 3).

To the Greek mind especially, perhaps no description was less welcome than that with which the apostle commences, our folly, our want of understanding before God, for the life that is now, and for that which is to come. But this is the truth. Human knowledge has nothing to do with it, save (it may be) by making the contrast more glaring. See a man, on the one hand, full of science, sound information, and letters, as in Rom. ii.; on the other hand, a prey to every falsehood about God, wholly without Him, and insensible to any living relationship with Him. In the beast there cannot be such a link from its nature; there is for it no moral association with God. But man! He had even as man, he only had, God breathing into his nostrils the breath of life, whereby he became a living soul. Man is therefore immediately and ever morally responsible; he was made to obey God, as much as to rule the lower creation. On earth the brute looks down, man alone looks up. Sin has utterly ruined this, whilst the responsibility remains. He has become the slave of a mightier rebel than himself. What “folly” now? and what can the end be?

Accordingly we find the next description of the apostle is “disobedient.” This is the universal condition of man; so he lives and dies in his natural state, never once obeying God here below. From a condition so desperate Christ, Himself the obedient Man though infinitely more than man, alone delivers; and this, by imparting His own life through faith. “He that believeth hath everlasting life.” It is true that this could not avail without Christ’s atoning death, which alone removes man’s guilt before God by Christ’s suffering, Just for unjust, on the cross. Yet even His death could only be a cleansing from every sin through His blood, and a blessed incentive to a new walk here below; in itself it could not be the new life on or rather in which the Holy Ghost would act by the word, were that all.

The urgently permanent want therefore of a sinful soul is the breath of a new and spiritual life. But herein was manifested the love of God in our case, that God has sent His Only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. Life in Him is only and always an obedient life; thereby from the moment of conversion the Holy Spirit separates us from evil. It is wholly different from Pharisaic setting ourselves apart, being a divine work. For we are sanctified, as the apostle Peter says, to the obedience of Jesus Christ, no less than to the sprinkling of His blood. Without His blood we should be oppressed with the sense of unremitted sins. Spiritual life alone would rather deepen this sense; life could not remove it righteously It is there that His death by grace comes in effectually for us before God. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son as propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10).

Thus the whole work of Christ is necessary for sinful man, and is the incomparable boon which faith enjoys in its fulness; but the practical aim of it all is that we, having died to sins, should live unto righteousness (1 Peter 2:24), and walk even as He walked here below. "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoso keepeth His word, in him verily hath the love of God been perfected" (1 John 2:4, 5). For man therefore is nothing good without obedience; yet we were once "disobedient," as we were "foolish" or lacking intelligence. God was not in our thoughts or hearts to obey. Our way was our folly in ignorance of God and gratification of self, or perhaps we fell into an ascetic dream of making God our debtor.

Further, we were not only wandering in error, but "led astray," however highly we may have thought of our independence and shrewd judgment. Nor should any one be surprised to learn that so it was. Were we not part of the world which lies in the wicked one, where the spirit of self-will governs all without exception, Jews and Gentiles, alike children of disobedience? "We also all once lived in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest" (Eph. 2), wholly ignorant that through unbelief we were slaves of one who is a liar and the father of it. Nor is any lie so evil, subtle, and fatal, as human religion. God only can make known in His word what pleases Him.

Nor was the evil confined to desires of the mind. We were "in slavery to divers lusts and pleasures"; so much the more bondmen, because we flattered ourselves that we were pre-eminently free. We did our own will and

pleased ourselves; we chose our pleasures here or there as we liked. What was this but to be slaves of the devil when severally pursuing divers lusts and pleasures? To do our will is to fall into his slavery. Christ was the blessed contrast, Who pleased not Himself but ever did the will of God, cost what it might.

Such ways as these exposed us to constant dangers, difficulties, strains, and miseries. Conflict of will broke in upon the calmest surface of amiability; gusts of feeling, yea, of passion, swept us along now and then; in short we were, as it is said here, “passing time in malice and envy,” whatever might be the good opinion we had of ourselves or valued one from another. We had no love in any divine or real sense of doing good unselfishly. We disliked what condemned ourselves. We envied in others what we had not. Here again let us delight our souls in Christ, Who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed by the devil; for God was with Him.

Lastly, the apostle does not hesitate to say we were “abhorred (or, hateful)” as well as “hating one another.” We awakened the horror of other people, spite of all appearances or efforts; and others returned “hate” with no less bitterness of feeling. What a power of evil lay on us! What a reality of evil and shame is in alienation from God! What grace in Him Who alone could say, “I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.”

Man's extremity was God's opportunity, as always, then above all. When judgment might have seemed most due, His kindness and His dear love toward man appeared. Earthly deliverances were wholly short of the dire need. Prophets had spoken for this in vain; in vain for this the most striking powers, miracles, signs. Man was lost. Would God appear to save him? This is just what the apostle here declares in terms clear and certain.

"But when the kindness and the love to man of our Saviour God appeared." The A. V. rather fails in that it merges "the philanthropy" of God in His kindness; whereas, by a distinct article to each, the two things are presented separately, however closely associated otherwise. Next, God's love toward man is a single word, φιλανθρωπία, whereas the absence of the article in the English makes its natural meaning to be His kindness toward man in His love. Now this is not really the thought expressed by the apostle, which appears to be as one has here endeavoured to represent it.

It is a blessed and full statement of what God is in His kindness, contrasted with all that we were in our folly and evil aforetime. Corruption, violence, disobedience, and error described ourselves. God, Who is holy and of inflexible righteousness, is also the God of gracious goodness in His own nature, and has most especial love toward man. This is no longer hidden, no longer a manifestation to be waited for; it has appeared so completely that God Himself could not add to the full expression of His love. "The law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." It is true that no man has seen God at any time. But this in no real way hindered the activity of His kindness and the proof of His love to man; on the contrary, it only gave occasion

for its richest possible display. “The Only-begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He declared [Him].” Nothing could match this. It was beyond all thought of creature. The angels were lost in admiration; men, in stupid unbelief, think nothing about it; else their hard and senseless hearts would melt before the wonders of such love. The mind of man is incapable of fathoming grace, and therefore retreats into its own dark selfishness. And no wonder, if he judge, as he is ever apt to judge, of God by himself. Not one that ever was born would have had the heart for such a death, even if he could.

God sent His only Son to die for His enemies! To die for a good man, for a dear friend, is what some rare man might do, as it has been done; to die for one’s enemies is an impossibility for man. But this is the very way in which the kindness of God and His love toward man appeared. Being characteristically divine, it can only be received by faith. Those who believe their own thoughts, and judge from their own feelings, refuse to receive it, give the lie to God, and are therefore lost, and this most justly. For is it not the rejection of God, alike in His grace and truth? Now, whatever may be the compassion of God toward foolish disobedient man, as we who were so once can but testify, God cannot pass by deliberate and persistent contempt of His love in the presence of His revealed light. And it is the true light of God which is now shining. Such is the gospel of Christ, in which more than in all else put together the kindness of God and His love toward man appeared. He therefore sent it forth to every creature, as the sun shines for every land.

It was not so with the law, however capable of dealing in a righteous way with every heart that takes it up. Still

the law was given to Israel, and only they were formally and by divine authority placed under the law. According to the scriptures the Gentiles were without law; they are thus designated in contrast with Jews; and on this ground will they pass under God's judgment, as we are told in Rom. 2. But now even they, who were nothing but sinners, and had nothing but the conscience to accuse or excuse, have the unspeakable privilege of the gospel preached to them. As the Jews were without excuse in rejecting their Messiah when He came to them in love and amplest attestation, so the Gentiles are yet more inexcusable if they shut their eyes and ears to that Christ, Who lifted up draws all men unto Him. It was a wonder for God in His love to humble Himself and come down to man in the person of His Son become a man. It was a wonder infinite that a man Who was God incarnate died as a sacrifice for sinners on the cross. He now is raised from the dead and received up in glory, exalted to give repentance and remission of sins, not to Israel only, but to any poor sinner who believes in Him to the ends of the earth.

For the due time was scarcely less admirable than the way. It was after the sins in every form and degree, and before the judgment. Man had been tried, then left to himself, which ended in the flood. Israel had received the law and apostatised. The Gentiles had been given world-power and only demonstrated that they were "beasts" morally. Both Jews and Gentiles joined in rejecting God's Son, the Messiah Who could and would have shed nothing but light and good to God's glory. When all hope naturally was buried in His grave, God raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory; nor this

only, but causes grace to appear in deeper and larger ways than ever by the gospel.

“This is love, not that we loved God [which was what law asked and never got], but that He loved us and gave His Son [this is the gospel] as propitiation for our sins.” Thus did the kindness of God and His love toward man appear. It is matchless, full of comfort, deliverance, and blessing to every soul believing in Christ; but he who despises it, as he dishonours God in His deepest grace, so he incurs God’s vengeance and everlasting judgment. In the solemn words of our Lord Jesus Himself, “He that believeth (or obeyeth) not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

It is remarkable that, if we find the word in its human application in Acts 28:2, this is the only passage in scripture, where we hear of “philanthropy” or love of mankind predicated of God our Saviour. Is it not worthy of inspiration? The philanthropy of God means His special affection toward man and, as we shall see presently, shown in a way of which the creature is quite incapable. Benevolent men boast of their own philanthropy or of their fellows’. What can be more in contrast? The baser metal is displayed very often by heterodox, by Arians, Unitarians, and Deists, by infidel Agnostics and Positivists. Furthermore Christians of every sort scruple not to join frequently in an unholy alliance with any or all those enemies of the faith for social, educational, and political purposes. Men glory in these combinations so foreign to God’s word and Christ’s cross, a worldly counterpart for the unity of the Spirit we are enjoined to keep as members of the one body of Christ. They rejoice that any merely natural means should be applied to the relief of social distress

and personal misery, careless of God's will, mind, and glory.

In what is purely external and of this creation men can all unite, whatever their faith or lack of faith — yea, opposition to the faith of God's elect. Such is the philanthropy of man, without serious thought of God's word or will, occupied with prisons and workhouses, the hospital and the asylum, people's parks, baths, and clubs, public bands, thus seeking to deal with every aspiring class, as well as the misery of the world in general. But our Saviour God deals with man by bringing in the light which discloses his ruin in the best circumstances from the throne down to the firstborn of the female slave that is behind the mill. God's philanthropy views the human philanthropists as perhaps most of all needing His saving love, because they are blinded to their sins by the consciousness of amiability or benevolence. Many of them on principle believe nothing unseen. They see only the facts of human misery and seek to alleviate it, wholly ignorant that they themselves are wretched before God, no less than the lowest of those they would relieve, and this for an eternity, which they not only do not believe but perhaps openly deny and defy.

God's philanthropy is as different as His nature is from man's, and springs from motives of love in Himself, as it is based on the sacrifice of Christ. So we are told in the verse before. No longer hidden as once, it once for all appeared; and man is the more responsible, because His kindness contemplates all, while it is valid only for those who believe. For it is "Not by works in righteousness which we ourselves did, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and the

renewing of the Holy Ghost" (ver. 5). Language cannot be clearer than this.

The works of a man as a ground for salvation are excluded; and most mercifully, for how could an unrighteous man — and such we were by nature before God — do works in righteousness? There is no doubt a work done in righteousness, if there ever was such, and an infinite one. Christ, the Righteous One, was come to do God's will, and did it all perfectly; as He dying said, "It is finished." Thus it terminated with His suffering for sins, but God therein glorified even as to sin. Thereby have we our blessed portion. We committed sins in unrighteousness abundantly; works in righteousness we ourselves never did, till we were justified by divine grace: even then could we stand in them before God? But in due time Christ died for ungodly men. God commends His love in that, we being still sinners, Christ died for us. According to His mercy God saved us. Thus is He God our Saviour. It is not only the title of His character: He has wrought for our need according to His mercy in Christ. Nor was it only to help but to "save."

It is not a theory but a fact; "according to His mercy He saved us." The best part of Judaism consisted of shadows which prefigured this; but Christianity is founded on facts in Christ come and suffering for us; and these facts are now through faith in the gospel applied to souls. Christ is the life eternal; and the Christian has that life in Him, not in himself but in Christ dead and risen to secure all. "He that believeth hath eternal life." Yet was he guilty and cannot deny his sins, but confesses and hates them before God. We needed therefore a Saviour to die for our sins as much as to give unto us life everlasting. This in both its parts

was in the mercy of God; and thus according to His mercy He saved us.

But the mercy if unknown or doubtful in its application to the soul is shorn of half its blessedness. Such is not the philanthropy of God. He loves that we should know what Christ has done and suffered for us. Believing in Him we are saved, and we know it on His own word and in the delivering power of His Spirit. Hence it is added, “According to His mercy He saved us through a washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” Not only are we set in a new position through Christ’s death and resurrection, of which baptism is the sign; but there is the effectual work in the soul from first to last. It is unbelief alone that doubts God’s salvation, if we receive Jesus. For the word is that “He saved us,” though it is only in a way most holy and that secures holiness in us.

“Regeneration” is a new state of things, and not merely “to be born again,” as anyone can see in Matt. 19:28. “And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” It is the changed state of the earth which the Lord will introduce at His appearing, as the kingdom of God pre-supposes according to John 3. That state is not yet come. But there is an action of grace which already apprehends a believer for it, the moment he receives Christ and His work proclaimed in the gospel.

Of this new and changed state baptism is the sign — not of the new birth, but of deliverance from sin and its effects by the death of Christ, witnessed in the power of His resurrection which has taken away the sting. Hence

it is that in 1 Peter 3:21 we read, “Which figure also now saveth you, baptism.” But it is carefully added, “not a putting away of filth of flesh, but request of a good conscience toward God through resurrection of Jesus Christ.” Superstitious men, who know not God’s grace in Christ, do only misuse the sign and confound it with the thing signified. The gospel may not dispense with the outward side; but it announces an everlasting reality in Christ risen. How blessed to have our part in this new creation even now (2 Cor. 5)! How wondrous to know that “if any one is in Christ, it is a new creation! The old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new, and all things are of God that reconciled us to Himself through Christ.” Before this is manifested to every eye, the Christian has both washing of regeneration now and renewing of the Holy Spirit also. This makes the force evident. If the washing of regeneration has an objective force, the renewing is a real and divine work in the soul In order that it should be so, the Holy Spirit, as He does invariably in the believer, takes His suited and efficacious part, which is no mere token but a reality in power suited to and worthy of redemption.

It is well known that some are disposed to understand here “the laver of regeneration.” The A.V. did not recognise this; the margin of the Revised Version does. It is well that the Revisers did not venture farther. The notion is absolutely unfounded; for λουτρὸν never means laver but washing, or the water for the washing (in the sense of bath), as is notorious. Never in the N.T. occurs λουτὴρ which is the proper word for “laver.” They are both found in the Septuagint, and even λουτρὼν, a place for washing or bathing-room. It is strange indeed

that a commentator of learning could say that λουτρὸν is always a vessel or pool in which washing takes place, here the “baptismal font.” Liddell and Scott do, it is true, give “a bath, bathing place,” but not a solitary instance of such usage. Their abundant references are to hot or cold bathing in the sense of washing, or water for it, or even libations to the dead; but λουτὴρ is the tub or laver, as λουτρὼν is the place or bath-room. Bp. Ellicott and Dean Alford misrepresent the Lexx., of course only through haste or pre-occupation. The word is correctly translated “washing” in our text. There could be no question about the matter, unless there had been a prejudice to warp the mind. The wish was father of the thought.

Salvation then is no outward work, though based on Christ’s work entirely outside ourselves; nor is it any mere deliverance by power, but personal and inward, “through a washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” There is a total change of position in Christ, a new place which is given to the believer, as well as another state subjectively. This is expressed by the washing and renewing. Old things are passed away, all things are become new. For now the believer is in Christ. As a man he was in Adam. Faith is now entitled to know that we all stand in Christ by God’s mercy, and altogether independently of what we did ourselves. Thus the evil is gone before God and for the conscience; for Christ is risen, the full expression of the state into which the Christian is brought by grace.

But, besides what may be called objective place and subjective change, there is an incomparably blessed power which works in those who are brought into this standing. It is not only that there is real “renewing,”

perfectly true and important as this is; but the Holy Ghost Himself was poured out upon us in all fulness; as it has been said here, “Which He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour” (ver. 6). This covers the entire Christian life. It is not merely that He effectually works, but He abides with us for ever. This is of immense value and in evident contrast with O.T. privilege where the danger of His leaving is felt and deprecated, as we see in Psalm 51. Under the gospel our privileges are known as abiding. The Holy Spirit Himself is even called in the Hebrews the eternal Spirit, though there it is in His special connection with Christ offering Himself without spot to God. But beyond controversy it is the same Spirit Who is now by grace imparted to us, or, as is here expressed with peculiar emphasis, “poured out upon us richly.” Undoubtedly this could not be, save “through Jesus Christ our Saviour.” But so it is added here, that we might dream of no other ground, on the one hand, and on the other have the fullest assurance of abundant and unfailing grace in the power of the Spirit personally through such a Saviour. It is a privilege which never can lapse, any more than God revokes it where faith is living, as it flows through Christ and His redemption; and these He will never dishonour.

We know that, on the day when this privilege was first made good, powers and wonders accompanied. But no mistake can well be more pernicious than to confound the gift (δωρέα) of the Holy Spirit with those gifts (

χαρίσματα) and signs and miracles which were external vouchers, as well as the display of the victory of the ascended Man over all the energy of evil. The presence of the Paraclete is an incomparably higher and deeper thing than all the mighty deeds which He wrought. Just

so the grace and truth of our Lord rose above the signs which pointed out Who and what He was. Even tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not; and yet tongues, the characteristic Christian miracle, approach nearer to that which edifies than any other exertion of divine power. But the gracious action of the Holy Spirit conveyed by His personal presence rises far above all such accompaniments, as the cause does above some or all of its effects.

Hence the all-important truth for all saints is, that while displays of power have passed away, as unsuited to the ruined state of the church, that which always was and is most needed and precious abides, because it rests on His work, finished on earth and accepted in heaven, Who never changes; and it comes to us through Christ, the same yesterday and today and for ever. It is He Who gives us to cry, “Abba, Father,” and this in the Spirit of the Son. It is He Who takes the things of Christ, and shows them to us and glorifies Him. It is He Who searches all things, yea the deep things of God. He gives us communion with the Father and the Son, no less than He helps our infirmity, and makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered, because He makes it for the saints according to God. It is He Who is all-powerful on the one hand for service in testifying of Christ, on the other for the worship of saints in the assembly above all.

The Holy Spirit has abdicated His relation to the assembly no more than to the individual Christian. It is only by the Holy Spirit that every believer can say that Jesus is Lord; but the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each to profit withal, for to one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom, and to another the word of

knowledge according to the same Spirit. If there are external ornaments taken away, we can and ought surely to justify God; but He withholds nothing that is really necessary or profitable and for His own glory. Just as of old, so it is now: — one and the same Spirit works all, dividing to each one severally as He will, for He is sovereign; and woe be to those who presume to control Him! He abides therefore for the blessing of the church and individual saints to Christ's glory (John 14:16).

The wealth of our privileges in the present gift of the Spirit corresponds to the nearness of relationship with the God and Father of Christ, and to the oneness with Christ into which the Christian only is introduced. Yet these are every one of them blessings not more intimate, and rich beyond all other times, than permanent: of none is this predicated more emphatically than of the Holy Spirit, that other Paraclete Whom the Father sent in Christ's name, that greatest of privileges, the Spirit thus personally given. But the unbelief of Christendom apprehends none of them as now revealed. Yea, even God's children for the most part are a prey to doubt and darkness as to each, through the spirit of the world that has invaded them all but universally, even where they have not become victims of the delusion of the enemy in a vain pretension to a special revival. From all this evil on either side faith preserves the soul in peace.

For if the Holy Ghost is still "poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (and to deny this is in principle to deny the perpetuity of Christ's body and of the personal Pentecostal presence of God's Spirit), there is no room for a restoration of what God never took away. But, again, if the Spirit is still here in person, constituting God's assembly, how sad and shameless for

those who believe in it to allow arrangements, which grew out of unbelief in His presence and oppose His free action in the assembly, or by the gifts of the Lord for the edifying of His body! Would that they who err in spirit might come to understanding, and they who murmur might learn doctrine! “In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength;” so wrote the evangelical prophet.

Now comes the design of God. His kindness and His philanthropy appeared in saving according to His own mercy, and with all fulness of favour at this present moment: — “That, having been justified by His grace, we should become heirs according to hope of eternal life” (ver. 7).

It is a mischievous mistake to suppose that the outpouring of the Holy Ghost on us richly is in order to our justification, as some have strangely conceived. All scripture proves that the gift of the Spirit follows faith, instead of being a preparation for justification. The effect is bad; for the Holy Ghost identifies His work with us: what He effects in and by us is ours. This accordingly would make the new work and walk of saints a means of justification, and thus grace would be no more grace. Not only does scripture elsewhere uniformly prove the fallacy and the evil of such a view, but the very clause before us refutes it. For we are said to have been justified by the grace of God; or, as it is expressed in Romans 8:34, “It is God that justifieth.” Certainly the believer is the last man to justify himself. God justifies, instead of laying anything to the charge of His elect, who abhor themselves before Him, owning not only their sins but their nature as vile and corrupt. They are

justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Rom. 3:24).

Here it is put as a fact emphatically. “Being, or having been, justified by His grace.” It is already done. Now grace on His part excludes desert on ours. “To him that worketh the reward is not reckoned as of grace but of debt; but to him that worketh not but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness” (Rom. 4:4, 5); or (as applied in Rom. 11:6) “if by grace, no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace.” Work justly calls for wages or reward; but what can justify the ungodly (and such were we once) save God’s sovereign favour?

The grace of God assuredly produces works suitable to its source and its character. Holiness of walk follows in its train. But His grace implies necessarily that there was no good thing in us. It is in no way a question of desert in the object of His grace; who on the contrary is saved expressly and exclusively when a lost sinner. From the moment of new birth he becomes a saint and is called to walk thenceforth as such. But in this context it had been already and with precision laid down, “not out of works in righteousness which we had done, but according to His own mercy He saved us.” The “we” or “ourselves” abandons all self-righteousness. Christ dead and risen is the sole possible means of God’s salvation; and His work of redemption is the righteous ground, that it may be God’s righteousness in contrast with ours. For our passover also was sacrificed, Christ, Who died for our sins, having suffered Just for unjust, to bring us to God Who is glorified thereby, as never before, nor so by aught possible again.

But it is well to note that the apostle speaks of justification with a triple connection. In Rom. 5:1, it is justified by or out of faith. There is no other principle on which it could be without compromise. We look out of ourselves to Christ, and rest only on Him raised from among the dead, Who was delivered for our offences and raised for our justification. Therefore we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is of faith, not of works of law; and these were the two competing principles. If any works could justify a man, it must have been the works of God's law. Works of man's device could have no value with God. Works of law would have been all well, if man could do them. The truth is that man, being now a sinner, could not possibly face them, save in the blind and mad presumption of flesh. "All sinned, and do come short of the glory of God," which becomes the measure, now that Eden is lost by sin. All his works are necessarily vitiated by his fallen condition, even if he had not been as he is, powerless through sin. Works of law therefore are wholly unavailing, save to detect and manifest the ruin of a sinner. If he is to be justified, it must be through Another by grace; and therefore it can only be by faith (ἐκ π.), not by law works. That the apostle in Rom 5:1, 2, asserts, with its blessed results for our souls toward God, past, present, and future.

But in ver. 9 of the same chapter we are told that we were justified in virtue of (ἐν) His blood. Here the adequate power comes forward. Without the blood of Christ no sin could be purged really and for ever before God. But the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses from every sin, as 1 John 1:7 declares. Hence if God justifies us, it is in virtue, or in the power, of Christ's blood; and

as being now justified in or by His blood, “ we shall be saved from wrath through Him.” Our sins were the great difficulty, as the believer truly felt; but now they are gone, we were justified and shall be saved. Such is the confident assurance to us of the apostle: a monstrous piece of presumption and cruel cheat, if he had not been inspired of God to declare it as righteous and true.

In our text, Titus 3:7, we are directed to the efficient cause from which justification flows. It is the grace of God, and not any merit in its objects. All glorying in flesh is thereby excluded for ever. It is therefore an unfailing source, with a ground in Christ’s work which justifies God no less than the repentant soul who lays hold of Christ by faith. “Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace.” The result is according to the mind and love of God, “that, having been justified by His grace, we should become heirs according to hope of eternal life.” We have therefore a title according to hope of life eternal, which was first in God’s purpose and will be fully realised in glory.

It is difficult to conceive anything more complete than these three statements of the same apostle. The accuracy of the form too is as striking as the truth conveyed is blessed to him who believes. Indeed it is a threefold cord which cannot be broken for him who by grace, trusts God and the word of His grace.

Some object to “heirs” standing alone; but it is all the more absolute because it does. In Rom. 8:16, 17, we are told that we who believe are children of God; and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and Christ’s joint-heirs. It is not inheriting this or that but “heirs also,” and to make it indefinitely rich, “heirs of God and Christ’s joint-

heirs" Again, in Gal. 4, the believer is no longer a bondman but a son, and if son, heir also through God (assuredly not through man, him. self or others). Thus we learn the double truth, that by faith, not by works of law, we are heirs of God, and this through God. What can be less tied to limits than this title? All is sovereign grace. It is He Who made us His heirs; and we are to inherit what Christ will inherit in glory. To Titus the apostle speaks so as to leave us "heirs" all the more largely, because it is quite indefinite. It was all by God's grace; and what of good for us has He withheld?

Yet we have important words which accompany it: "Heirs according to hope of eternal life." This life in Christ is the believer's now; but we have it in a body full of weakness, compassed with infirmities, and in fact mortal. Our bodies will enjoy the life when our hope is accomplished at the coming of Christ. Eternal life will be no longer hid with Christ in God, but manifested according to all the power of His glory, as it is even now the gift to faith, the inestimable gift of God's grace. "For our governing state subsists in the heavens, from which also we await the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, Who shall transform the body of our humiliation into conformity with the body of His glory according to the working whereby He is able to subdue even all things to Himself" (Phil. 3:20, 21).

So in the Epistle to the Romans 6:22 we read, "Ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end life eternal." The glorious future is here before us; then and there alone will the full character of eternal life be unhindered. But it is no less really true now, as verse 23 seems to show; for if the wages of sin is death, "the free gift of God (flowing from His favour) is eternal life in Christ Jesus

our Lord.” We have at least the present title of His free gift in Christ. Both Gospel and Epistle of John assert its present reality as ours. What a privilege for the believer to enjoy now! What a responsibility to walk accordingly and bear a true witness to Him! It is nothing less than Christ in us the hope of glory. When He comes to Israel, the glory will be possessed and manifest. We have Him as life while He is hidden in God; and when He shall be manifested, then shall we also with Him be manifested in glory.

Nor was the apostle content with his full and clear statement of the gospel. He draws the attention of Titus to its importance and value in a formula not uncommon in the pastoral Epistles. “Faithful [is] the saying; and concerning these things I will that thou affirm strongly, in order that those who have believed God8 may be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men; but foolish questionings and genealogies and strifes and legal fightings shun, for they are unprofitable and vain” (vers. 8, 9).

There is no real ground for doubt that the apostle is here looking back on the development of the truth which had just occupied him. The salvation of God from first to last was simply and briefly stated in 1 Tim. 1:15, 16. It was here more fully explained. The relationship of the Holy Ghost to it is brought out as an added privilege, no less than the grace of God as the spring of it all. In 1 Tim. 1 it is just the plain truth of Christ come into the world to save sinners. Certainly the object of faith is not left out here; and the Holy Ghost is said to be poured out richly, besides His renewing us, that, being justified by God’s grace, we might be made heirs according to hope of eternal life. We are not waiting for life or salvation as

to our souls; we do not wait for righteousness, being already justified; for we by the Spirit do of faith wait for the hope of righteousness (Gal. 5:5), when eternal life shall swallow up our bodies also, and this in heavenly glory.

It may be alleged, no doubt, that “faithful is the saying” precedes in the former case, whilst it follows here. But 1 Tim. 4:9, 10, is a clear proof that the order may vary without in any way affecting the certainty of the apostolic application. The A. V. like some others is at least ambiguous, if not misleading; for one might infer from it that the faithful saying was merely the call of believers to maintain good works. This however is a rather unworthy sense; which the text, as well as the truth generally, disproves. The apostle is laying down the only ground of power for a fruit-bearing course; and hence is urgent with Titus, that he should insist constantly and thoroughly on the sure but exclusive truth of salvation by grace in all its fulness as well as reality. This was the apostle’s first theme for individual souls everywhere and always; he now presses it on Titus. Without it there is no readiness or power for good works; without it conscience is clouded, and the heart hardened: there is neither life nor peace where it is unknown.

But when we are saved after this divine sort, we are able to take everything to God as well as from Him. In a world which cast out Christ and where Satan reigns, trials and sorrows are expected for the faithful, yet do we give thanks; comforts and joys are given of God, and we give thanks. Faith sees and hears Him Who guides and guards, whatever the difficulty or danger. His will is acceptable as well as holy and perfect. We love not His

commandments only but His word, having found its value in our deepest need, as He by it made known His love to us in spite of our alienation and hatred. Now we can say without presumption, we love Him and His honour. We desire to do His will, and to please Him; and this is the will of God, even our sanctification; for He has called us on terms of holiness, and we are ourselves taught of God to love one another: so the apostle has ruled.

Known salvation therefore, by God's grace in Christ our Lord, is the basis which the Holy Ghost lays for the walk of a Christian according to God. Nevertheless there is need for exhortation; and the word is full of cheer as of warning, the encouragements being varied and strong, to the end that they who have believed God may be careful to maintain good works. Perhaps it is not too much to say that, if His grace justifies us, our fidelity thenceforth ought to justify Him, however poor our measure may be.

It may be well also to protest here against lowering this expression ("to maintain good works"), as if it only echoed ver. 14. It is not so. The expression may be similar; but the context is clear that the object of God differs in the two verses, as we shall see by-and-by. Undoubtedly ver. 14 has an important bearing; but it is of a narrower and lower character. In ver. 8 good works have nothing to do with "necessary uses," and must be taken in all their extent. They are the honourable works, which become a believer, not benevolent merely but suitable to the objects of divine favour and of everlasting blessing, in a world where evil abounds and God is unknown save to faith.

It is also well to add that it is not believing in God here as in the A.V., but “believing God.” They have set to their seal that God is true, having accepted His testimony. Therefore they bowed to His conviction wrought inwardly, that they were hateful and hating one another, but oh! how thankfully also that according to His mercy He saved them. Yet if all the Trinity concerned itself in this truly divine salvation, without the cross it was not possible. Christ suffering for sins had made it righteous for God to exercise His grace without stint. Therefore is it God’s righteousness. This the Holy Ghost can crown with the richest enjoyment and with real power for practice.

“These things are good and profitable to men.” Here it need not be doubted that the apostle includes the maintenance of good works on the part of believers; but why should any wish to exclude the faithfulness of God’s salvation from a still more direct and important place? The cause is surely of at least equal moment with the effect. In contrast with these good and profitable things the apostle bids Titus “shun foolish questionings and genealogies and strifes and fighting about law.” It is the same apostle who told Timothy, as indeed we all know, that the law is good if a man use it lawfully. How so? It is not made for a righteous man but for the lawless and unruly, an unsparing weapon against all evil. What will produce honourable works? Nothing but the gospel of the glory of the blessed God which was committed to Paul and pressed on Titus no less than Timothy.

Here then the apostle denounces the misuse of the law. As it puffs up man who, ignorant of his sin and powerlessness, builds on it, so it engenders foolish questions and genealogies and strifes, and legal

fightings. Gospel truths are “good and profitable to men”; legal squabbles are “unprofitable and vain”; and such is the misuse of law to which man’s mind is ever prone, if indeed he pays any heed at all. The truth of the gospel, as it reveals grace, so it commands both heart and conscience of the believer. Where faith is not, there is the power of death unremoved, and darkness Godward. So is it with the race in its natural estate, which no rite can alter — only the Deliverer received in faith.

From questions dark or trifling and in either way quite unprofitable or even injurious, to which legalism tends, the apostle next warns of a still darker result which is too apt to appear, the uprising of party spirit in its most extreme shape, which scripture designates “heresy.” 1 Cor. 11:18, 19, is the first occurrence of the phrase αἵρεσις in the apostolic Epistles, which can alone precisely define its Christian application. “I hear that schisms exist among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that the approved may be made manifest among you.”

Hence we learn how ordinary language differs from scripture. Men regard “heresy” as a departure from sound doctrine, which is apt to end in a separate party or sect characterised by it. In short they regard “schism” as the severed result, whether with (as generally is the fact), or without (as may be), the heterodox root. Now the inspired word appears to be irreconcilable with such thoughts. “Schisms” already existed in the church at Corinth. As yet there were no “sects” or separate parties; but this the apostle regarded as inevitable. Splits within lead naturally, and (as men are) necessarily, to splits without or sects. This

was imminent at Corinth, unless grace gave self-judgment and thus nipped the bud, so that the evil fruit should not follow. But the danger was at work in the "schisms" that afflicted the Corinthian saints, though all as yet ate of the one loaf. If they did not repent, the issue would surely be "heresies" or sects, as in Gal. 5:20.

It seems plain from this survey of usage, that the word in neither Epistle necessarily involves strange doctrine, however often this may be and is the animating spring of a party. The carnal preference, which set up Cephas against Paul, or Apollos against both, formed "schisms" in the assembly; and this, if not judged as sin, would issue at length in outward factions, or "heresies." For such fleshly feeling ever grows more hot and intolerant, so that Christ the centre of unity is overlooked, and the Spirit, being grieved, ceases to control those who are thus selfwilled and insubmissive to God's word.

But there is another step in the path of evil, of which we find the expression in the Second Epistle. Of Peter (2:1). Here there is marked development; for we hear of false teachers (ψευδοδιδάσκαλοι), who are characterised as bringing in privily "destructive heresies," or sects of perdition (αἱρέσεις ἀπωλείας). The context is clear, in this case alone, that it is not only personal or party selfwill breaking away from the unity of the Spirit, but that the factions or heresies anticipated by the apostle have the darker dye of ruinous heterodoxy also. Not a. hint of this appears in the usage of the word for the Galatians and the Corinthians. Bad as the case in its mildest form is, it ever presents a violation of church unity. It is only when the term is contextually enlarged and weighted with the distinct imputation of false

teaching that we can tax the “heretic” with heterodoxy. Hence the unbelieving cavils of De Wette, etc., have no real ground. The traditional and mistaken sense of a later day does not apply to the Pauline usage of αἵρεσις.

Now this is of importance in helping us to a true and just discernment of the apostle’s injunction to Titus, where there is an advance in fact on the warnings to the Corinthians and the Galatians. It does suppose that there was, or might be, a sect-maker in Crete, who had to be dealt with. Such an one had gone out in the pride of his heart and was after admonition to be declined. “An heretical man after a first and second admonition refuse, knowing that such a one is subverted and sinneth, being self-condemned” (vers. 10, 11).

Here the evil is not expressed in the aggravated form of false teaching; and consequently we are not entitled to lighten the sin of faction in itself, of which alone the passage speaks, by supplementing the case with its far more serious shape when denounced by Peter at the later day. By “heretical man” the apostle means any one active in originating or adopting a sect, even if he were orthodox. Not content with “schisms” inside, such were forming a separate school without. They might, as a general rule, fall into destructive views, more or less diverging from those whom such had wilfully and deliberately left, in order to justify themselves or oppose others vainly. But the apostle does not add a word, either here or elsewhere, to the evil of “faction” or “sect” in itself. Titus was to admonish once or twice. For there might be differing measures in his selfwill that had gone outside: one so determined that a first admonition would prove enough; another not so far gone might

encourage the Lord's servant to persevere and admonish a second time.

Hence also explains, at any rate in part, why there is not a word about putting away the evildoer. Titus was to "eschew" or "avoid" him. Now παραιτοῦ is said of shunning old wives' fables (1 Tim. 4:7), younger widows (v. 11), foolish and uninstructed questions (2 Tim. 3: 23), as well as a heretic in the scripture before us. In no case is excommunication meant, but just avoiding alike things or persons. It is granted that the Epistle does not embrace within its scope, like 1 Corinthians, all ecclesiastical action even to the last extremity; any more than excommunication is prescribed in the Epistle to the Galatians, or in those to the seven Apocalyptic churches whence the advocates for tolerating the worst evils within the assembly draw their unwise and unholy arguments. Only the heretic was outside.

Hence there is to be noticed another and more special reason why no such measure was to be laid on the church through Titus: the evil-doer had gone out. This is of the essence of "heresy," whatever its form; in this lies its advance on and exaggeration of "schism." Now how could you with propriety put away him who had already gone away? The utmost which could be done, when it was no mistake (perhaps with a right design yet an ill-guided conscience), but deliberate intention with wilful slight and defiance of the assembly, would be to close the door formally, so that he could not enter fellowship again without as formal restoration. This in effect, when it truly applied, might be equivalent to excommunication; but it would bear on its front the stamping the offender with the fact of his own selfwill; while the faithful also would show themselves not

indifferent but vigilant and holy in the case. The assembly, by the Lord entrusted with the extreme act of putting away when God's word calls for it, does not overpass its responsibility in pronouncing on such a sin: the greater or at least more formal act includes what is less or akin. Some such action as this may be implied and inferred; but Waterland (Doctrine of Trin. ch. 4) goes too far in saying that the command to Titus contains as much. Still less is Vitringa (De Vet. Syn. iii. 1-10), after straining 2 Thess. 3 and Rom. 16, warranted in making it = ἔκβαλλε, the public excommunication following the admonition, or a private one as among the Jews: so Bp. Ellicott justly observes.

The truth is that the Holy Spirit applies in Gal. 5 to false doctrine the same solemn figure as He does in 1 Cor. 5 to immoral evil. It is leaven; and, where church action is enjoined, we are commanded to purge it from the assembly. Will any one contend that doctrinal leaven is to be kept in, and only immoral leaven is to be put out? Evil doctrine is the worse and more ensnaring; and if man as man does not trouble about it, the more is it incumbent on the faithful to care for God's honour. "Holiness becometh Thy house, O Jehovah, for ever." Now that our Passover, Christ, has been sacrificed, let us keep the feast, not with old leaven neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. Let those who will have laxity speak out plainly and betray their evil aim, that we may by grace keep ourselves pure.

Again, men who bring not the doctrine of Christ, and deny the Father and the Son, are branded by the most loving of the apostles as antichrists, whom we are forbidden to receive into the house or even to greet.

This goes far beyond what is fairly and withal imperatively taught by the exclusion of leaven in the Pauline Epistles. It is a deeper evil striking at Christ's person, the Rock on which the church is built, and hence demands a most prompt and thorough judgment for His sake, to say nothing of His people subtly imperilled by any tampering with them thereby.

Here Titus was simply to have done with a sectarian man (leader or adherent is but a question of degree) after a first and second admonition. What follows confirms without constraint and thoroughly the difference of the case before us from ecclesiastical dealing: "Knowing that such a one is perverted, and sinneth, being self-condemned" (ver. 11). Whitby departs from scripture by adding, "is perverted from the true faith." 1 Tim. 1:19, 20 and 2 Tim. 2:18 teach this, but not the passage in question, which marks the evil of faction apart from heterodoxy, though the two often go together. Nor does αὐτοκατάκριτος mean "condemned by his own conscience," but self-condemned, i.e. ipso facto, without saying a word of conscience, which may have been quite dull or darkened, instead of giving sentence against the man. He was self-condemned, because, liking his own will and perhaps notions too, he could no longer brook the atmosphere of God's assembly; he preferred to be outside God's habitation in the Spirit, to have a church of his choice, or to be his own church.

Now, as sin is lawlessness, so if one had as a denizen known that holy temple built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner atone, to leave it of his own will (not forced out justly or unjustly) was to sin with a high hand and

seal his own condemnation: words admirably suiting a deserter and self-exalting rival, but not by any means one whose sin had been solemnly judged and himself put away by the sentence of the church. In short “heresy” simply, here and elsewhere in the Epistles, means departure, not from the truth but rather from the assembly, which is its pillar and ground, where the Lord works by the Spirit to God’s glory. It goes beyond “schism” which acts within, but it is not necessarily heterodox, though this may be often added and is likely to be its end.

The conclusion now follows. “When I shall send Artemas unto thee or Tychicus, give diligence to come unto me at Nicopolis, for there I have determined to winter. Set forward Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting to them. And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful. All that are with me salute thee. Salute them that love us in faith. Grace be with you all” (vers. 12-15).

It is a common mistake to suppose that words, so simple and common-place as these seem, have little value. We learn what the goodness of the Lord is through such a one as Paul, not merely in circumstances of great strain and difficulty, but in the most ordinary matters of daily spiritual life. Grace moulds the conduct and the words alike, in the least things as in the greatest; as there is no affectation, there is no levity. The consciousness of God’s presence, the habit of having to do with Him, invests the simplest affairs with a garb that is holy and loving without an effort.

But the fact is that in these closing words we have that which ought to have cleared up many a controversy and been corrective of spurious tradition. Titus was in no way the fixed ecclesiastical ruler of Crete; he had served the Lord there in most important ways, and his work was come to a close as far as that island was concerned. The apostle was not indifferent. Into the vacuum that must be thus created there, he desired spiritual help for the saints and assemblies still; and therefore he proposes to send Artemas or Tychicus before Titus leaves. The fact that of one of these we know somewhat in the Acts of the Apostles, of the other not there or elsewhere, is full of interest. We learn that there were men whom the Lord honoured in a high degree who only appear incidentally like Artemas; and yet he is even put before Tychicus. It would be wrong to infer that he had a higher standing. The Holy Spirit does not regulate the affairs of God after the manner of a Lord Chamberlain. We may be assured that the apostle would not speak of sending Artemas or Tychicus, had he not believed that the one was no less spiritually qualified than the other. Comparisons however are not sanctioned in scripture.

But we can also see that the apostle did not think of sending both: it is “Artemas or Tychicus,” not Artemas and Tychicus. Labourers suitable to help the church in a large way are not numerous. Other places had claims no less than Crete; but it is plain that both these labourers held a personal relation to the apostle. He proposed to send the one or the other to Titus in Crete: when either one or the other should have arrived, the apostle calls on Titus to be diligent in joining him at Nicopolis; “for there I have determined to winter.”

From this we learn some facts of interest to all Christians. The apostle was certainly not a prisoner at this time. It appears to have been after his first imprisonment at Rome, and before the second which closed in his death. Had he not been free, how could he speak of his decision to spend a winter there? But this also convincingly shows us that the traditional appendix to the Epistle is unfounded. It was not really written from Nicopolis, any more than Titus was ordained bishop of Crete. Again, there is no sufficient reason to assume that it was Nicopolis in Macedonia, even if that city then existed. For it is certain that various cities of that name were built after the days of Paul — one or more by the emperor Trajan. Long before there was a Nicopolis in Alexandria, there was another Nicopolis in Cilicia. But the most important town of the name then existing, beyond a doubt, was in Epirus, looking down on a promontory of Actium (in Acarnania), built by Augustus Caesar in honour of the great victory over Antony, which had such a momentous bearing on the future of the Roman empire. It seems therefore reasonable, as there is no particular description given pointing to another quarter, that the apostle means the city that was most notorious.

Further, we may be sure that the zeal which consumed the apostle did not now summon Titus there for rest to himself any more than to the younger workman. In the last Epistle the apostle ever wrote it is said that Titus went to Dalmatia, which was in the neighbourhood of Epirus. This again affords some confirmation that the Nicopolis in question lay in that neighbourhood. The work of the Lord was to be pushed into the West as well as in the East.

Quite a distinct fact appears in the next verse, 13. “But forward Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting to them.” How beautifully unjealous love, and zeal for the Lord’s glory, and care for the comfort of His labourers, are shown! And how confidently too Paul looks for this blessed feeling in Titus, the reflex of his own! Often and long he had proved him to be a faithful and gracious brother. He is sure that an elevated position in Crete had in no way impaired the old spirit of fellowship and value for others.

It is the more to be noticed, because neither of these two commended to his care were at all so associated with the apostle personally as many others. We never hear of them (as τοὺς περὶ τὸν Παῦλον) in the group which accompanied the apostle on his journey. What is or is not said appears to indicate the co-ordinate class of labourers, of whom we read in the Acts of the Apostles as well as in the Epistles, Apollos notably being their type. Yet the heart of the apostle goes out and urges Titus in love no less for such than for his well-known usual associates.

Here again Zenas the lawyer is named before Apollos: this is the order not of the world, but of grace. It is not quite certain what sort of lawyer he was. Calvin dryly considers that he could not have been a forensic one: else he would not have wanted means. A graver but simple if not conclusive reason points in the same direction. Everywhere else in the N.T. “lawyer” is connected with Jewish learning rather than Roman or Greek law. Certain it is that Paul assumes that there might be need of the help enjoined. He had accepted help of the kind himself, as appears from his Epistles, and before this he asked for it on behalf of others. We

find the same thing in the still later Third Epistle of John.

But it is a fine trait of Christ to see this gracious consideration laid so confidently on the shoulders of Titus, though the apostle does not stop there. “And let ours also learn to maintain good works for the necessary wants, that they be not unfruitful.” If Titus was not to forget fellow-labourers, how incumbent it was on the saints generally? This is the force of “ours also.” Only here it seems “ours” means the saints in Crete. They are exhorted to learn, what Titus had long learned, to be forward in good works, and, among all other calls, for the encouragement of devoted ministers of the Lord in His work. It is not merely the poor we should think of, but the work of faith and labour of love. Thus should believers be not “unfruitful.” Nor is God unrighteous to forget that work or the love shown toward His name; and if it be so in ministering to the saints, will He fail to remember such as honour those who serve them at all cost?

Lastly, we have the salutation “All that are with me (

μετ ἐμοῦ) salute thee;” it is not merely “with me” (

σὺν ἐμοὶ) as in Galatians 1:2. It is special connection, not simple companionship. This lends the salutation increase of force. Again Paul directs Titus to salute “those that love us dearly in faith.” Faith is the connecting link with all that is eternal and of the Spirit of God, yea with God Himself.

His last word is not to Titus only, but “grace be with you all.” His heart breaks forth in the desire of divine blessing towards all the saints in Crete, as we know it did in a general yet living way to all such on earth. For

the faithful stand in a special, divine, and everlasting relationship, which no believer ought ever to forget. In entails duties as varied as their practical condition may demand, and for this scripture provides amply in the goodness and wisdom of God. But grace is needed by all and for everything. Who can wonder then that the apostle concludes with the desire that it might be with them all?

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1 For whether we do or do not read Titus or Titius in Acts 18:7, Justus was clearly a different personage from the companion of the apostle.

2 This is a phrase peculiar in itself and difficult to transfuse well and truly into English. “Eternal” is clear, as said of God, life, punishment of sin. etc. But in combination with “times” it appears harsh, as in Rom. 16:25, and still more where πρὸ precedes, as in 2 Tim. 1:9 and here. Mr. T. S. Green gives “in all time” and “before all time” respectively, which seems weak or worse for the first case. Mr. Darby for Rom. 16 prefers “in [the] times of the ages,” and for 2 Tim. and Titus “before the ages of time.” But why invert thus? Would it not be better to adhere to the same order in all three, “times of ages?” Perhaps indeed “times everlasting” might be admissible for although the A.V. uses “eternal” and “everlasting” interchangeably, the latter is not necessarily so absolute as the former. We might say “before times everlasting” but hardly “before times eternal,” and for more reasons than one. It is unfounded to conceive a difference of sense between its use in 2

Tim. 1 and Titus 1; and the wish springs from misunderstanding of the truth.

3 It is one of the little inaccuracies of the Auth. V. that we find here “Cretes.” and in Titus 1:12 “Cretians” without any reason. The only correct form of course is “Cretans.”

4 The reader can consult Ps. 16:10, Ps. 89:18, 19, etc., and Acts 2:27, Acts 13:34, 35, with application to others also.

5 The Text. Rec., following many witnesses, and followed by the A.V., etc., has οἰκουρούς, “keepers at home”; which differs only by a letter easily omitted from οἰκουργούς, which most of the later critics prefer, as it is apparently the best reading.

6 It cannot be questioned fairly that the most ancient and best MSS. are in favour of this word, though we have no instance of its use in classical or even Hellenistic Greek, and the verbal form occurs only in Clem. Rom, perhaps derived from our text. Still it is a perfectly legitimate formation. The common word “keepers at home” is far inferior in moral force.

7 The more ancient MSS. omit the copulative.

8 Tyndale is right here, and Wiclif, for with the latter “believen to” is equivalent to our “believed” simply. It is strange that the Rhemish did not cleave to the Vulgate which is correct, but errs with the later English Versions. Believing “God” means receiving His testimony, especially in the gospel, as just laid down, no less incumbent on and needed by Jews than by Gentiles. Besides this, we believe on (ἐπὶ) God and in (

εἰς) Him, as made known to us in raising Christ from the dead (Rom. 4:24; 1 Peter 1:21). But this goes farther, and we have to distinguish things that differ.